

# Predictors of hookworm and *Opisthorchis viverrini* infection among adolescents in urban Laos: a cross-sectional study

This article was published in the following Dove Press journal:  
*Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine*

Itsuko Yoshida<sup>1</sup>  
Osamu Horie<sup>2</sup>  
Kongsap Akkhavong<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Nursing Science, Yasuda Women's University, Hiroshima, Japan;

<sup>2</sup>Department of Clinical Laboratory Science, Tenri Health Care University, Tenri, Nara, Japan; <sup>3</sup>Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute, Ministry of Health, Vientiane, Laos

**Purpose:** Infection with hookworm and *Opisthorchis viverrini* are serious health problems among children and adolescents in Laos. In this study, we demonstrated the factors related to hookworm and *O. viverrini* infection, including primary school health programs, among secondary school students in Vientiane city of Laos.

**Material and methods:** A cross-sectional survey and stool examination were conducted among secondary school students in Vientiane. One stool sample from each participant was examined using two Kato-Katz smears. Data of 164 participants were analyzed and the associations among parasitic infections, sociodemographic characteristics, and the school health program in primary school were assessed in a univariate logistic regression analysis. Predictors with  $p < 0.25$  were retained in a multivariate logistic regression model. Odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were reported. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Results:** The infection rates of *O. viverrini* and hookworm were 39.0% and 36.0%, respectively. Older students (OR=1.55, 95% CI: 1.01–2.37,  $p=0.046$ ) and those whose father had irregular income (OR=0.47, 95% CI: 0.13–0.93,  $p=0.036$ ) had a higher risk for hookworm infection. Students whose mother had irregular income (OR=0.30, 95% CI: 0.13–0.69,  $p=0.005$ ) had a higher risk for *O. viverrini* infection. Higher primary school health program scores were associated with a lower risk for hookworm infection in the univariate model but not in the multivariate model.

**Conclusion:** Sociodemographic factors have a strong influence on infections with both hookworm and *O. viverrini*. Current school health programs in Laos may be insufficient to reduce *O. viverrini* infections. Other approaches, such as supporting parents in finding employment with regular income, may be needed.

**Keywords:** hookworm, *Opisthorchis viverrini*, adolescents, Laos

## Introduction

Infections owing to soil-transmitted helminths and foodborne trematodes are serious public health problems in Laos.<sup>1–3</sup> Previous studies have reported a high prevalence of intestinal parasitic infections among school-aged children and young people in Laos. For example, the reported prevalence of intestinal helminths among children aged 6–11 years is 70.3%, and this is 71.2% among young people aged 12–19 years in northern Laos.<sup>4</sup> Among children under 15 years of age in Bolikhamxay Province, this prevalence is 56.7%.<sup>5</sup> Recent studies show that the main parasitic infections among the general population are hookworm and *Opisthorchis viverrini* infections.<sup>2,6,7</sup> This tendency has also been observed among children and young people, with 80.0% of

Correspondence: Itsuko Yoshida  
Department of Nursing Science, Yasuda Women's University, 6-13-1 Yasuhigashi Asaminami-ku, Hiroshima, Hiroshima, Japan  
Tel +81 804 600 4381  
Fax +8 182 872 2896  
Email yoshida-i@yasuda-u.ac.jp

the children aged 6–15 years infected by hookworm and 64.6% by *O. viverrini* in Champasack Province,<sup>8</sup> and 87.0% infected by hookworm and *O. viverrini* in Saravane Province.<sup>2</sup> The impact of helminth infections is significant predictors of malnutrition, iron deficiency anemia, and poor academic performance among schoolchildren.<sup>9–12</sup> Additionally, *O. viverrini* infection is associated with cholangiocarcinoma and bile duct cancer.<sup>13,14</sup>

Therefore, a successful parasite control program for students at school is necessary to improve their health status, increase their chances of optimal growth and learning,<sup>15</sup> and avoid future early death. According to the National School Health Policy formulated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Health (MoH) in Laos, the school health program consists of five components: personal health and life skills, healthy school environment, health and nutrition services, control and prevention of common diseases, and school and community partnership.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, helminths control is also included in the program and has been implemented as the school deworming campaign for all primary school-aged children since 2005.<sup>17</sup> This campaign has covered 93% of the country.<sup>18</sup> The school-based program is expected to provide schoolchildren with proper knowledge, attitudes, and practices for maintaining better health status throughout their entire life. However, the influence of this program during primary school and the factors related to parasitic infection among secondary school students has not been sufficiently investigated.

In the present study, we sought to identify factors, including primary school health programs, related to infection with hookworm and *O. viverrini* among secondary school students in a large city of Laos.

## Material and methods

### Study area

The study was conducted in Vientiane, the largest city in Laos. Vientiane is located on the banks of the Mekong River near the border with Thailand, at elevation 174 m above sea level. Vientiane has a tropical monsoon climate, with the rainy season occurring between May and October.<sup>19</sup> Vientiane has nine districts. The study site was a secondary school in Sikottabong District, which is located at about 9 km from the center of the city and urban area. The students of the target school were mainly from nine villages located in the vicinity of the school. The total number of students at the school was around 230. The gross enrollment rate in secondary schools in Laos is 66.5%.<sup>20</sup>

### Study population and sample size

As of the 2015 census, Vientiane city had a population of 820,000, with 8.9% of the population aged 10–14 years.<sup>19</sup> We selected one secondary school located in an area where we have implemented a school health program since 2002.

The sample size was determined using the A-priori Sample Size Calculator for Multiple Regression (available from <http://www.danielsoper.com/statcalc>) with a 0.15 anticipated effect size, 80% statistical power, 15 predictors, and 0.05 probability level. The calculated minimum sample size was 139.

### Study design

We conducted a cross-sectional survey in September 2013. First, schoolteachers and students were informed about the study objectives and procedures. A total of 197 students agreed to voluntarily participate and signed consent forms. Students in first grade were not included because they were in the process of admission during the study period.

### Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire included sociodemographic characteristics, perception of the primary school health program, and status of water and sanitation in the student's home. This questionnaire was translated into the Lao language, and any discrepancies in terms of wording were settled through discussions with Laotian senior researchers from the Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute. Finally, the translated questionnaires were pre-tested. To collect data, first, a Laotian researcher explained the questionnaire to the students and instructed them on how to complete the questionnaire. The students then completed the self-administered questionnaires in the Lao language.

### Sample collection and stool examination

All students participated were provided with a stool container labeled with an identification number on the day before the survey. Students were requested to provide their own fresh stool sample on the sample collection day. The research team visited classrooms at the target school between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. to collect the stool samples together with the completed questionnaire. All collected samples were kept in a cool box and were transferred by car to the laboratory of the Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute within an hour after collection. For each stool sample, two Kato–Katz thick-smear slides were prepared, using standard 41.7 mg templates. After a

clearing time of 30 mins, the slides were examined under a light microscope (100× magnification). All samples were examined on the day of collection.

## Data analysis

In total, 178 participants submitted a stool sample, and samples were analyzed for the prevalence of helminths among study participants. Among 178 students, 164 completed the questionnaire. The data from these 164 participants were used to analyze associations among sociodemographic characteristics, primary school health program score, status of hygiene and sanitation in the student's home, and parasitic infection. The items addressing the perception of the school health program were from a previous study on school health program evaluation in Laos.<sup>21</sup> Response options to the survey questions were “yes” or “no”, and “yes” responses were summed to obtain the overall primary school health program score (Table 1). The intensity of helminth infections was expressed in fecal eggs per gram (EPG). According to the previous studies,<sup>2,6,22</sup> for hookworm and *O. viverrini* infections, the following light-, moderate-, and high-intensity groups were established based on the EPG counts: hookworm; 1–1,999 EPG, 2000–3,999 EPG, and ≥4,000 EPG and *O. viverrini* and *T. trichiura*: 1–999 EPG, 1,000–9,999 EPG, and ≥10,000 EPG.

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS, version 22.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). The association among parasite infections (hookworm and *O. viverrini*), sociodemographic characteristics, and the school health program available during primary school were assessed in a univariate logistic regression analysis. Predictors with

$p < 0.25$  were retained in a multivariate logistic regression model. Odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were reported. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval was obtained from the Tenri Health Care University Ethics Committee (Project no. 27) and the National Ethics Committee on Health Research, MoH, Lao PDR (Ethical Clearance No. 045/2013 NECHR). Permission for the survey was obtained from the MoH, as well as the school committee and director. Meetings were held with students' parents or guardians in which they were given a detailed explanation of the study aims, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Written informed consent was obtained from the parents or guardians of participants. In cases where a parent or guardian was illiterate, students signed the consent form, witnessed by a parent or guardian.” Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

## Results

### Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

The data of 164 students were included in the analysis; mean student age was 13.7 years (SD 1.3; range 10–18 years). The mean student age when entering primary school was 6.0 years (SD 1.0; range 3–9 years), and the mean age when entering secondary school was 11.5 years (SD 1.0; range 9–15 years). A total of 49.4% of the students were male, and most students (86.0%) attended

**Table 1** Questionnaire items for primary school health program score

Items	%
There was water available in primary school	70.6
There was boiled or bottled water for students to drink	87.1
There was a latrine in primary school	93.3
The latrine was always kept tidy	78.5
The primary school had a good fence to prevent animals from entering the schoolyard	91.4
Health personnel visited the primary school to check students' health condition	87.1
Primary school teachers instructed students to wash hands before eating	98.2
Primary school teachers instructed students to wash hands after using the latrine	95.1
Primary school teachers instructed students to wash hands after returning from outside	69.9
Primary school teachers instructed students on how to clip fingernails	97.5
Primary school teachers instructed students on how to keep eyes and ears clean	88.3
Total score (range: 5–11)	Mean (SD) 9.57 (1.33)

**Abbreviation:** SD, standard deviation.

primary school in Vientiane. Among the total, 41.4% of the students' fathers and 52.4% of the students' mothers had fewer than 6 years' education. The most common occupations among fathers were farmer (33.5%) and government employee (24.5%); the most common jobs among mothers were farmer (28.1%) and trader (26.8%). A total of 86.0% of the students reported having a latrine at home and 87.2% of the used a water-sealed latrine; only 21.3% of the students had tap water available at home. Among the total, 89.0% of the students belonged to the Lao-Thai ethnic group (Table 2).

## Parasitic infection

The most frequently encountered parasitic infection was *O. viverrini*, with a positive rate of 39.0%. Hookworm, *Trichuris trichiura*, and *Taenia* spp. were found in 36.0%, 4.3%, and 2.4% of the participants, respectively. Most cases of *O. viverrini*, infection were categorized as light intensity, with no cases of heavy intensity infection found. Most cases of hookworm infection were also light intensity; in addition, three cases were classified as moderate intensity and one case as heavy intensity (Table 3).

## Factors related to hookworm infection

Univariate logistic regression analysis resulted in 10 predicted variables: age, age entering primary school, age entering secondary school, primary school health program score, father's education level, father's occupation; mother's occupation, type of latrine, source of daily-use water, and frequency of deworming. The results of multivariate logistic regression analysis showed that two variables were identified as significantly related to hookworm infection; older age (OR=1.55, 95% CI: 1.01–2.37,  $p=0.046$ ) was significantly associated with higher infection risk and the student's father having an occupation with regular income was associated with significantly lower risk (OR=0.47, 95% CI: 0.13–0.93,  $p=0.036$ ) for hookworm infection. The primary school health program score was not significant in the multivariate model (OR=0.76, 95% CI: 0.56–1.02,  $p=0.068$ ) although it was significant (OR=0.69, 95% CI: 0.53–0.88,  $p=0.003$ ) in univariate logistic regression (Table 4).

## Factors related to *O. viverrini* infection

Univariate logistic regression analysis resulted in nine predicted variables; school health score, location of primary school attended, student's sex, father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, mother's

occupation, ethnicity, and source of daily-use water. The results of multivariate logistic regression analysis showed that only the mother having an occupation with regular income was significantly associated with lower risk (OR=0.30,  $p=0.005$ ) for *O. viverrini* infection (Table 5).

## Discussion

In this study, we found that infection with *O. viverrini* and hookworm were the most prevalent parasitic infections among secondary students in Vientiane, Laos. Our findings confirmed previous studies.<sup>2,7,8,22</sup> Compared with countries surrounding Laos, the prevalence rates of hookworm infection (36.0%) in our study were similar to those in Cambodia, with 34.9% among schoolchildren<sup>23</sup> and 34.8% among young people aged 11–16 years.<sup>24</sup> The prevalence among schoolchildren was slightly lower in Vietnam, 22.8% in the southern part of the country<sup>25</sup> and 5.3% in the northern part.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, only 0.5% of the schoolchildren in Bangkok, Thailand have hookworm infection.<sup>27</sup> Risk factors of hookworm infection include walking barefoot in contaminated soil. In our study, students usually use beach sandals, which cover the soles of their feet. Although 87.2% of the participants had a water-sealed latrine in their dwelling, every rainy season, these flood and overflow with waste, which contaminates the soil. In addition, even in urban areas of Laos, only the main roads are paved and other areas where students walk and play are unpaved. These factors lead to the high prevalence rate of hookworm infection in Vientiane. The prevalence rates of *O. viverrini* (39.0%) in our study were also at the same levels as those in Cambodia, with 40.0% among young people aged 10–19 years.<sup>28</sup> However, in northeastern Thailand, only 0.0–2.1% of those aged less than 20 years are infected.<sup>29,30</sup> *O. viverrini* infection is caused by ingesting raw or inadequately cooked fish. Suburban areas of Vientiane city still have fishponds and people catch fish for daily consumption. This may lead to frequent raw fish consumption and the subsequent high prevalence of *O. viverrini* infection.

The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes populations with prevalence rates between 10% and 50% as requiring preventive chemotherapy.<sup>16</sup> Most participants in this study were covered by a national deworming program. The intensity of hookworm infection showed that most infected cases were categorized as light intensity. This suggests that deworming programs can maintain lower hookworm infection intensity. However, reinfection after mass deworming programs has been frequently reported.<sup>31–33</sup> The medication that was distributed in

**Table 2** Sociodemographic characteristics of participants

Variables	n (Mean)	% (SD)	(Range)
Age, y	13.7	1.3	10–18
Age entering primary school, y	6.0	1.0	3–9
Age entering secondary school, y	11.5	1.0	9–15
Location of primary school			
Vientiane city	141	86.0	
Outside of Vientiane city	20	12.2	
Missing	3	1.8	
Student's sex			
Male	81	49.4	
Female	83	50.6	
Father's education			
Primary school or no schooling	68	41.4	
Lower secondary school or higher	92	56.0	
Missing	4	2.4	
Mother's education			
Primary school or no schooling	86	52.4	
Lower secondary school or higher	75	45.7	
Missing	3	1.8	
Father's occupation			
Unemployed	4	2.4	
Farmer	55	33.5	
Trader	17	10.4	
Government employee	40	24.5	
Driver	9	5.5	
Other	38	23.2	
Missing	1	0.6	
Mother's occupation			
Unemployed	31	18.9	
Farmer	46	28.1	
Trader	44	26.8	
Government employee	14	8.5	
Seamstress	11	6.7	
Other	17	10.4	
Missing	1	0.6	
Latrine			
Latrine present at home	141	86.0	
Share latrine with neighbors	20	12.2	
No latrine	3	1.8	
Type of latrine			
Water-sealed latrine	143	87.2	
Pit latrine or other	21	12.8	
Source of water for daily use			
Tap water	35	21.3	
Other (river/well/rainwater)	129	78.7	

(Continued)

**Table 2** (Continued).

Variables	n (Mean)	% (SD)	(Range)
Ethnicity			
Lao-Thai	146	89.0	
Hmong	13	8.0	
Other	3	1.8	
Missing	2	1.2	

**Abbreviation:** SD, standard deviation.

primary schools for a long time was single-dose mebendazole 500 mg, which has low efficacy against hookworm.<sup>34</sup> The study in Laos by Soukhathammavong et al, showed that the cure rate and egg reduction rate with single-dose mebendazole treatment was 17.6% and 76.3%, respectively; these rates with albendazole treatment were 36.0% and 86.7%, respectively.<sup>7</sup> A study in China showed that triple-dose albendazole treatment has high efficacy against hookworm, with a 96.7% cure rate, a 99.1% egg reduction rate, and a low reinfection rate (5.1%) at 6 months after treatment.<sup>35</sup> To reduce the infection rate and number of cases with heavy intensity, the medication used in deworming programs should be reconsidered. Additionally, mebendazole is less effective for *O. viverrini* infection.<sup>4,7</sup> Praziquantel is the only medicine recommended by the WHO for the treatment of *O. viverrini* infection and it should be administered in certain doses according to students' weight.<sup>36</sup> Such administration is not easy for schoolteachers; therefore, measures for controlling *O. viverrini* infection is not included in national school health programs in Laos. For safety, the MoH in Laos recommends that medical personnel should supervise and monitor treatment and follow-up when praziquantel is administered. Therefore, good collaboration between MoH and MoE is needed if praziquantel is to be introduced in the school health program.

The results of univariate logistic regression in this study showed that a lower primary school health program score was a risk factor of hookworm infection. The primary school questions in our study mainly queried participants about the contents of health education and the school environment during their primary school years. This score possibly includes recall bias; however, hygiene education such as washing hands, using the toilet, eating clean food, wearing clean clothes, and cleaning the environment, may increase students' awareness and improve behaviors, such as the use of regular medication and

hygiene practices to prevent hookworm infection. In the other hand, the multivariate model showed that primary school health program scores were not significant factors but sociodemographic factors had a greater influence on hookworm infection. Our findings showed that older students were at greater risk of hookworm infection. This tendency was also found in the previous studies from southern Laos.<sup>7,9,37,38</sup> Older students may engage in more agriculture work to help their parents, resulting in greater hookworm infection. The data in our study that students whose father was unemployed or a farmer had a greater risk of hookworm infection also support this result. With respect to the father's occupation, the percentage of students whose father worked as a farmer was the highest in this study, even in Vientiane city.

Our study findings suggested that having a mother who was employed and had regular income was associated with lower risk of *O. viverrini* infection. Several studies in Laos have shown that low economic status is associated with *O. viverrini* infection.<sup>7,37</sup> In addition, previous studies on female economic empowerment have demonstrated that women who have financial resources tend to spend their income on their children's diet, education, and health.<sup>39,40</sup> The main cause of *O. viverrini* infection is eating raw or partially cooked fish. Fish is a low-cost food, in comparison with meat. Therefore, a mother may spend her money to buy meat rather than fish and her children may thus have a lower risk of infection with *O. viverrini*.

Our study clarified the situation of *O. viverrini* and hookworm infections, as well as social factors predicting both infections, among adolescents in Vientiane, the largest city in Laos. However, this study has several limitations. First, the participants in our study were from a purposely selected school in an urban area; therefore, generalization of the study findings is limited. Second, our study was intended to evaluate the effect of a school health program conducted when participants were in

**Table 3** Prevalence and intensity of parasitic infection by gender and age group (n=164)

	n (%)	Gender		Age groups				
		Female	Male	10-11	12-13	14-15	16-18	
<i>Opisthorchis viverrini</i> Intensity of infection: Negative Light (1-999 EPG) Moderate (1,000-9,999 EPG) Heavy (≥10,000 EPG)	100 (61.0) 62 (37.8) 2 (1.2) 0	45 (54.2) 37 (44.6) 1 (1.2) 0	55 (65.4) 25 (30.9) 1 (1.2) 0	3 (50.0) 3 (50.0) 0 (0.0) 0	48 (66.7) 23 (31.9) 1 (1.4) 0	43 (57.3) 31 (41.3) 1 (1.3) 0	6 (54.5) 5 (45.5) 0 0	
Hookworm Intensity of infection: Negative Light (1-1,999 EPG) Moderate (2,000-3,999 EPG) Heavy (≥4,000 EPG)	105 (64.0) 55 (33.5) 3 (1.8) 1 (0.6)	52 (62.7) 29 (34.9) 1 (1.8) 1 (1.8)	53 (65.4) 26 (32.1) 2 (2.5) 0	6 (100.0) 0 0 0	56 (77.8) 16 (22.2) 0 0	37 (49.3) 36 (48.0) 1 (1.3) 1 (1.3)	6 (54.5) 3 (27.3) 2 (18.2) 0	
<i>Trichuris trichiura</i> Intensity of infection: Negative Light (1-999 EPG) Moderate (1,000-9,999 EPG) Heavy (≥10,000 EPG)	157 (95.7) 6 (3.7) 1 (0.6) 0	79 (95.2) 3 (3.6) 1 (1.2) 0	78 (96.3) 3 (3.7) 0 0	6 (100.0) 0 0 0	69 (95.8) 3 (4.2) 0 0	72 (96.0) 2 (2.7) 1 (1.3%) 0	10 (90.9) 1 (9.1) 0 0	
<i>Toenia</i> spp.	4 (2.4)	2 (2.4)	2 (2.5)	0	2 (2.8)	2 (2.7)	0	

**Abbreviation:** EPG=egg per gram of stool.

**Table 4** Factors associated with hookworm infection in logistic regression

Independent variables	Univariate			Multivariate		
	OR	95% CI	p-value	OR	95% CI	p-value
Age	1.58	1.19–2.09	0.002	1.55	1.01–2.37	0.046
Age entering primary school	1.49	1.04–2.13	0.031	1.37	0.82–2.30	0.234
Age entering secondary school	1.29	0.93–1.81	0.132	0.68	0.40–1.16	0.154
Primary school health program score	0.69	0.53–0.88	0.003	0.76	0.56–1.02	0.068
Location of primary school attended						
Vientiane	1.00					
Outside of Vientiane	0.57	0.20–1.66	0.303			
Sex						
Male	1.00					
Female	1.13	0.60–2.14	0.711			
Father's education						
6 years or more	1.00					
Less than 6 years	1.92	1.00–3.68	0.051	1.03	0.44–2.42	0.943
Mother's education						
6 years or more	1.00					
Less than 6 years	1.39	0.73–2.66	0.321			
Father's occupation						
Unemployed/farmer	1.00					
Job with regular income	0.47	0.24–0.91	0.025	0.34	0.13–0.93	0.036
Mother's occupation						
Unemployed/farmer	1.00					
Job with regular income	0.68	0.36–1.29	0.239	1.11	0.43–2.91	0.828
Ethnicity						
Lao-Thai	1.00					
Hmong/other	0.77	0.26–2.35	0.651			
Latrine at home						
Latrine available in the home	1.00					
Share with neighbors/no latrine	0.94	0.37–2.37	0.898			
Type of latrine						
Water-sealed latrine	1.00					
Pit latrine or other	1.92	0.72–5.14	0.195	1.73	0.51–5.87	0.376
Source of daily-use water						
Tap water	1.00					
Other (river/well/rainwater)	1.83	0.79–4.22	0.157	1.25	0.43–3.63	0.679
Frequency of deworming						
Regular deworming medication	1.00					
No deworming medication	3.56	1.13–11.20	0.030	1.98	0.53–7.49	0.313

**Abbreviations:** OR, odds ratio; CI, confidence interval.

primary school; therefore, recall bias was unavoidable. More accurate measures must be developed to evaluate school health programs for preventing hookworm and *O. viverrini* infection. Third, our study could not determine

students' habits of raw fish consumption. Because participants' daily food is prepared by parents or guardians, students' habits may be influenced by those of their parents or guardians. Further studies are required to determine

**Table 5** Factors associated with *Opisthorchis viverrini* infection in logistic regression

Independent variables	Univariate			Multivariate		
	OR	95% CI	p-value	OR	95% CI	p-value
Age	1.08	0.8–1.39	0.542			
Age entering primary school	0.92	0.66–1.28	0.628			
Age entering secondary school	1.16	0.84–1.61	0.358			
Primary school health program score	1.17	0.92–1.50	0.207	1.20	0.90–1.61	0.221
Location of primary school attended						
Vientiane	1.00					
Outside of Vientiane	0.34	0.11–1.06	0.063	0.42	0.10–1.76	0.236
Student's sex						
Male	1.00					
Female	1.79	0.95–3.37	0.074	1.29	0.62–2.68	0.496
Father's education						
6 years or more	1.00					
Less than 6 years	1.50	0.79–2.84	0.216	1.12	0.47–2.65	0.803
Mother's education						
6 years or more	1.00					
Less than 6 years	1.49	0.79–2.82	0.219	1.05	0.44–2.49	0.909
Father's occupation						
Unemployed/farmer	1.00					
Job with regular income	0.42	0.22–0.81	0.010	0.77	0.33–1.81	0.550
Mother's occupation						
Unemployed/farmer	1.00					
Job with regular income	0.29	0.15–0.55	<0.001	0.30	0.13–0.69	0.005
Ethnicity						
Lao-Thai	1.00					
Hmong/other	0.49	0.15–1.60	0.238	0.81	0.19–3.45	0.780
Latrine at home						
Latrine available in the home	1.00					
Shares with neighbors/no latrine	1.01	0.41–2.48	0.991			
Type of latrine						
Water-sealed latrine	1.00					
Pit latrine or other	0.56	0.19–1.67	0.300			
Source of daily-use water						
Tap water	1.00					
Other (river/well/rainwater)	2.59	1.09–6.13	0.031	2.17	0.80–5.85	0.127
Frequency of deworming						
Regular deworming medication	1.00					
No deworming medication	1.18	0.39–3.57	0.774			

**Abbreviations:** OR, odds ratio; CI, confidence interval.

whether there is an association between *O. viverrini* infection in children and the consumption frequency of raw fish prepared by parents or guardians. Fourth, our study was conducted in 2013; therefore, some variables might not

indicate the present situation, especially parents' occupation and hygienic and sanitary facilities at home, owing to rapid economic development in Laos. Further evaluation is needed in future studies.

## Conclusions

This study highlights that *O. viverrini* and hookworm infection are prevalent among secondary school students in Vientiane city. Improving primary school health programs is effective in reducing the risk of hookworm infection among secondary students, although sociodemographic factors have an influence on both infections. *O. viverrini* infection is associated with mothers having an occupation with regular income, which is a factor associated with lower risk. Hookworm infection is associated with age and father's occupation. Older students have greater infection risk, and students whose father is employed and has regular income have lower risk. Current primary school health programs may be insufficient to reduce *O. viverrini* infections, and different approaches may be needed, such as encouraging mothers to seek jobs that provide regular income for their family.

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful to all participants. Our sincere thanks go to the staff at the National Institute of Tropical and Public Health Lao PDR for their support and fieldwork assistance. We also thank Analisa Avila, ELS, of Edanz Group ([www.edanzediting.com/ac](http://www.edanzediting.com/ac)) for editing a draft of this manuscript. This work was supported by a research grant from Tenri Health Care University in 2014.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

## References

1. Forrer A, Sayasone S, Vounatsou P, et al. Spatial Distribution of, and Risk Factors for, *Opisthorchis viverrini* Infection in Southern Lao PDR. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis*. 2012;6(2):e1481. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001481
2. Phongluxa K, Xayaseng V, Vonghachack Y, et al. Helminth infection in southern Laos: high prevalence and low awareness. *Parasit Vectors*. 2013;6:328. doi:10.1186/1756-3305-6-328
3. Eom KE, Young T, Sohn W, et al. Prevalence of helminthic infection among inhabitants of Lao PDR. *Korean J Parasitol*. 2014;52(1):51–56. doi:10.3347/kjp.2014.52.1.51
4. Conlan JV, Khamlome B, Vongxay K, et al. Soil-transmitted helminthiasis in Laos: a community-wide cross-sectional study of humans and dogs in a mass drug administration environment. *Am J Trop Med Hyg*. 2012;86(4):624–634. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.2012.11-0413
5. Hohmann H, Panzer S, Pimpachan C, et al. Relationship of intestinal parasites to the environment and to behavioral factors in children in the bolikhamxay province of Lao PDR. *Southeast Asian J Trop Med Public Health*. 2001;32:4–13.
6. Soukhathammavong PA, Sayasone S, Phongluxa K, et al. Low efficacy of single-dose albendazole and mebendazole against hookworm and effect on concomitant helminth infection in Lao PDR. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis*. 2012;6(1):e1417. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001417
7. Vonghachack Y, Odermatt P, Taisayavong K, et al. Transmission of opisthorchis v., schistosoma mekongi and soil-transmitted helminthes on the Mekong Islands, Southern Lao PDR. *Infect Dis Poverty*. 2017;6:131. doi:10.1186/s40249-017-0343-x
8. Sayasone S, Mak TK, Vanmany M, et al. Helminth and intestinal protozoa infections, multiparasitism and risk factors in Champasack Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis*. 2011;5(4):e1037. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0001370
9. Stephenson LS, Latham MC, Adams EJ, et al. Weight gain of Kenyan school children infected with Hookworm, *Trichuris trichura* and *Ascaris lumbricoides* is improved following once- or twice-yearly treatment with Albendazole. *J Nutr*. 1993;123:656–665. doi:10.1093/jn/123.4.656
10. Simeon DT, Grantham-McGregor SM, Callender JE, Wong MS. Treatment of *Trichuris trichura* infections improves growth, spelling scores and school attendance in some children. *J Nutr*. 1995;125:1875–1883. doi:10.1093/jn/125.7.1875
11. Eppig CE, Fincher CL, Thornhill RT. Parasite prevalence and the worldwide distribution of cognitive ability. In: Choffness ER, editor. *Causes and Impact of Neglected Tropical and Zoonotic Diseases: Opportunities for Integrated Intervention Strategies – Workshop Summary*. Washinton, DC: National Academic Press; 2010:155–172.
12. Ahmed A, Al-Mekhlafi HM, Al-Adhroey AH, et al. The nutritional impacts of soil-transmitted helminths infections among Orang Asli schoolchildren in rural Malaysia. *Parasit Vectors*. 2012;5:119–128. doi:10.1186/1756-3305-5-119
13. Peters W, Masvol G. *Tropical Medicine and Parasitology*. 5th ed. London: Mosby; 2002.
14. Sripa B, Bethony JM, Sithithaworm P, et al. Opisthorchiasis and Opisthorchis-associated cholangiocarcinoma in Thailand and Laos. *Acta Trop*. 2011;120(Suppl):S158–S168. doi:10.1016/j.actatropica.2010.07.006
15. World Health Organization. *Helminth Control in School-Age Children: A Guide for Managers of Control Programmes*. 2nd ed. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2011.
16. Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, in Lao PDR. *National School Health Policy*. Vientiane, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, Lao PDR; 2005.
17. Phoungkham S, Foung L, Khatthanaphone P. Lao PDR: strengthening the school health initiative. In: Whitman CV, Aldinger CE, editors. *Case Studies in Global School Health Promotion: From Research to Practice*. New York, NY: Springer; 2009:327–335.
18. World Health Organization. First mekong-plus programme, managers workshop on lymphatic filariasis and other helminthiasis; 2009. Available from: [http://www.wpro.who.int/inter-net/files/mvp/CambodiaLFNTD\\_report2.pdf](http://www.wpro.who.int/inter-net/files/mvp/CambodiaLFNTD_report2.pdf). Accessed August 15, 2018.
19. Lao Statics Bureau. Results of population and housing census; 2015. Available from: [https://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PHC-ENG-FNAL-WEB\\_0.pdf](https://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PHC-ENG-FNAL-WEB_0.pdf) Accessed March 15, 2019.
20. World Bank. World development indicators; 2016. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR?locations=LA>. Accessed August 15, 2018.
21. Yoshimura N, Jimba M, Poudel KC, et al. Health promoting school in urban, semi-urban and rural Lao PDR. *Health Promot Inte*. 2009;24(2):166–176. doi:10.1093/heapro/dap004
22. Sayasone S, Ordeat P, Phoumind N, et al. Epidemiology of opisthorchis viverrini in a rural district of southern Lao PDR. *Trans. R. Soc Trop Med Hyg*. 2007;101:40–47. doi:10.1016/j.trstmh.2006.02.018
23. Schar F, Ordeat P, Khieu V, et al. Evaluation of real-time PCR for *Strongyloides stercoralis* and hookworm as diagnostic tool in asymptomatic schoolchildren in Cambodia. *Acta Trop*. 2013;126(2):89–92. doi:10.1016/j.actatropica.2012.12.012

24. Moore CE, Chhat HP, Sona S, et al. Changing patterns of gastrointestinal parasite infections in cambodian children: 2006–2011. *J Trop Pediatr.* 2012;58(6):509–512. doi:10.1093/tropej/fms024
25. Hung BK, De NV, Duyet LV, Chai J. Prevalence of soil-transmitted helminths and molecular clarification of hookworm species in ethnic ebe primary schoolchildren in Dak Lak Province, Southern Vietnam. *Korean J Parasitol.* 2016;54(4):471–476. doi:10.3347/kjp.2016.54.4.471
26. Gier B, Nga TT, Winichagoon P, et al. Species-specific associations between soil-transmitted helminths and micronutrients in Vietnamese schoolchildren. *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2016;95(1):77–82. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.15-0533
27. Kitvatanachai S, Rhongbuttri P. Intestinal parasitic infections in suburban government schools, Lak Hok subdistrict, Muang Pathum Thani, Thailand. *Asian Pac J Trop Med.* 2013;6:99–702. doi:10.1016/S1995-7645(13)60121-2
28. Yong T, Shin E, Chai J, et al. High prevalence of *Opisthorchis viverrini* infection in a riparian population in Takeo Province, Cambodia. *Korean J Parasitol.* 2012;50(2):173–176. doi:10.3347/kjp.2012.50.2.173
29. Kaewpitoon SJ, Rujirakul R, Kaewpitoon N. Prevalence of *opisthorchis viverrini* infection in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, Northeast Thailand. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev.* 2012;13:5245–5249.
30. Kaewpitoon SJ, Kaewpitoon N, Rujirakul R, et al. The carcinogenic liver fluke *opisthorchis viverrini* among rural community people in Northeast Thailand: a cross-sectional descriptive study using multistage sampling technique. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev.* 2015;16:7803–7807.
31. Saathoff E, Olsen A, Kvalsvig JD, Appleton CC. Patterns of geohelminth infection, impact of albendazole treatment and re-infection after treatment in schoolchildren from rural Kwazulu-Natal/South-Africa. *BMC Infect Dis.* 2004;4:27. doi:10.1186/1471-2334-4-27
32. Cundill B, Alexander N, Bethony JM, et al. Rates and intensity of re-infection with human helminths after treatment and the influence of individual, household, and environmental factors in a Brazilian community. *Parasitology.* 2011;138:11. doi:10.1017/S0031182011001132
33. Yap P, Utzinger J, Hattendorf J, Steinmann P. Influence of nutrition on infection and re-infection with soil-transmitted helminths: a systematic review. *Parasit Vectors.* 2014;7:229. doi:10.1186/1756-3305-7-23
34. Moser W, Schindler C, Keiser J. Efficacy of recommended drugs against soil transmitted helminths: systematic review and network meta-analysis. *BMJ.* 2017;358:j4307. doi:10.1136/bmj.j4307
35. Yap P, Du ZW, Wu FW, et al. Rapid re-infection with soil-transmitted helminths after triple-dose albendazole treatment of school-aged children in Yunnan, People's Republic of China. *Am J Trop Med Hyg.* 2013;89(1):23–31. doi:10.4269/ajtmh.13-0009
36. World Health Organization. *Report of the WHO Expert Consultation on Food-Borne Trematode Infections and Taeniasis/Cysticercosis.* Vientiane: Lao People's Democratic Republic; 2009 October 12–16. Available from: [http://www.who.int/neglected\\_diseases/preventive\\_chemotherapy/WHO\\_HTM\\_NTD\\_PCT\\_2011.3.pdf](http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/preventive_chemotherapy/WHO_HTM_NTD_PCT_2011.3.pdf). Accessed August 15, 2018.
37. Phongluxa K, van Eeuwijk P, Soukhathammavong P, et al. Perceived illness drives participation in mass deworming campaigns in Laos. *Acta Trop.* 2015;141:281–288. doi:10.1016/j.actatropica.2014.03.022
38. Forrer A, Vounatsou P, Sayasone S, et al. Risk profiling of hookworm infection and intensity in Southern Lao People's Democratic Republic using bayesian models. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis.* 2015;9(3):e3486. doi:10.1371/journal.pntd.0003486
39. Ehrhardt AA, Sawires S, McGovern T, et al. Gender, empowerment, and health: what is it? How does it work? *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2009;51(Suppl 3):96–105. doi:10.1097/QAI.0b013e3181aafd54
40. Doepke M, Tertilt M. Does female empowerment promote economic development? Discussion paper series, Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit No. 5637; 2011. Available from: <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:101:1-201104134490>. Accessed August 15, 2018.

## Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine

### Publish your work in this journal

Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine is an international, peer-reviewed, open access journal publishing original research, case reports, editorials, reviews and commentaries on all areas of tropical medicine, including: Diseases and medicine in tropical regions; Entomology; Epidemiology; Health economics issues; Infectious disease; Laboratory science and new technology in tropical medicine;

Submit your manuscript here: <http://www.dovepress.com/research-and-reports-in-tropical-medicine-journal>

Dovepress

Parasitology; Public health medicine/health care policy in tropical regions; and Microbiology. The manuscript management system is completely online and includes a very quick and fair peer-review system. Visit <http://www.dovepress.com/testimonials.php> to read real quotes from published authors.