

**OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY PATTERNS
AMONG GRADE 10 STUDENTS
IN THE *MENIKHINNA* MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH AREA**

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In Sri Lanka, the prevalence of overweight and obesity has also been increasing, mirroring global trends. Urbanization, changes in dietary habits, and reduced physical activity levels contribute to this phenomenon. According to national surveys, the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adolescents in Sri Lanka has risen alarmingly over the past decade. This poses significant challenges for the country's healthcare system and public health initiatives. In that context, this study seeks to understand the contemporary patterns of overweight and obesity among Grade 10 students in the *Menikhinna* Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area. The study adopted a qualitative methodology using secondary data from 2019 to 2023 gathered through the electronic Reproductive Health Management Information System (eRHMS) and a web-based data system managed by the Family Health Bureau under the Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka. The results reveal varying prevalence rates across different schools (government-private and Sinhala-Tamil) within the area. Although the *Menikhinna* MOH area is considered rural, 20 schools in this area indicate a considerably higher risk for overweight and obesity. Both male and female students in Grade 10 show a significant prevalence of overweight (" \bar{x} " 7.38%) and obesity (" \bar{x} " 3.51%) in *Menikhinna* MOH area. Hence, this study concludes that ethnicity and gender do not affect overweight and obesity primarily, but the dietary practices and lack of physical activities do. Further, the research implemented four comprehensive awareness programs promoting nutrition and physical activity across four selected schools: Pilawala Maha Vidyalaya, Kandy Model College, Loyal Ladies Muslim Girls College, and Walala A. Rathnayake Central College for Grade 10 students, along with a Training of Trainers (TOT) program for teachers to support sustainable health-promoting behaviors.

Keywords: Obesity, overweight, *Menikkinna* MOH, dietary practices, physical activities