

12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on  
**Internal Medicine and Hospital Management**  
April 27-28, 2022 | Webinar

Volume: 12

## **Assessment of the prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections and associated habit and culture-related risk factors among primary schoolchildren in Debre Berhan town, Northeast Ethiopia**

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**Background:** Intestinal parasitic infections (IPIs) are still among the major public health issues in developing countries. Assessing the prevalence of IPIs and potential risk factors in different localities is vital to enhance control strategies. The aim of this study was to assess the prevalence of IPIs and associated habit and culture-related risk factors among primary schoolchildren in Debre, Berhan town, Northeast Ethiopia.

**Method:** School based cross-sectional study was conducted from April to June 2017. A total of 645 children aged 6-15 years were selected from six primary schools in Debre Berhan town via a multistage random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data about **Socio demographic and potential** risk factor variables. Fresh stool samples were collected from each child and examined using direct smear and formal-ether concentration technique.

**Result:** Among the 645 children participated in the study, 341 (52.9%) were infected by one or more intestinal parasites. Helminths (33.8%) were more prevalent than protozoa (20%). Double parasitic infection rate was 0.9%. The predominant parasites were *Ascaris lumbricoides* (22.6%), *Entamoeba histolytica/dispar/moshkovskii* (18.1%) and *Hymenolepis nana* (5.7%). Multivariable logistic regression analysis showed that age of child (6-9 years), family size (above 5), mother's illiteracy and primary education, father's illiteracy, urban-farmer father, manual-worker father, not washing hands before eating, unclean fingers, open defecation site (ODS) near residence, latrine type, cultural response to dropped food (cleaning and eating; 'kiss and replace'), habit of playing with waste water, habit of playing with soil, habit of sucking fingers and habit of eating when playing were significantly associated with IPIs ( $p < 0.05$ ). Likewise, age (6-9 years), mother's illiteracy, urban-farmer father, not washing hands before eating, ODS near residence, tradition of cleaning and eating dropped food, habit of playing with soil, sucking fingers and eating when playing were identified as significant risk factors of *A. lumbricoides* infection.

**Conclusion:** High prevalence of IPIs among the study participants demands improvement of environmental sanitation, personal hygiene, and health education regarding the potential habit and culture-related risk factors.

### **Biography**

Gedamu G.H. got BSc degree in Biology from Addis Ababa University in 2005 in his homeland Ethiopia. Since then, he is teaching biological science. He got Master's degree (MPH) in General Public Health from Debre Berhan University in 2018. He is curious and ambitious in researching into various public health issues, and currently working as a private-mentor of postgraduate researchers from diverse disciplines.

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