

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Background:**

Children's food preference is established in early childhood. If not intervened, unhealthy food practices acquired at this stage leads to childhood obesity and adverse health outcomes such as non-communicable diseases in adulthood. Ultra-processed food, known to be energy rich and low in nutritional quality is globally identified as a common "unhealthy food" consumed in childhood. However, limited research has been done in Sri Lanka on the prevalence of ultra-processed food consumption among pre-school children and its associated factors, generating an evidence gap for action.

### **Objective:**

To describe the prevalence and patterns of ultra- processed food consumption and factors associated among preschool children living in Gampaha Medical Officer of Health Area

### **Methods:**

This study will be conducted as a community based cross-sectional study among preschool children attending child welfare clinics in Gampaha Medical Officer of Health area. A multi stage sampling method combining simple random and cluster sampling will be used to recruit a total number of 489 children aged between three to five years. Data will be collected from mothers of preschool children by a trained interviewer using a pre-tested and validated questionnaire. In data analysis SPSS version 21 will be used. Level of ultra- processed food consumption will be measured by a scoring system according to the frequency of weekly ultra-processed food intake. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the patterns and either Student's Independent t test or ANOVA test will be performed to analyse factors associated.

### **Potential Impact:**

This study aims to determine the prevalence of ultra- processed food consumption among preschool children living in Gampaha Medical Officer of Health area. The researchers also aim to find out the association between mother's education level, family income, television advertisements, mother's employment status and children's ultra- processed food consumption.

The study findings will further contribute to the existing knowledge and it will be useful in formulating health policies, developing health promotion interventions and dietary guidelines for preschool children.

**Keywords:** Prevalence, ultra-processed food, preschool children