

Impact of Financial and Nutrition Support on Blood Health, Dietary Intake, and Well-Being among Female Student-Athletes

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Abstract : Within the field of sports science, financial situations have been reported as a key barrier in purchasing high-quality foods. A lack of proper nutrition leads to insecurities of health, impairs training, and diminishes optimal performances. Consequently, insufficient nutrient intake, disordered eating patterns, and eating disorders may arise, leading to poor health and well-being. Athletic scholarships, nutrition resources, and meal programs are available, yet are disproportionally allocated, favoring male sports, Caucasian athletes, and higher sport levels. Direct athlete finances towards nutrition at various sport levels and the role race influences aid received has yet to be examined. Additionally, a diverse female athlete population is missing in the sports science literature, specifically in nutrition. To address this gap, the current project assesses how financial and nutrition support and nutrition knowledge impacts physical health, dietary intake, and overall quality of life of a diverse sample of female athletes at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), National Junior Collegiate Athletic Association (NJCAA), and club sport levels. The project will identify differences in financial support in relation to race, as well. Approximately (N = 120) female athletes will participate in a single 30-minute lab visit. At this visit, body composition (i.e., height, weight, body mass index, and fat percent), blood health indicators (fasted blood glucose and lipids), and resting blood pressure are measured. In addition, three validated questionnaires pertaining to nutrition knowledge (Sports Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire; SNKQ), dietary intake (Rapid Eating Assessment for Participants; REAP), and quality of life (World Health Organization Quality of Life Brief; WHOQL-B) are gathered. Body composition and blood health indicators will be compared with the results of self-reported sports nutrition knowledge, dietary intake, and quality of life questionnaires. It is hypothesized that 1) financial and nutrition support and nutrition knowledge will differ between the sport levels and 2) financial and nutrition support and nutrition knowledge will have a positive association with quality of dietary intake and blood health indicators, 3) financial and nutrition support will differ significantly among racial background across the various competition levels, and 4) dietary intake will influence blood health indicators and quality of life. The findings from this study could have positive implications on athletic associations' policies on equity of financial and nutrition support to improve the health and safety of all female athletes across several sport levels.

Keywords : athlete, equity, finances, health, resources

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