

Original Article

Mean Platelet Volume and Neutrophil-to-Lymphocyte Ratio in Pediatric Gastritis: Relation to Helicobacter pylori Infection

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Received: November 15 2025;
Accepted: January 5, 2026

Abstract

Background: *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is a primary contributor to chronic gastritis in children, leading to both local and systemic inflammatory responses. Although endoscopic and histopathologic evaluations are the diagnostic standards, they are invasive and costly. Recently, hematologic indices such as the neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio (NLR) and mean platelet volume (MPV) have been proposed as simple, accessible markers of systemic inflammation. However, previous studies assessing their association with *H. pylori* infection in pediatric gastritis have reported inconsistent findings. Therefore, the aim of this study was the assessment of MPV and NLR in pediatric gastritis and relation to helicobacter pylori Infection.

Materials and Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted on children aged 1–17 years with gastrointestinal symptoms were candidates for endoscopy at the Gastroenterology Clinic of Amirkola Children's Hospital. Gastric tissue samples were collected via biopsy and examined histopathologically, and *H. pylori* infection was confirmed using Giemsa staining. In addition, complete blood count (CBC) tests were performed for NLR and MPV measurements.

Results: The study included 126 children (mean age 10.03 ± 2.51 years). *H. pylori* infection was significantly associated with both endoscopic ($p = 0.001$) and histopathologic gastritis ($p = 0.011$). No significant differences were observed in NLR or MPV between *H. pylori*-positive and *H. pylori*-negative groups ($p = 0.990$ and $p = 0.459$, respectively). Similarly, NLR and MPV did not differ significantly according to the presence of histopathologic ($p = 0.874$ and $p = 0.891$, respectively) or endoscopic gastritis ($p = 0.667$ and $p = 0.103$).

Conclusion: *H. pylori* infection was significantly associated with endoscopic and histopathologic gastritis in children, highlighting its central role in pediatric gastritis. However, NLR and MPV showed no significant differences according to *H. pylori* infection or gastritis status, indicating limited diagnostic utility of these hematologic markers.

Keywords: Gastritis, *Helicobacter pylori*, Mean Platelet Volume, Neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio



Introduction

Gastritis refers to an inflammatory process affecting the gastric mucosal lining, leading to injury and disruption of the mucus-protective barrier (1, 2). The condition may develop acutely with sudden and severe manifestations or progress chronically over time. Although the etiology of gastritis remains unclear in many cases, infection with *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) is recognized as the most established and well-documented cause (3,4).

A variety of factors have been associated with the onset of gastritis, including excessive gastric acid secretion, autoimmune reactions, parasitic and viral infections, granulomatous disorders such as Crohn's disease and sarcoidosis, mechanical trauma, malnutrition, prolonged use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and *H. pylori* infection itself (4).

Among these causes, *H. pylori* remains the predominant agent worldwide and plays a key role in the development of chronic gastritis, gastroduodenal ulcers, and gastric cancer (5, 6). In developing countries, up to 80% of children are infected, whereas infection rates are much lower in industrialized regions (7, 8). The prevalence is particularly high among low socioeconomic groups and in areas with poor hygiene and household crowding (9). *H. pylori* is a Gram-negative, microaerophilic bacterium that inhabits the gastric antrum and elicits both local and systemic inflammatory responses characterized by infiltration of neutrophils, macrophages, and lymphocytes into the mucosa (10-12).

This cellular infiltration and the associated cytokine release promote chronic mucosal inflammation and tissue injury. The severity of histopathologic changes tends to vary by age, and *H. pylori*-associated gastritis in children is generally milder than in adults (10-14).

In recent years, hematologic indices have gained attention as markers of systemic inflammation. The neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio (NLR) and mean platelet volume (MPV) are inexpensive, easily obtainable indicators reflecting immune activation and inflammatory status (1,9,10). NLR represents the balance

between neutrophil-driven inflammation and lymphocyte-mediated regulation, whereas MPV reflects platelet size and activation, which increase during inflammatory responses.

Given that both NLR and MPV reflect systemic inflammatory activity, evaluating their association with *H. pylori* infection and histopathologic gastritis may provide valuable insights into the inflammatory burden and immune response patterns in affected children.

Material and Methods

Type of Study

This cross-sectional study was conducted in 2021 to investigate *Helicobacter pylori*-associated gastritis in children aged 1–17 years presenting with chronic abdominal pain. Participants were referred to the Gastroenterology Clinic of Amirkola Children's Hospital.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligible children exhibited persistent gastrointestinal symptoms suggestive of *H. pylori* infection, including abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and heartburn, lasting for at least two months. Written parental consent was obtained prior to enrollment.

Exclusion criteria included

- History of hematologic disorders (e.g., thrombocytopenia, leukemia, lymphoma, autoimmune destruction of red blood cells, or thalassemia)
- Parasitic or other infections
- Exposure to caustic substances
- Concurrent infection within the preceding two to three weeks
- Incomplete medical records

Sample Size and Sampling Method

Using standard formulas for diagnostic studies (15), as defined by the study objectives and previously reported 93% sensitivity, sample size was calculated (16). Assuming a 95% confidence level, a 20% expected prevalence of gastritis among children, and a 0.10 margin of error, the study required at least 126 patients. Participants were selected through a non-probability convenience sampling approach.

Data Collection

Chronic abdominal pain was defined as a minimum of three episodes interfering with daily activities and persisting for one month or longer, suggestive of *H. pylori*-related gastritis (17). All eligible children underwent detailed history taking and physical examination by a pediatric gastroenterologist. Children presenting with alarm features—such as dysphagia, odynophagia, weight loss, anorexia, anemia, or persistent abdominal pain—were further evaluated for possible peptic disease. Persistent symptoms that resulted in school absence or hospitalization also prompted diagnostic testing, including Complete Blood Count (CBC) and upper endoscopy (18).

Hematological Assessment

Hematological evaluation was done on fasting blood from each child in a seated position by a trained laboratory technician. Blood samples were collected in EDTA-containing tubes, gently mixed, and analyzed using an automated cell counter (Sysmex K-1000 Hematology Analyzer) to determine the neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio (NLR) and other hematological indices.

Endoscopic Procedure

All patients underwent diagnostic upper endoscopy following 6–8 hours of fasting. An intravenous line was established, and sedation was administered using ketamine and propofol according to body weight. Endoscopic examinations were performed using an Olympus GIF-30.

gastroscope (Japan) by two experienced gastroenterologists in agreement. Endoscopic findings indicative of *H. pylori* infection included erythema, mucosal erosions, loss of rugal folds, visible vessels, diffuse nodularity, and superficial or deep gastric ulcers (19, 20).

Biopsy and Histopathological Evaluation

During each endoscopic procedure, three biopsy samples were collected from the esophagus, gastric antrum, and duodenum. The specimens were preserved in 10% formalin and sent to the laboratory for histopathological

analysis. Gastritis was confirmed based on histologic features, including glandular atrophy, granulomatous inflammation, eosinophilic or lymphocytic infiltration, and metaplasia. Antral biopsies were additionally stained with Giemsa to detect *H. pylori*, which appeared as spiral-shaped bacteria under microscopy (21).

Statistical analysis

The data were entered into SPSS (version 23). Non-parametric tests such as the Mann-Whitney U test were used due to the data failing to conform to the normality assumptions underlying parametric methods. In addition, Chi-Square test was also used. P-value <0.05 was assumed significant.

Results

A total of 126 participants were included. The mean age of the children was 10.03 ± 2.51 years, and 67 (53.2%) of them were boys.

Gastritis was diagnosed histopathologically in 42 patients (33.3%), endoscopically in 85 patients (67.5%), and *Helicobacter pylori* infection was detected in 58 patients (46%).

Table I presents the comparison of NLR and MPV between H. pylori-positive and H. pylori-negative patients.

Table I: Clinical and laboratory features of patients with ALL

Variables	H-pylori	Number	Median (IQR)	Mean Rank	U	Z	P-value*
NLR	Negative	68	1.37(1.45)	63.54	1969.500	-.012	0.990
	Positive	58	1.45 (1.40)	63.46			
MPV	Negative	68	8.85 (1.2)	65.72	1821.000	-.740	0.459
	Positive	58	8.6 (0.8)	60.90			

*Mann-Whitney Test

For NLR, the mean rank was 63.54 in the H. pylori-negative group and 63.46 in the positive group, with no statistically significant difference between the two groups ($U = 1969.500$, $Z = -0.012$, $p = 0.990$).

Similarly, for MPV, the mean rank in the H. pylori-negative group (65.72) was higher than that in the positive group (60.90), but this difference was not statistically significant ($U = 1821.000$, $Z = -0.740$, $p = 0.459$).

Therefore, there was no significant difference in NLR or MPV levels between H. pylori-positive and negative individuals.

Table II presents the comparison of NLR and MPV between patients with and without endoscopic evidence of gastritis.

Table II: Comparison between NLR and MPV in patients with and without endoscopic evidence of gastritis

Variables	Gastritis. endoscopy	Number	Median (IQR)	Mean Rank	U	Z	P-value*
NLR	Negative	41	1.4 (1.25)	61.49	1660.000	-.430	0.667
	Positive	85	1.4 (1.6)	64.47			
MPV	Negative	41	8.6 (0.9)	55.88	1430.000	.103	0.103
	Positive	85	8.9 (1.3)	67.18			

*Mann-Whitney Test

No significant difference in the mean rank of NLR or MPV was seen between patients with and without endoscopic gastritis ($p > 0.05$). Although the gastritis-positive group had higher mean ranks for both variables, these differences were not statistically significant (Table II).

Table III presents the comparison of NLR and MPV between patients with and without pathological evidence of gastritis

Table III: Comparison of NLR and MPV between patients with and without pathological evidence of gastritis

Variables	Pathological gastritis	Number	Median (IQR)	Mean Rank	U	Z	P-value*
NLR	Negative	84	1.4 (1.3)	63.86	1733.500	-.158	0.874
	Positive	42	1.25 (1.6)	62.77			
MPV	Negative	84	8.8 (1)	63.82	1737.500	-.137	0.891
	Positive	42	8.6 (1.4)	62.87			

*Mann-Whitney Test

According to these findings, there were no significant differences in the mean rank of NLR or MPV values between patients with and

without pathological evidence of gastritis ($p > 0.05$). The mean ranks were similar across groups, indicating that gastritis status based on pathology did not influence NLR or MPV levels (Table III).

Table IV: Association between *H. pylori* infection and endoscopic or pathological findings of gastritis

Variables	H pylori Number		Total Number	P-value*
	No	Yes		
Gastritis. Endoscopy				
No	31	10	41	0.001
Yes	37	48	85	
Gastritis. Histopathology				
No	52	32	84	0.011
Yes	16	26	42	

* Chi-square test

A significant association was observed between *H. pylori* infection and endoscopic evidence of gastritis ($p = 0.001$). Similarly, there was a significant relationship between *H. pylori* infection and pathological gastritis ($p = 0.011$). These results indicate that gastritis, both endoscopic and histopathologic, was significantly more frequent among *H. pylori*-positive patients (Table IV).

Table V: Frequency of symptoms 7 and 30 days before in the studied children

Variables		Before 7 days		Before 30 days	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Vomiting	Yes	114	90.5	106	84.1
	No	12	9.5	20	15.9
Regurgitation	Yes	55	43.7	79	62.7
	No	71	56.3	47	37.3
Chest pain	Yes	62	49.2	77	61.1
	No	64	50.8	49	38.9
Epigastric pain	Yes	98	77.8	94	74.6
	No	28	22.2	32	25.4
Swallowing disorder	Yes	25	19.8	40	31.7
	No	101	80.2	86	68.3
Nausea	Yes	95	75.4	95	75.4
	No	31	24.6	28	22.2
Belching	Yes	48	38.1	66	52.4
	No	78	61.9	60.0	47.6
Return of food into the mouth	Yes	29	23.0	52	41.3
	No	97	77.0	74	58.7
Epigastria pain after eating	Yes	109	86.5	111	88.1
	No	17	13.5	15	11.9

In some cases, data were missing (Table V). In terms of the severity classification of gastritis in 58 children with *H. pylori* positive, 50 children (86.2%) had mild gastritis, 4 children (6.9%) had moderate gastritis, and 4 children (6.9%) had severe gastritis.

Discussion

In our study, we found no significant difference in NLR values between *H. pylori*-positive and -negative groups. Similarly, Boyuk et al. reported that NLR measurements did not differ significantly between *H. pylori*-negative and -positive groups (22), aligning with our findings.

Similarly, Săsăran et al. reported that children with *H. pylori*-induced gastritis exhibited elevated PLR and NLR values; however, these increases were not statistically significant. They concluded that gastritis does not significantly influence MPV, PLR, or NLR, which is consistent with our findings (23).

They concluded that gastritis does not significantly influence MPV, PLR, or NLR, which is consistent with our findings.” In the study by Melit et al., which examined NLR in children with *H. pylori*-associated gastritis, a slight but statistically insignificant increase in NLR was observed—again consistent with our findings (24).

In the present study, there was no significant difference in MPV values between *H. pylori*-positive and -negative groups. This suggests that platelet activation, reflected by MPV, may not be directly influenced by the presence of *H. pylori* infection in children with gastritis. Our results are consistent with those of Ozgur Yeniova et al. (25) and Sahin et al. (26), who also found no significant correlation between MPV and *H. pylori*-related gastritis.

Taken together, these findings suggest that systemic inflammatory markers such as NLR and platelet indices like MPV may not reliably reflect the local gastric inflammation caused by *H. pylori* in pediatric patients. It is possible that the inflammatory response to *H. pylori* infection in children is more localized and less likely to trigger systemic hematological changes detectable in peripheral blood.

We also did not find any relationship between NLR and MPV in children with gastritis. This suggests that variations in the inflammatory response reflected by NLR are not associated with changes in MPV in this population. In

contrast, Wu et al. reported that NLR and PLR levels were significantly increased, whereas MPV values were decreased in patients with gout compared with healthy controls (27). This discrepancy may indicate that the relationship between systemic inflammation and platelet indices differs depending on the underlying disease and its inflammatory characteristics.

Our findings showed that *H. pylori* infection was significantly associated with both endoscopic and histopathologic gastritis, indicating that the presence of the bacterium contributes to both visible mucosal changes and microscopic inflammatory alterations. Similarly, Dosma et al. reported a significant relationship between *H. pylori* infection and histopathological parameters, including acute and chronic inflammatory cell infiltration, suggesting that *H. pylori* plays a direct role in triggering and sustaining gastric mucosal inflammation. Moreover, they observed that bacterial load correlated with the severity of inflammation ($p < 0.001$), supporting the concept that higher levels of colonization intensify the host's inflammatory response (28).

This concordance reinforces the pathogenic role of *H. pylori* in inducing both macroscopic and microscopic gastric mucosal injury and highlights the importance of bacterial density as a determinant of inflammatory severity.

The limitations of this study include the lack of follow-up of the children after *H. pylori* treatment. Additionally, the study was conducted in a single-center, cross-sectional study. Furthermore, another limitation of this study is the lack of multivariate analysis. Factors such as age, sex, and gastritis severity could affect hematologic indices, but the sample size was insufficient for reliable regression modeling. Further research with larger sample sizes is recommended to control for these confounders.

Conclusion

Although *Helicobacter pylori* infection was significantly associated with both endoscopic and histopathologic gastritis, no statistically significant relationship was found between inflammatory hematologic indices—including NLR and MPV—

and the presence of *H. pylori* infection or gastritis in pediatric patients. These findings suggest that, unlike in some adult populations, systemic inflammatory markers such as NLR and MPV may not reliably reflect the local gastric inflammatory response induced by *H. pylori* in children.

Therefore, while endoscopic and histopathologic assessments remain the gold standards for diagnosing *H. pylori*-related gastritis, NLR and MPV appear to have limited diagnostic or predictive value in this context. Further studies are recommended to explore whether other noninvasive biomarkers could more reliably indicate gastric inflammation in pediatric patients.

Availability of Data

The datasets analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethical Considerations

This study received approval from the Ethics Committee of Babol University of Medical Sciences under the code MUBABOL.HRI.REC.1402.043

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Clinical Research Development Unit of Amirkola Children's Hospital, the Research Council and Non communicable Pediatric Diseases Research Center, Health Research Institute of Babol University of Medical Sciences and Neonatal and NICU ward for their support and cooperation with study.

Authors' Contributions

SM and MED oversaw the study process. HN, ME and MN conducted the data analysis and HMN and MP developed the manuscript. All the authors reviewed the final manuscript and approved it for submission.

Funding

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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