

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Determinants of Malaria Incidence among Mine Workers: The Role of Length of Stay and Risk Perception

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ABSTRACT

Background: Prolonged duration of stay in mining areas increases exposure to malaria vectors, thereby elevating the risk of transmission. Additionally, workers' perceptions of malaria risk influence their engagement in preventive behaviors, such as using mosquito nets, applying repellents, and avoiding outdoor activities at night. This study analyzes the relationships between the length of stay in mining areas and risk perception, and between the incidence of malaria among mine workers and risk perception. **Methods:** A quantitative, analytical cross-sectional design was employed. The study population comprised miners in Hulawa Village, Buntulia District, Pohuwato Regency. Key variables included the habit of going out at night and risk perception. Data were collected using a questionnaire, with total sampling. Data analysis utilized the Chi-Square test and Multiple Logistic Regression. **Results:** There was a significant association between duration of stay in the mining area (p value = 0.00; OR = 31.179) and risk perception (p value = 0.03; OR = 8.916) with the incidence of malaria among mine workers. **Conclusion:** The findings indicate a relationship between the duration of stay in mining areas and risk perception, and the incidence of malaria among mine workers.

Keywords: Length of stay, Malaria, Mine workers, Risk perception

INTRODUCTION

Mining environments generally have different characteristics compared to general settlements. Mining sites are often located in forested areas, close to water sources, and are characterized by many puddles of water from extraction activities. These conditions create an optimal habitat for mosquito breeding. In addition, mine workers generally live in temporary settlements of poor quality, such as tents or simple barracks, without protection against mosquitoes. These factors make the mining environment a high-risk area for malaria transmission.

In the epidemiology of infectious diseases, the duration of exposure to a risky environment is an important indicator of the likelihood of exposure. The longer an individual stays in a malaria-endemic area, the greater the likelihood of

exposure to environmental risk factors, such as infectious mosquito bites, unsuitable living conditions, and limited prevention facilities. The duration of stay also reflects the frequency of exposure to vectors, thereby cumulatively influencing the incidence of infection.

For mine workers, length of stay is a highly relevant factor because most reside in the mining area for varying periods, ranging from several weeks to years. Workers with longer stays tend to be more active at night in open work areas and have lifestyle habits that can increase the risk of transmission. Previous studies have shown that length of stay correlates with malaria incidence, as repeated exposure increases the risk of infection despite preventive behaviors.

In malaria control efforts, individual behavior plays a very significant role. One aspect of behavior that influences this is risk perception, an

individual's assessment of the likelihood and severity of disease threats they may face. A high risk perception generally encourages individuals to take protective measures, such as using mosquito nets, repellents, protective clothing, or following recommended prevention procedures. Conversely, a low risk perception can lead individuals to neglect preventive measures, even in an environment with a high transmission rate.

Risk perception refers to the extent to which individuals assess their vulnerability to disease and the severity of possible impacts. The higher the risk perception, the more likely individuals are to take preventive measures (Health Belief Model). In this study, workers who considered malaria dangerous and felt vulnerable tended to use mosquito nets or avoid nighttime activities.

The Gorontalo Provincial Health Office reported an alarming spike in malaria cases through e-SISMAL. In 2022, only 52 cases were recorded, of which 32 came from North Gorontalo Regency. However, in 2023, there was a drastic spike to 1,577 cases. Entering the 37th week of the 2024 epidemiological year, the number of cases has reached 1,073, with Pohuwato District contributing the most with 814 cases. With a case growth rate of 1.3 per 1,000 population, Gorontalo Province is predicted to enter the moderate endemicity category in 2025.

E-SISMAL data shows that from 2023 to July 2025, there were 2,003 indigenous malaria cases in Pohuwato District. Data from the Buntulia Community Health Center recorded 59 positive cases of indigenous malaria from January to July 2025, with Hulawa Village contributing the most, namely 19 cases from 125 miners originating from Gorontalo, Central Sulawesi, and North Sulawesi. Hulawa Village is directly adjacent to small-scale gold mining areas, particularly in Poladingo Hamlet, which is the center of small-scale gold mining. The hilly and valley-filled topography of the village has led to the formation of many depressions and pools of water, especially in former mining pits.

Hulawa Village is one of the main areas of malaria transmission in Pohuwato Regency, particularly in Buntulia District, accounting for

around 56% of the region's total malaria cases. Based on these conditions, this study aims to evaluate the factors causing malaria among mine workers and identify vector breeding sites in the mining area of Hulawa Village, Buntulia District, Pohuwato Regency. Mining workers are at high risk not only because they live in an endemic area, but also because their work patterns and lifestyles require outdoor activities at night, when *Anopheles* mosquitoes are most active in seeking prey.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional design. The research was conducted at the Hulawa Village mine in Buntulia District, Pohuwato Regency, Gorontalo Province, in August 2025. The research population consisted of 125 mine workers in Hulawa Village, selected by simple random sampling. Data analysis included univariate and bivariate analyses using the Chi-Square test and multivariate analysis using the Logistic Regression test. The Logistic Regression test was used to analyze the most influential predictor factors after controlling for other variables. The instrument used was a questionnaire. The research instrument was first tested for validity and reliability. Ethical approval recommendation number 146/UN47.B7 / KE / 2025.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data in Table 1, 62 respondents (49.6%) had a long duration of stay in the mining area, while 63 respondents (50.4%) reported a short duration of stay, potentially increasing the risk of exposure to *Anopheles* mosquito bites. The distribution of respondents' risk perceptions shows that 63 people (50.4%) have a high risk perception, while 62 people (49.6%) have a low risk perception. This slight difference indicates that the risk perception of mine workers towards malaria is relatively balanced between those who feel at risk and those who do not. This condition underscores the need to strengthen health education to enhance risk perception, thereby optimizing preventive behavior.

Table 1. Frequency of duration of stay in the mining area and risk perception

No	Variable	Frequency	
		n	%
Duration of Stay in the Mining Area			
1	Duration	62	49.6
2	Short	63	50.4
	Total	125	100
Risk Perception			
1	High	63	50.4
2	Low	62	49.6
	Total	125	100

Table 2. Analysis of the relationship between duration of stay in the mining area and risk perception with malaria incidence among mine workers

Variable	Malaria Incidence				Total		P-Value
	Positive		Negative				
	n	%	n	%	N	%	
Length of Stay in Mining Area							
Length	42	33.6	20	16.0	62	49.6	0.00
Short	6	4.8	57	45.6	63	50.4	
Total	48	38.4	77	61.6	125	100	
Risk Perception							
High	30	24.0	33	26.4	63	50.4	0.03
Low	18	14.4	44	35.2	62	49.6	
Total	48	38.4	77	61.6	125	100	

Table 3. Analysis of variables most associated with malaria incidence among mine workers

No	Research Variable	P-Value	Odds Ratio	95% C.I for EXP (B)	
				Lower	Upper
1	Duration of Stay in Mining Area	0.001	31,179	4,447	218,583
2	Risk Perception	0.043	0.132	0.019	0.934

Table 2 shows that of the 125 respondents, 62 (49.6%) had lived in the mining area for a long time, while 63 (50.4%) had lived there for a short time. In the group that had lived there for a long time, 42 people (33.6%) tested positive for malaria, and 20 people (16.0%) tested negative. In the group that had only recently moved there, 6 people (4.8%) tested positive for malaria, and 57 people (45.6%) tested negative.

The statistical test results showed a p-value = 0.00 ($\alpha < 0.05$), indicating a significant relationship between the duration of residence in the mining area and the incidence of malaria in Hulawa Village, Buntulia District. These findings show that the

longer a person lives in a mining area, the higher the risk of malaria infection.

The longer a person lives in an endemic area, the higher the risk of exposure to malaria-carrying mosquito bites. Mining areas usually have a lot of standing water and high humidity, which supports the mosquito life cycle. Standing water in former mine pits is an ideal habitat for mosquito breeding. In addition, mine workers generally live in temporary housing with poor sanitation, limited ventilation, and minimal personal protection, thereby increasing the risk of malaria transmission.

Long-term residence in endemic areas also increases the likelihood of repeated exposure to

mosquito bites. Individuals who have lived in these areas for a long time are more likely to be exposed to mosquitoes carrying Plasmodium, either through their work or through proximity to puddles of water. In malaria epidemiology, long-term exposure increases the risk of recurrent infection, especially when vector control and preventive behaviors remain low.

Regarding the risk perception variable, among the 63 respondents with high risk perception, 30 (24.0%) were confirmed positive for malaria, while 33 (26.4%) were in the malaria-negative group. Meanwhile, among 62 respondents with low risk perception, 18 (14.4%) were confirmed positive for malaria, and 44 (35.2%) were malaria-negative. These data show that workers with high risk perception have a greater proportion of malaria cases. These findings indicate that high-risk perception is likely formed from personal experience or prior exposure to information about malaria cases in the work environment. Conversely, in the low-risk-perception group, the number of malaria cases was lower than in the high-risk-perception group.

The statistical test results showed a p-value = 0.03, which is smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus, there is a significant relationship between risk perception and malaria incidence among mine workers. These findings confirm that risk perception influences the likelihood of malaria, both through preventive behavior and the level of individual awareness of the dangers of malaria.

Workers who have a high perception of risk tend to be more consistent in implementing preventive measures, such as using mosquito nets, maintaining environmental hygiene, and avoiding outdoor activities at night. The effectiveness of risk perception in malaria prevention is greatly influenced by education programs that can change mindsets and raise collective awareness among mine workers. Collaboration among health workers, village officials, and community leaders can strengthen risk perception and encourage sustainable malaria prevention behaviors at the household and mining community levels.

Respondents who had a high perception of risk but were still infected with malaria showed a

gap between their knowledge of risk and their preventive behavior. A high perception of risk reflects an understanding of the dangers of malaria, but this awareness has not been fully translated into concrete action. A similar phenomenon is often observed in endemic areas, where people understand how malaria is transmitted but inconsistently implement preventive behaviors, such as using insecticide-treated mosquito nets, spraying insecticides, or managing the environment.

Table 3 presents the results of a logistic regression analysis identifying the variables most strongly associated with the incidence of malaria among mine workers. The two variables analyzed were duration of stay in the mining area and risk perception.

The duration-of-stay variable showed a p-value of 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship with malaria incidence ($p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that the length of stay is a strong factor influencing the incidence of malaria among mine workers. An odds ratio (OR) value of 31.179 indicates that workers with a longer length of stay in the mining area have a 31 times higher risk of contracting malaria than workers with a shorter length of stay. This very large OR value illustrates the strength of the relationship. The 95% confidence interval ranges from 4.447 to 218.583. Although the interval is wide, all CI values are above 1, reinforcing that the risk increases significantly with increasing length of stay. The width of the interval also indicates variation in exposure levels among workers, but does not change the main conclusion.

These results indicate that the longer workers remain in the mining area, a malaria-endemic region, the greater their cumulative exposure to Anopheles mosquitoes. A longer duration of stay indicates repeated exposure to a risky environment, poorly protected living conditions, and nighttime activities that increase the potential for infection. Therefore, the duration of stay is the most dominant factor in this regression model.

Epidemiologically, a longer duration of stay in a malaria-endemic area increases the likelihood

of exposure to *Anopheles* mosquito bites. Mining areas often have environmental conditions that support mosquito breeding, such as puddles left behind by excavation, water storage ponds, and poor drainage. These conditions increase vector exposure with increasing length of stay at the mine site, thereby increasing the risk of malaria transmission.

Longer stays are also associated with changes in worker behavior. At the beginning of their stay in the mining area, workers tend to be more aware of the risk of malaria and more compliant with preventive measures, such as using mosquito nets, mosquito repellents, or protective clothing. However, over time, awareness levels may decline as workers become accustomed to their surroundings. This decline in vigilance could increase the risk of mosquito bites and malaria cases.

Workers who have lived in the mining area for a long time generally have high workloads and long working hours, including working until late at night or early in the morning. *Anopheles* mosquitoes are active at night, increasing the risk of contact with malaria vectors, especially if workers do not consistently use personal protective equipment.

The length of stay in the mining area is also related to work behavior and fatigue. Workers with long stays tend to work long hours, including at night, increasing the risk of contact with active mosquitoes. Fatigue can also reduce compliance with malaria prevention behaviors, such as using mosquito repellent or sleeping under a mosquito net.

Workers with long stays in mining areas should be prioritized in malaria prevention programs, including the provision of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, indoor residual spraying, mining site management, and ongoing education on malaria prevention. These efforts must be carried out consistently and continuously to reduce the risk of malaria in groups of workers with high exposure levels.

Thus, the duration of stay in the mining area is an important determinant of malaria incidence among mine workers. Malaria prevention efforts need to focus on workers with long stays through

environmental control, improving clean and healthy living behaviors, and strengthening self-protection programs against mosquito bites. Continuous intervention is necessary to reduce the risk of malaria in groups of mine workers with high exposure levels.

The risk perception variable had a p-value of 0.043 and an odds ratio of 0.132, indicating that workers with high risk perception were less likely to contract malaria than those with low risk perception. Good risk perception has a protective effect, reducing the risk by 87% ($1 - 0.132$). Workers with high risk perception tend to be more disciplined in using personal protective equipment, such as mosquito nets and repellents, and in avoiding outdoor activities during risky times.

Workers with high risk perception tend to be more aware of preventive measures, such as using mosquito nets, maintaining environmental hygiene, and avoiding nighttime outdoor activities. The effectiveness of risk perception in preventing malaria depends heavily on education programs that can shift perspectives and increase collective awareness among mine workers. Collaboration between health workers, village officials, and community leaders can strengthen risk perception and encourage sustainable malaria prevention behaviors at the household and mining community levels.

Respondents with high risk perception but who remain positive about malaria indicate a gap between risk knowledge and preventive behavior. High risk perception indicates an understanding of the dangers of malaria, but this awareness has not been fully translated into concrete action. This phenomenon often occurs in endemic areas, where people know how malaria is transmitted but do not consistently practice preventive behaviors such as using insecticide-treated bed nets, spraying insecticides, or managing the environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, the following conclusions can be drawn: the duration of stay in the mining area is significantly related to the incidence of malaria among mine workers in Hulawa Village, Pohuwato District (p-value = 0.00; α

< 0.05), and perception of malaria risk is significantly related to the incidence of malaria among mine workers in Hulawa Village, Buntulia Subdistrict, Pohuwato Regency (p-value = 0.04; α < 0.05). The most influential variable for the incidence of malaria among mine workers in Hulawa Village, Buntulia Subdistrict, Pohuwato Regency, is the duration of stay in the mining area, with an OR of 31.179.

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