Nutritional Status and Dietary Patterns among Hospitality Industry Employees in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of an Internationally Affiliated Hotel and a Resort

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The hospitality industry significantly contributes to a nation's economy and the employee well-being is vital to sustaining the industry's reputation and growth. However, there are limited evidence related to the nutritional status and diet of Sri Lankan hospitality industry employees. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the nutritional status and dietary patterns among employees in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry, examining the factors associated with the risk of overweight/obesity. A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among 240 hospitality industry employees working full-time at a Resort in Beruwala, and a hotel in Colombo, using convenience sampling. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect socio-demographic data, dietary habits, lifestyle factors and health status. Nutritional status was assessed using body mass index (BMI), waist-to-hip ratio, waist circumference, hip circumference, and body fat percentage. Dietary intake was assessed using a validated Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ) and cafeteria menu reviews. Majority of the participants in the sample were males working in the food and beverage preparation department with a monthly income of Rs 50,000 – 75,000. The mean age was 38±11 years, and the mean BMI was 24.07±4.51 kg/m^2, with 58% in the overweight/obesity category. The mean body fat percentage, waist circumference, and waist to hip ratio were 25.76±9.43%, 85.68±11.33 cm, and 0.89±0.09, respectively, indicating a considerable risk of central adiposity. Further, participants were classified into the moderate healthy food consumption category. A significant proportion of participants reported smoking and alcohol consumption, with 30% engaging in physical activity. Menu assessment revealed lower fruit and vegetable servings, frequent sugary foods, and high-oil content in meals as potential issues. Correlation analysis revealed that lower physical activity and fruit consumption to be significantly associated with a higher BMI ($p < 0.05$) while meal skipping, and having hypertension was significantly associated with the risk overweight/obesity ($p < 0.05$). Further, employees with higher income and those with hypertension had greater odds of having central obesity ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, the study provided evidence of higher prevalence of overweight/obesity among participants, indicating the need for changes in the cafeteria menus and long-term interventions to help employees maintain a healthier body weight.

Keywords: hospitality industry, nutritional status, dietary patterns, overweight