

Nutrition Perception, Knowledge, and Practices of Elite Junior Footballers in Singapore

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Abstract

**Introduction:** Without sufficient nutrition education, elite athletes cannot optimise their sporting performance and recovery. In Southeast Asia, football represents one of the most popular sports. Previous sports nutrition studies were from non-Asian countries or not football-specific (Manore *et al*, 2017; Folasire *et al*, 2015; Nazni *et al*, 2010; Montecalbo *et al*, 2015). Current validated questionnaires are impractical to employ (Callela *et al*, 2017; Trakman *et al*, 2017). This pilot study aims to assess the nutritional literacy and practices of junior elite football academy footballers.

**Methods:** 74 elite football academy players were surveyed using visual pictorial resources. Questions focused on balanced diets, healthier cooking methods, and food groups.

**Results:** Players who perceive themselves to have balanced diets are more likely to possess better knowledge  $X^2(1, n=74) = 4.009 (p=0.045)$ . Based on linear regression, gender and education has little impact, and ethnicity has a weak to moderate negative impact on nutrition knowledge.

Table 1 Regression table of gender, ethnicity, and education as predictors of nutrition knowledge

<u>Independent</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>β</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Gender	0.023	0.026	0.124	0.887	0.076
Ethnicity	-0.029	0.014	-0.239	-2.052	0.044
Education	0.013	0.027	0.065	0.469	0.641

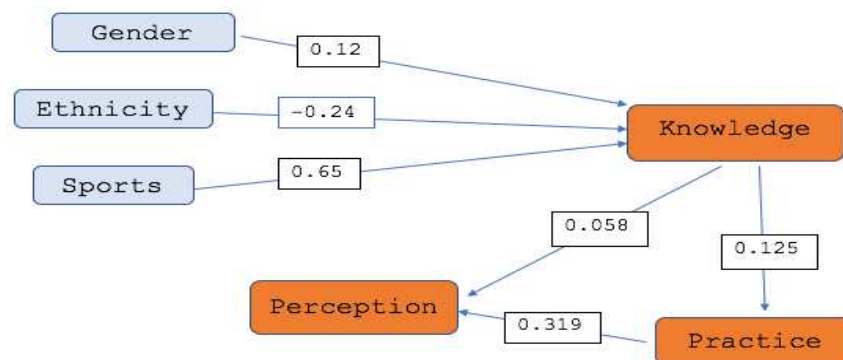




Figure 1 Path analysis with beta coefficients of demographic factors (blue) and responses (orange).

Conclusions: There is inadequate knowledge about balanced diets, healthy cooking methods, and food groups. This is concerning as developing athletes represent future talent pool. If uncorrected, this may impair performance and recovery, increasing injury risk. It may persist into adulthood, leading to nutritional deficiencies.

Keywords: Diet, Malnutrition, Football, Athlete