

Prevalence of Dietary Supplements among University Athlete Regime in Sri Lanka: A Cross-Sectional Study

Authors : S. A. N. Rashani, S. Piger, P. N. J. Fernando, S. Jayawickema, M. A. Niriella, A. P. De Silva

Abstract : Dietary supplement (DS) consumption is drastically trending among the young athlete generation in developing countries. Many athletes try to fulfill their nutrition requirements using dietary supplements without knowing their effects on health and performance. This study aimed to assess the DS usage patterns of university athletes in Sri Lanka. A self-administered questionnaire was employed to collect data from state university students representing a university team, and a sample of 200 respondents was selected based on a stratified random sampling technique. Incomplete questionnaires were omitted from the analysis. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS statistics for Windows version 25. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ in the data analysis. The prevalence of DS was 48.2% ($n = 94$), with no significant association between gender and DS intake. Protein (15.9%), vitamin (14.9%), sports drinks (12.8%), and creatine (8.2%) were the most consumed DS by students. Weightlifting (85.0%), football (62.5%), rugby (57.7%), and wrestling (40.9%) players showed higher DS usage among other sports. Coaches were reported as the most frequent person who was advised to use DS (43.0%). Students who won interuniversity games showed significantly low DS intake ($p = 0.002$) compared to others. Interestingly, DS use was significantly affected by the season of use ($p = 0.000$), pointing out that during competition and training seasons (62.4%) was the most frequent use. The pharmacy (27.0%) was the commonest place to buy DS. Students who used nutrient-dense meal plans during the training and competition period still showed a 61.0% tendency to consume DS. Most claimed reason to use DS was to increase energy and strength (29.0%). A majority reported that they used DS for less than one month (35.5%), while the second-highest duration was over three years (17.2%). Considering body mass index (BMI), healthy weight students showed 71.0% DS prevalence. DS prevalence was moderate among Sri Lankan university students, highlighting that the highest DS use was during competition and training seasons. Moreover, it emphasizes the need for nutrition and anti-doping counseling in the Sri Lankan university system.

Keywords : athlete, dietary, supplements, university

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