



An Exploratory Study on Career Challenges of Spa Therapists in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Spa in Sri Lanka provides a rejuvenating experience for anyone looking to unwind from the stresses of everyday life or find relief from the pain of a severe illness. Professional spa therapists play a significant role in the Sri Lankan spa industry. They should work in various settings, specialising in knowledge concerning specific client populations, and learn multiple massage and spa bodywork systems that approach the body and healing from new perspectives; therefore, many professional therapists face various challenges. This exploratory study aimed to explore career challenges faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka. According to the survey, We were able to locate eight spa therapists working in an SLDTA-registered spa in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used together to find information-rich cases. The thematic analysis has been used to analyse the data. According to the findings, different types of inherent and extrinsic challenges exist. These challenges include social, guest-related, health-related, workplace-place-related, economic, and regulatory-related. In addition, we were able to capture the response of Spa therapists to those challenges. The implications of this research would help understand the typical career challenges of Spa therapists and help the vocational training sector and industry regulators to develop measures to advance career development and establish the reputation of the occupation of the Spa therapist in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Spa Therapists, Career Challenges, SLDTA, Professional, Sri Lanka

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka's wellness industry encompasses not only the wellness tourism sector, which is expanding at a rate of more than 10% per year, but fitness, mind-body medicine, preventative medicine, healthy eating, and weight loss are all powerful industries and wellness tourism is growing at roughly twice the rate of the overall tourism industry (Linser, 2019). The Sri Lanka Export Development Board (2018) focuses on providing international travellers with services that promote mental and physical well-being. Due to the use of the spa for this, there may be a massive demand for the spa industry in the future. Physicians, Ayurvedic doctors, massage therapists, yoga instructors, spiritual leaders, life coaches, counsellors, cosmetic surgeons, dermatologists, cosmetologists, and others work in the spa industry (Capellini, 2010). Spa therapists provide spa treatments and procedures such as massage, body scrubs, body wraps, and therapeutic baths in a spa setting such as a day spa, resort spa, or medical spa (Yanthy et al., 2015). A career in the spa allows for constant growth because spa therapists can work in various environments, specialise in knowledge related to specific populations of clients, and learn a variety of massage and spa bodywork systems that approach the body and healing from new perspectives. (Williams, 2007).

Other sorts of sexual harassment lawsuits exist, however, such as when clients are accused of making unwanted advances toward the therapist (Buchner et al., 2008). According to Aravinda (2010), most service providers are sweatshops that exploit women with inadequate massage skills and are licenced as Ayurvedic spas. These have a massive social impact on the job image of the spa therapist, who is legally and professionally employed. Because special services are considered unlawful, they are vulnerable to police raids, exploitation, extortion, and human trafficking. On the other hand, clients seek out treatments unrelated to traditional massages for various reasons.

In a developing spa industry in Sri Lanka, well-being and wellness have recorded growth as essential to the tourism industry's well-being. In addition, spa therapists are vital to providing holistic care to foreign and domestic clients; hence, these therapists become a critical asset in the wellness industry. Although the industry has developed, there needs to be a more apparent theoretical gap regarding the professional growth of spa therapists in Sri Lanka. Several sociological and psychological variables, such as gender, socioeconomic background, and preferences, influence work motivations,

according to Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. Then, the theoretical gap and its practical application on the career paths and challenges Sri Lankan spa therapists face. Although a new trend called spa therapy has become popular in Sri Lanka, information regarding cultural and societal aspects has influenced job opportunities. Most of the existing literature focuses on problems of Western societies and is therefore unsuitable for describing unique issues faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka. Thus, Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise merits scrutiny.

The primary goals of this study are to identify the career challenges that spa therapists face in Sri Lanka and the responses that spa therapists identify to those challenges. Furthermore, this study found that career spa therapists have a successful career path, and Sri Lankan professional therapists earn a good salary and work in a pleasant social environment. Spa therapists have a negative image in society in Sri Lanka, resulting in many professional therapists facing numerous challenges.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spas sprung up all over Europe and beyond as the Roman Empire grew, and they became places to socialise, relax, and receive medical care (Koncul, 2012). Spa tourism is all about healthcare and relaxation; it entails travelling to various spa destinations to improve an individual's health and well-being (Koskinen, 2019). As a result, spa therapists play an essential role in the industry. Many spa therapists work relatively independently with a consistent group of clients, and it is critical to maintain good relationships with those clients through exemplary business practices (Capellini, 2010). Many countries have specific licensing requirements for therapists, necessitating accredited spa, beauty, massage, or other health practitioner education for new employees. These graduates can work as junior or assistant spa therapists (Koncul, 2012). Junior therapists may attend additional treatment and product training, take on a more senior role, and eventually advance to senior therapist and therapy supervisor positions as they gain confidence in delivering treatments by the spa's standards and style (Buchner et al., 2008).

Spa Therapist Career Challenges

Spa therapists must maintain impeccable personal hygiene. Cleaning one's body and hair, wearing clean, appropriate clothing, removing jewellery, properly washing one's hands, and dealing with issues such as smoking and illness are all part of it (Rahman, 2022). Beauty, massage, and complementary therapies are available, including traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda, naturopathy, and other forms of conventional medicine, as well as yoga, taichi, Pilates, and holistic practices (Koskinen, 2019). Therapists who perspire profusely while performing spa treatments can prevent sweat droplets from falling onto the client by wearing sweatbands on their forehead and wrist. A clean towel can absorb perspiration throughout the session (Capellini, 2010). Because the therapist can work in various environments, specialise in knowledge related to specific populations of clients, and learn multiple massage and spa bodywork systems that approach the body and healing from new perspectives, a career in the spa allows for constant growth. Many therapists also pursue education and certification in fitness training, aesthetics, yoga instruction, and nail technology. As a result of dealing with customers directly and their services significantly impacting the human mind and body, spa therapists face various career challenges (Williams, 2007).

Two significant challenges confront spa therapists in particular. Spa therapists face unique challenges for two primary reasons: client safety and their safety. Fainting, heart attacks, slips, falls, drowning, burns, and scalds are examples of client injuries. Sexual harassment frequently arises when a spa therapist is accused of harassing a client (Linser, 2019). There are other types of sexual harassment cases, such as clients being accused of making inappropriate advances toward therapists and one employee accusing another of harassment. Sexual assault is a sensitive subject for therapists and their clients (Richard et al., 2020). Never engage in sexual relations with a client, inside or outside the treatment room. This sexual relation includes touching the

client's genitals, breasts, mouth, or anus with the hands, body, mouth, or genitals; allowing the client to feel the therapist; or allowing or encouraging the client to touch themselves or masturbate during or immediately after the session in the treatment room (Craig, 2018). Sexual exploitation occurs when the therapist masturbates or sexually touches themselves in front of the client. Sexual impropriety can lead to sexual harassment charges and the loss of massage certification. Sexual abuse can lead to losing massage certification, personal injury lawsuits, criminal charges, fines, attorney's fees, court costs, and jail time (Buchner et al., 2008).

Mitigating Challenges Encountered by Spa Therapists

In a safe environment, injury or harm is unlikely to occur. Conditions that could cause injury have been eliminated in such an environment. Procedures are put in place to increase security, and plans are made to deal with any accidents that may occur. The safety plan should include guidelines for ensuring the safety of both clients and therapists (Constant et al., 1995). Concern about client safety: Stay current on first aid to ensure the client's safety. Each treatment room should have a first-aid kit and hydrocortisone cream to treat skin reactions to spa products (Yanthy et al., 2015). Only administer a spa treatment after first taking a thorough medical history. If a therapist suspects a spa treatment is inappropriate for a specific client, avoid caution, contact the client's physician, or postpone the treatment (Craig, 2018). Therapists will also come into contact with harsh cleaning products; therefore, they should wear heavy gloves, a face mask, and protective eyewear to protect their eyes, respiratory system, and skin.

Therapists who care for themselves are less likely to be injured or ill while working as spa therapists. Nutrition, sleep, exercise, stress-reduction activities, and good body mechanics contribute to professional health and longevity (Williams, 2007). Sexual harassment is more effective for a

therapist's career, particularly spa therapists' commitment to personal and professional boundaries. This harm creates separation or a border between people and the environment. Learning how to assert and maintain one's boundaries while respecting the boundaries of others is essential to developing a healthy therapeutic relationship (Forestier et al., 2016). The therapist will refrain from and prevent sexual behaviours in massage practice and uphold the highest professional standards (Sukenik et al., 1999). Sexual impropriety may result in sexual harassment charges, loss of massage therapist credentials, personal injury lawsuits, criminal charges, fines, attorney's fees, court costs, and jail time (Richard et al., 2020).

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise

One famous framework in the field of career development is Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise. This theory argues that individuals cut down on professions they are willing to work in according to sociological and psychological factors such as socio-economic, gender class, and personal likes (Gottfredson, 1981). In particular, the concept of self-interest is frequently used in Western societies to explain how people decide on their careers and jobs. Application of Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise in non-western cultural and vocational settings appears to be very scarce among literary sources, and one could be surprised. In particular, this theory is separate from any research that addresses the impact of such issues on spa therapists in Sri Lanka, a specific country with unique social features and socio-economic status. The spa and wellness industry of the country that attracted foreign workers has grown, creating a new category of spa workers crucial to this trade. Nonetheless, the sociocultural variables that impact employment decision-making and the problems faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka have yet to be well known. Much of the currently available information is directed towards Western contexts, and, as a result, it may need to provide

adequate insight. However, a theoretically rich area for future research is the gap where Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise can be applied to spa therapists in Sri Lanka. Knowing how Sri Lankan cultural and societal factors influence the decisions of spa therapists regarding their profession will aid in understanding the problems they face and the strategies they apply to address them.

METHODOLOGY

Based on a social constructivist worldview, this qualitative study investigated the professional challenges faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka and the responses of therapists in SLDTA-registered spas in the Colombo district. Data was gathered through eight semi-structured interviews, four conducted face-to-face, and the remaining interviews were worked over the phone with spa therapists (five male and three female); once data saturation was reached, the number of interviews was reduced to eight. The techniques of purposive and snowball sampling are used. Sampling Method To begin, a purposive sampling method was used to find four respondents, which aided in connecting with them. Through the first respondent, we were able to find four additional respondents. Interviews were conducted in Sinhala by us. With the permission of the research participants, the discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Semi-structured interviews have been selected as the data collection method because they are aligned with the study's main two objectives. According to Liamputtong (2008), we conducted interviews in the Sinhala language and translated the interviews conducted in Sinhala into English when transcribing. The length of the interviews ranges between 30 and 40 minutes on average. The six-step approach of Braun and Clarke (2014) was used to analyse the data thematically. We generated the initial open codes based on the transcripts, which were collated into broader categories and themes. As a result,

we used thematic analysis to gain a thorough understanding of the collected data through reasoning.

According to Mason & Francis (2022), thematic analysis is easy to use, making it ideal for novice researchers unfamiliar with more complex types of qualitative analysis. It is well suited for early career researchers who find other types of qualitative analysis complex to learn. Triangulation and in-person and phone-administered semi-structured interviews improved the study's credibility. Snowball and purposive sampling techniques enabled access to different perspectives. Before publishing them, results were made accessible to participants for validation or verification purposes. In addition, digital recording and verbatim interview transcription were also employed to cut down on confusion and improve the study's internal validity. To ensure credibility, we adopted a uniform data collection method for interviews in Sinhala. This method minimised variations due to language differences. We used thematic analysis as a structured and transparent method of achieving naming categories, coding, and producing themes. The study was considered sufficiently reliable when it eventually became impossible to gather additional substantially different information; therefore, data saturation was ended.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent and Themes

Spa therapists were provided with data related to covering the main research objectives. Eight therapists provided data via face-to-face interviews and telephone call interviews. The respondents were the Colombo district SLDTA representatives, who resisted the spa. Before conducting the interview, we tried to build a connection with them because we thought it was better to get high productivity. We found the first four respondents using purposive sampling techniques. We could discover four respondents via snowball sampling.

Table 1: Respondent Profile

Respondents	Age	Gender	Experience (in years)
01	42	Male	15
02	28	Female	04
03	29	Male	11
04	34	Female	13
05	36	Male	10
06	27	Male	08
07	44	Female	20
08	39	Male	13

Source: Authors' own

The respondents are divided into various age groups. The oldest therapist on the respondent's list is 42 years old, and the youngest therapist is 27 years old. They have different experiences depending on their age. The respondent has 15 years of experience in the field, with a minimum of 5 years. Using the collected data, researchers developed themes, categories, subcategories, and children's codes following the study's objectives.

Career challenges faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka.

The first theme of the study addresses the career challenges faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka. The eight respondents described different and similar challenges they face in their jobs. We have identified two main challenges. Challenges were both inherent and extrinsic challenges. Under the inherent challenges, we have placed the main three subcategories: Guest, health, and workplace-related challenges are those three subcategories. Under the extrinsic challenges, we have identified the main three subcategories, which are social, enforcement, and economic-related challenges.

Inherent Challenges

Inherent challenges are primarily impacted by continuing to work. Mainly, there are three challenges: guest-related, health-related, and working-

related.

Guest related challenges

Therapists have to deal with various guests, and they expect different things. Some therapists indicated that clients decide what to expect, and what guests are waiting for is determined by the guests themselves. For example, one respondent stated, “I gave a deep tissue massage to a guest, but the guest said that I was expecting that it was not a massage like this.” (Respondent 02; Personal Interview, 2022). Another respondent added, “I think another is the language problem” (Respondent 01; Personal Interview, 2022). Mainly, many therapists cannot speak fluent English, and usually, therapists have to deal with guests from different countries because they should know another language. For these reasons, many therapists face different types of challenges. Few female therapists indicated their experience of sexual harassment. Spa therapists are particularly vulnerable; they work in close quarters, alone, often touching half-dressed guests. Therefore, therapists can aim for accusations; for example, “Cross-gender attraction is the main reason for a problematic situation in the spa industry” (Respondent 05; Personal Interview, 2022), and the other is guest complaints. The reputation of the spa therapist job, as well as its existence of the job, is determined by the form of complaints. Guest complaints are the most affected career lives of spa therapists; some respondents mention, "Two years ago, a therapist worked in our spa . A guest referred to complain about his hygiene” (Respondent 04; Personal Interview, 2022).

Health-related challenges

One respondent indicated, “I have knee and back pain, and most therapists have finger and elbow problems. I think it is because we are standing together for a long time and overused hands that these problems have come”(Respondent 03; Personal Interview 2022). This quotation confirms that many therapists have to face this challenge. Many industry therapists' careers

are short due to health problems, and this challenge significantly affects their career lives. Knee pain is a common problem often caused by bad posture at work. As a result, many therapists have not wondered about poor posture, and sitting for too long can cause many knee pain problems. Elbow problems and finger problems are common diseases that come to a spa therapist. The massage is done by using the wrist. Doing this for a long time damages the cartilage around the wrist.

Working place-related challenges.

Particular spa therapists have to face many types of challenges at work. This type of challenge affected their careers. Stressful jobs, mental stress, loss of service charges, and deduction of salary are mainly affected by therapists. They must perform numerous treatments per day, and some respondents have been working for a long time without receiving a raise. This challenge is their professional challenge. Some of the responses gave facts about this. “Nowadays, we do not receive service charges and salary deductions, which are precious things to us furthermore, Sometimes we have to do five treatments a day. Some days, we are just tired for the day. We must work stressfully in those situations” (Respondent 06; Personal Interview, 2022).

Extrinsic Career Challenges

Spa therapists have to face three main types of extrinsic career challenges. Social-related challenges, enforcement, and economic-related challenges.

Social related challenges

One of the significant challenges currently confronting the professional spa industry is the low quality of the roadside. The quality of the treatments performed there could be better and more valuable. As a result, job image has

been significantly impacted in recent years. Sri Lanka's illegal spas have caused a misunderstanding of what professional therapists do and what a spa is, leading to family problems and misunderstandings. For example, one respondent stated, "I would say that spas should be professional. Really, the 1,000 to 2,000 rupees that went by the side of the road should be eliminated instead of going to 2,000. The value should be given" (Respondent 08; Personal Interview, 2022).

Enforcement related challenges

Enforcement-related challenges are one of the main categories we have identified under the central theme of career challenges. Some respondents have indicated the absence of a registration procedure for spa therapists. According to some therapists' ideas, there is no legal background, and there has not been a process to register as a spa therapist in Sri Lanka; therefore, there is a risk to the safety of the career. One respondent, for example, stated, "There is no legal process to register as a spa therapist in Sri Lanka" (Respondent 08; Personal Interview, 2022). Any other obstacle, the respondent indicated, "Currently, there is no place for us to get a valuable certificate. It would be better if it were like the NVQ level and other one is If the enforcement institutions enforce the law properly, not a single spa will open" (Respondent 04; Personal Interview, 2022). Therapists do not have a place in Sri Lanka's education system to obtain a certificate issued by a public educational institution. Because this challenge also dramatically affects their careers. The next one is the deficiencies in the law. In Sri Lanka, a spa therapist cannot start a business because he lacks legal qualifications. If a therapist wants to register a spa in Sri Lanka, an Ayurvedic doctor must write one, but this program is expensive.

Economic related challenges

One respondent stated, "The number of foreign tourists has decreased. It has had a big impact on us to carry on our profession, and the current

economic crisis has also greatly impacted our work” (Respondent 03; Personal Interview, 2022). Some respondents have indicated that due to the decrease in the number of tourists, there is difficulty carrying out their jobs and that the current economic crisis has the most impact on their profession. The lack of fuel has significantly impacted issues such as increasing family problems.

Responses for Career Challenges

The above theme addresses the second objective. We have identified two main types of responses: responses for inherent career challenges and responses for extrinsic Career challenges. We identified six subcategories based on the codes: answers for guest-related challenges, responses for health-related challenges, responses for workplace place-related challenges, responses for economic-related challenges, responses for enforcement-related challenges, and responses for social-related challenges based on the codes.

Responses for Inherent Career Challenges

Responses for inherent challenges are primarily impacted by continuing to work. There are three reactions: Responses to guest-related challenges, answers to health-related difficulties, and Responses to working-related challenges.

Responses for guest-related challenges

Respondent added, “We do a skin test, and we give the customer an information form before starting a massage.” (Respondent 05; Personal Interview, 2022). Some respondents indicated that they take some details from the customer before starting a treatment, called a consultation form. Before doing a facial massage, they use it and perform a skin test with cream. Explaining how the treatment is done before starting the treatment can help customers avoid accidents and allergies to a large extent. The importance of

having an English-speaking training programme was also clarified. Customer handling is a factor in reducing customer complaints. For example, one therapist stated, “Our people have difficulties handling English because I suggest that we conduct a speaking English program” (Respondent 02; Personal Interview, 2022).

Responses for health-related Challenges

Mainly, many different types of health problems affect the career life of spa therapists because we have identified responses to health-related challenges. Employee insurance, proper training procedures, exercising, and taking a rest occasionally are the main research findings in this category. One respondent, for example, stated, “I see that a therapist can prevent the problems that come after getting the right training, exercising, and taking a rest occasionally; the other is employee insurance” (Respondent 03; Personal Interview, 2022).

Responses for workplace-related challenges

One therapist indicated that “in particular, our institution has a legal system, and in general, the treatment time per day is between an hour and an hour and a half” (Respondent 01; Personal Interview, 2022). Particular therapists can successfully face these challenges by reducing the amount of treatment done per day, complying with the institution's laws, and increasing the quality standard of their work. According to the respondents, they like to decide how much treatment they can do in a day, as one treatment takes around an hour and a half to finish. Furthermore, one suggested having four daily treatments and an 8-hour work schedule. One respondent has indicated a loss of service charges. This is something that therapists get in addition to their salary. Therefore, service charges are significant to carry on with their career, but the problem is that some spas need to give service charges properly. For

example, one professional added, “Currently, we do not get our service charge properly. We only get half of it in some months” (Respondent 03; Personal Interview, 2022).

Responses for Extrinsic Career Challenges

Based on the codes, we have identified three main subcategories: responses for economic, enforcement, and social-related challenges.

Responses to economic-related challenges

Some respondents have indicated that the government or responsible institutions should set up a programme to create job security. With the current economic crisis, a large amount of subsidy was found for the tourism industry, but the amount of support received by the spa industry could be higher. As a result, the amount of aid received by the sector should be increased. Government subsidy provision is most important to a therapist's career. Respondents think they should get concessions in this challenging time. Even if the other businesses engaged in the tourism industry get many benefits due to the economic crisis in the country, they get less attention. We also want to have other subsidies like interest-free loans and government support to ensure the job security of therapists. For example, one respondent stated, “Like other aspects of the tourism industry, we also need to provide subsidies like interest-free loans” (Respondent 06; Personal Interview, 2022). Another respondent added, “Industry-responsible institutes should ensure our job security” (Respondent 07; Personal Interview, 2022). Respondents stated that they want to ensure their job security by citing the experiences of friends who have lost their jobs.

Responses to enforcement-related challenges

Some respondents stated, “The responsible agencies of the government should perform the task efficiently to raid illegal spas” (Respondent 05;

Personal Interview, 2022). Respondents discussed raiding illegal spas. They say that the number of illicit spas has increased due to the ineffectiveness of law enforcement institutions. They need a proper solution from responsible enforcement institutions such as the police and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. One therapist added, "Currently, in Sri Lanka, there is no legal environment for a professional therapist to start his own business. Especially if I want to start a spa, I must register with an Ayurveda doctor. It costs us much money to do that" (Respondent 04; Personal Interview, 2022). Respondents wish to have a mechanism for registering their businesses. According to the current system, they must register with an Ayurveda doctor, which costs much money.

Responses to social-related challenges

Law enforcement agencies in Sri Lanka have not planned to regulate illegal spas. Furthermore, some respondents have the idea of increasing the quality of these spas. For example, one professional indicated that "a program should be set up to regulate illegal spas, but the government does not have a specific process for regulating spas" (Respondent 01; Personal Interview, 2022), and another respondent added, "Another thing is that people should be properly explained what a spa is" (Respondent 03; Personal Interview, 2022). Some respondents have commented that people in Lanka have no idea about the spa. People living in villages do not understand professional spas. In particular, programs for spreading knowledge should be created, and the media can be used for this. Some professionals believe that spas should be included in the Sri Lankan education system as a subject. Then, in the future, the misconceptions in the field among people can be eliminated through proper education. For example, the therapist added, "Training is essential for us; that is why this subject should be taught as a subject at the school level and university level, and the people coming in the future will know what this job."

(Respondent 05; Personal Interview, 2022)

DISCUSSION

We identified two types of challenges faced by Sri Lankan spa therapists: inherent career challenges and extrinsic career challenges. The findings revealed various kinds of intrinsic challenges. Guest-related challenges, health-related challenges, and workplace-related challenges are all possible. The outcome showed the multiple types of challenges that were extrinsic. Economic, enforcement and social challenges are all present—these inherent impact both the continuation of work and the survival of working life. The problems in the industry and the problems in the country had an indirect impact on the therapists.

The findings revealed that there were occasions when health-related challenges and emergency health situations occurred. As confirmed by past research by Capellini (2010), This study discovered that spa therapists face tough challenges for two reasons: risk to clients and themselves. These dangers are generated mainly by the widespread use of heat and water, resulting in various threats, such as fainting, heart attacks, slips and falls, drowning, burns, and scalds. Regarding spa therapists, repetitive stress injuries, accidents, and fatigue have all cut their careers short. This study also confirmed the findings of prior studies (Buchner et al., 2008) regarding sexual harassment; when a spa therapist is accused of harassing a customer, these issues are most common. Other sorts of sexual harassment lawsuits exist, however, such as when clients are accused of making unwanted advances toward the therapist. This is in line with Aravinda (2010), who found that most people have a terrible attitude towards the spa industry because of the illegal spa. The rapid growth of unlawful massage centres is a pressing issue that must be addressed because it affects many sensitive areas of society. We have identified research findings under the social-related challenges.

We identified various types of responses of spa therapists to their professional challenges. Responses for inherent challenges and responses for extrinsic challenges are divided into two categories. Under these two broad categories, we identified six subcategories: responses to social challenges, reactions to guest challenges, answers to health challenges, solutions to workplace challenges, responses to economic challenges, and enforcement responses. The findings revealed various reactions to guest-related challenges, including responses before treatment and during therapy. Moreover, the outcome indicated the different reactions to health-related challenges, replies concerning spas, and responses concerning therapists. Williams (2007) only administers a spa treatment after conducting a thorough medical history. If a therapist suspects a spa treatment is inappropriate for a specific client, contact the client's physician or postpone treatment. This study's findings Mainly show that many different types of health problems affect the career life of spa therapists because we have identified responses to health-related challenges. Employee insurance, proper training procedures, exercising, and taking a rest occasionally are the main research findings in this category. This Study advances knowledge of the difficulties faced by spa therapists in Sri Lanka. This study is distinctive since it thoroughly examines both inherent and extrinsic career obstacles. This all-encompassing viewpoint sets our study apart from others and offers a more comprehensive insight into the wellness industry.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study has explored the career problems faced by spa therapist staff in Sri Lanka, particularly with registered SLDTA masseuses in the capital city of Colombo. We have identified two critical types of difficulties that spa therapists face due to inherent and extrinsic impacts from their profession by analysing the interview data. The foremost challenge impacting spa therapists today is societal misconceptions, primarily driven by the prevalence of illegal

spas. These mainly affect women in the field, leading to their premature exit from the industry. Health-related issues, including knee pain, back pain, and other physical strains, shorten many therapists' careers. Work-related challenges, such as demanding work conditions and salary deductions, significantly affect the professional lives of spa therapists. Stressful work environments, often characterised by high treatment quotas, exacerbate these challenges. The sustainability of spa therapists' careers is at considerable risk due to macroeconomic factors, particularly the drop in tourist arrivals and the current economic crisis. Furthermore, the stability of this profession has been further jeopardized by the absence of legislation and an educational path to certification as a spa therapist in Sri Lanka.

To address these challenges, spa therapists must develop responses with specific actions inherent in guests, health, and workplace-related issues, as well as broader societal, economic, and regulatory challenges. Activities include regulating illegal spas, raising public awareness, and advocating for integrating spa therapy training into the formal system to deal with social challenges. Government support and introducing measures to protect jobs can mitigate economic challenges. Regularisation of public services and the establishment of an official registration regime for spa therapists can address problems relating to enforcement.

IMPLICATIONS TO THE PRACTICE

When making implications, we focus primarily on the enforcement institutions of Sri Lanka. Two enforcement institutions are in charge of spa and wellness tourism. They are the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and the Ayurveda Department. All tourism-related services are required to be registered with the SLTDA. It can be considered the primary responsible party. They have to take action to regulate this sector. According to this research recommendation, all illegal spas must be handled. The enforcement institutions

should establish a program to register as spa therapists legally. Sri Lankans need to have a positive perception of the spa. Professional spas are unfamiliar to many people, particularly those who live in villages.

Meanwhile, we recommended creating programs for spreading knowledge, and the media could be used for this. We recommended that spas should be included as a subject in the Sri Lankan education system. Then, in the future, the misconceptions in the field among people can be eliminated through proper education. In the end, educated people will turn to this industry. Research findings show that therapists face language problems because a program should be developed to improve language. Therapists need a place in Sri Lanka's education system to obtain a certificate issued by a public educational institution. The enforcement institutions should consider developing programs allowing spa therapists to obtain valuable government certification through courses or graduate-level programs offered by a public institution.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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