Assalam International University

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The prevalence of vitamins and minerals use among university students. Across-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Micronutrients, including vitamins and minerals, play a crucial role in maintaining overall health by supporting metabolic processes, immune function, and cognitive performance. University students often experience dietary shifts that may impact their nutrient intake, leading to potential deficiencies.

This study aims to assess the consumption of vitamins and minerals among university students, identifying the prevalence, influencing factors, and sources of supplement information.

A cross-sectional, observational study was conducted using an online questionnaire distributed among 244 students aged 17-35 years. The questionnaire collected demographic data, supplement usage, dietary habits, and sources of information on supplementation. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 22, applying descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations, with significance set at $P < 0.05$.

Results indicate that 62% of students reported using supplements, with Vitamin D (49.8%) and Zinc (36.7%) being the most commonly consumed. A significant proportion (41.5%) did not take any mineral supplements. While 48.7% of students regularly consumed fruits and vegetables, 51.3% had inconsistent or no intake, suggesting potential dietary gaps. The primary motivations for supplement use included body shaping (58.9%), weight loss (29.8%), and enhancing health during exercise (23.3%). Social media (54.5%) and fitness coaches (49.8%) were the primary sources of supplement information, whereas healthcare professionals played a minimal role.

A high prevalence of supplement use among students, driven by fitness goals and self-perceived dietary insufficiencies. However, reliance on non-medical sources raises concerns about misinformation. Educational interventions promoting balanced diets and informed supplement use are recommended. Future research should explore the long-term effects of supplement use and develop strategies to enhance nutritional literacy among university students.