

Iron and folic acid deficiencies which affect more than 2 billion people have been reported to be the major contributors to anemia in pregnant women despite the existing IFAS programs. Low IFAS results into premature births, low birth weights, children born with congenital malformations, high maternal and neonatal mortality. Iron and Folic Acid supplementation for pregnant women is one of the interventions that have been implemented by the Ministry of Health to reduce anaemia levels. However, the practices and barriers to uptake of IFAS is poorly understood among pregnant women. This was a cross sectional study carried out among 305 women selected by systematic random sampling attending ante-natal care in health facilities in Bunyala Sub-County in Busia County. The objectives of the study were to establish socio-economic characteristics of pregnant women on iron and folic acid supplements in Bunyala sub - county; identify practices on the uptake of iron and folic acid supplements among pregnant women in Bunyala sub - county and to determine barriers to the uptake of iron and folic acid supplements among pregnant women in Bunyala sub - county. A semi structured questionnaire was used to collect information on practices and barriers to the uptake of iron and folic acid supplements. This study reports that almost half of pregnant women were young and majority of them had primary education as the highest level of education (66.2%). Also, very few are on salary (2.3%) with a very low income (less than Ksh 500 a month). Although the majority (92.8%) get access to Iron/folate or syrup at the public hospitals, weekly and monthly adherence to prescription were as low as 54.8% and 74.4% respectively. The barriers to uptake of IFAS are side effects (23.5%), forgetfulness of the women (11.8%) and distance to the health facility that most of the women must use motor bike given their low income (49.2%). This study reports low level of education and income among pregnant women. Also poor adherence to the uptake of IFAS and barriers include side effects, forgetfulness and also distance to the health facility. The study recommends economic empowerment and enhanced health promotion programs.

## ABSTRACT