

THEME 04:
IMPLICATIONS OF SCIENCE AND
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INEQUALITY

High Malnutrition Rate among Young Women Working in Wearing Apparel Industry; Impact of Food Consumption and Life Style

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Female contribution in labor force of Sri Lankan wearing apparel industry has been noteworthy during the last two decades. Proper nutrition at young age of women determines healthy pregnancy and the risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in later life.

This study was aimed to assess the nutritional status, and food consumption and behavioural factors of young women working at wearing apparel manufacturing factories. A random sample of 340 participants age ranging 18 – 30 y were included. A self-administered structured questionnaire, qualitative food frequency questionnaire and physical activity records were used to collect information. Anthropometric measurements, namely, height, weight, triceps skin fold thickness and waist circumference (WC) were obtained to assess the nutritional status.

Sixty three percent of the participants were malnourished. Body fat levels had a positive correlation with body mass index. Age, marital state, snacks consumption and special dietary practices were significantly associated with nutritional status. Unmarried women were more likely to be underweight and be in the normal BMI category than those of married women who were obese. A significant proportion (58%) of participants had sedentary lifestyle. Only 19% were consuming fruits at least once a day. Underweight women were less likely to follow special dietary practices and more likely to consume snacks compared to obese participants. The findings of the study showed that underweight was a severe problem than overweight or obesity prevalence. Participants consumed fast foods or bakery products as snacks, which may lead to low fruit consumption.

High proportion of young working women in wearing apparel industry has under nutrition as well as over nutrition problems due to improper food consumption and physical activity behaviour. Therefore, awareness and interventional programs are necessary to improve the nutritional status of this important segment of the labour force in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Body mass index, Obese, Sedentary lifestyle, Underweight*