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DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS USE BY MALE RUGBY PLAYERS IN THE 2006 SEASON OF KENYA CUP LEAGUE

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of the study was to establish demographic characteristics and dietary supplements use by Kenya Cup Rugby Players. This study investigated the age, level of education, occupation, experience and club affiliation of the players. Data were gathered from a sample of 140 respondents obtained through stratified random sampling. The target population included all rugby players who participated in the Kenya Cup Rugby League of the 2006 season. The teams comprised of Kenya Commercial Bank, Harlequins, Nonderscripts, Mwamba, Impala, Mean Machine and United States International University. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Data collected was expressed in terms of frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that majority (78%) of the players were below the age of 25 years. The largest proportion of the players had attained tertiary/university level of education (65%). A greater number of the players had been with their teams for a period of 3 – 6 years (50%), whereas, a small (12%) proportion of respondents had played for the national team for duration of less than 2 years. The percentages in age declined significantly because the game of rugby is not a professional sport. Most of the players possess high levels of education to enable them have the capacity to assimilate the importance of nutrition for good health. Players tend to play for their teams longer than at the national level since there is high competition at that level which the players may not sustain. The study recommended that youth programmes of the game of rugby should be established to tap talent from the grass root level and it should be made a professional sport. Further research should be conducted on women rugby teams and other variables apart from those in the present study.

Key Words: Rugby, League, Demographic Characteristics, Dietary Supplements

INTRODUCTION
Rugby football originated in 1823 AD and was attributed to an English man known as William Webb. He introduced a new dimension into the game of football that of running with the ball (Myles and Thomas 1994). It is believed that he disregarded the rules of football (soccer) as played in his time by taking the ball in his arms and running with it. (Kiganjo, et al., 2003). Basically, the ball is both handled and kicked. The main objective is to place a ball on the ground across the goal line in order to make a try. A given team usually strives to gain possession of the ball through contests such as line outs, Mauls, scrums, kick off and open play situations (Biscomb 1998, Kiganjo et al., 2003). All these require strength, endurance, power and speed. Currently, rugby has become a multimillion dollar sport that places extreme physical demands on its players. Today, rugby players compete for fame and glory in the rugby union or rugby league. Players smash and tackle opponents to stop them from getting a try (scoring). Therefore, if one has to perform well, he/she has to be rough, rugged and determined. This is only possible if rugby players eat a balanced diet and use supplements that money can buy (Steven, 2002).

In Kenya, club rugby dates back to 1923 with the formation of Nonderscripts and Old Harlequins. This was followed by Impala (1930), Mean Machine (1976), Black Blad (1978), Barclays Bank and Watembezi (1980), Nakuru and Damu Pevu (1986). National Rugby Tournaments include Enterprise Cup (1980), Kenya Cup (1986), Eric Shirley Shield, Mwamba Cup, Black Rock Festival (played over Easter) and the Seven Aside competition series. Currently, the top rugby teams taking part in the Kenya cup league are Kenya Commercial Bank, Nonderscripts, Harlequins, Impala, Mwamba, Mean Machine, Mombasa and Nakuru (Kiganjo et al. 2003).

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Kenya Cup Rugby League is the highest tournament organized by Kenya Football Rugby Union. The 2006 edition took place within the period of March – August Season. The descriptive survey design was used in the study. This was suitable because the subjects or respondents gave information related to the utilization trends of dietary supplements and factors that influence their utilization. Simple random sampling was used to select the players.
Questionnaires were administered to 20 players per team. This gave a total of 140 (67%) rugby players. Data was presented in percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations. The statistical package for social sciences was used to analyze data. A chi-square test (X²) computed at P ≤ 0.05 level of significance was used to test the hypothesis. The teams that participated included Kenya Commercial Bank, Nondescripts, Harlequins, Mwamba, Mean Machine, United States International University, Impala and Nakuru (but was relegated). Questionnaires were distributed and filled at the training venues, with the players consent. They were distributed by the researcher and the players asked to fill and return as soon as possible and not later than 24 hours. This ensured higher returns of the questionnaire. The variables recorded included age, level of education, occupation, experience and club affiliation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 140 players of seven rugby teams that participated in the Kenya Cup League of the 2006 Season. Demographic data of the study team are presented and discussed.

![Fig 1. The age Distribution of the Respondents](image)

The study indicates that majority (78%) of the participants were below 25 years. 10% were between 26 – 30 years, while the rest (11%) were in the age bracket of 31-35 years, 1% were in the 36 – 40 years brackets and over 40 years respectively. This suggests that the game of rugby in Kenya is not a professional sport and probably, that is why this explains why the percentages declined significantly as the player become older. This could also be attributed to the fact that most of the players aged above 30 years have different careers. This makes it difficult for them to find time to play the sport. However, according to Food and Agricultural Organization (1985), and US Food and Nutrition Board (1999), significant numbers of both the young and old engage in vigorous athletic training. However, the young require more protein supplements since inadequate amount retard growth and affect training response.

![Fig 2. Level of Education of the Respondents](image)

As illustrated in figure 2, most of the respondents (65%), had attained tertiary/university level of education. 26% had ordinary level, 9% had advanced level of high school education. Given this scenario, one can conclude that the game of rugby at Kenya Cup league involves participants who possess high levels of education. The levels of education are likely to influence the use of dietary supplements by rugby players. These findings also imply that players will have the capacity to assimilate the knowledge and appreciate the importance of food supplements in relation to sport. This is supported by Nayge and Reed (1999) whose studies revealed that there is a greater use of supplements among adults with high levels of education or socio-economic status. More years of education imply a greater awareness of the role of nutrition in good health (Frank et al. 2000). Thus the game of rugby at Kenya Cup league seems to be an elite sport yet not professional.

![Fig 3. Occupation of the Respondents](image)

The distribution of occupations across the players took a slightly similar trend to the level of education. The Figure above shows that players who participated in the Kenya Rugby League were mainly students (74%). This was followed by about 12%, who were self employed, 5% were involved in other occupations such as medicine, 4% of them were administrators, 2% were either engineers or teachers and lastly, 1% were accountants. This is an indication that a majority of the players who are mainly students may not be able to afford the cost of dietary supplements. The implication is that there are likely few users of dietary supplements among the students. This is supported by Janet et al. (2002) whose study revealed
that participants whose lifestyles are healthier tend to use dietary supplements.

**Fig 5. Experience of the Respondents**

The study sought to find out the length of time that players had participated in the rugby game. Results show that fifty percent (50%) of the respondents stated that they had 3-6 years, 24% had 7-10 years, 16% had less than 2 years and 8% of the respondents had played for 11-14 years (Figure 4). It is evident that majority of the respondents had tended to affiliate and play for their teams for a longer period of time. In order for this to happen they are expected to perform well. This is consistent with Slesinski et al. (1996) who revealed that engaging in regular physical activity is associated with dietary supplements use. Other studies by Brilla and Conte (1999) revealed that Zinc, Magnesium and Aspartate (ZMA) are widely used by endurance and strength training athletes such as footballers, body builders, sprinters and rugby players.

**Fig 6. Number of years in the National Team**

Since Kenya Cup league is the highest level in Kenya, it is possible that some players may have played in the national team. Majority (71.7%) of the respondents reported that they had played in the national team for less than 2 years. This was followed by 15.2% who had played for a period of 3-5 years, 6.5% for 6-10 years, 2.2% had played for 11-15 years, whereas 4.3% had played for 16-20 years (figure 5). It is an indication that most of the rugby players in the national team do not play for a long period. This could be attributed to the high level of competition at the national level, meaning that failure to perform well earns an exclusion. Therefore players require energy and good health. This as is supported by Myles and Thomas (1994) who revealed that rugby players can only perform well if they eat a balanced diet. Poortmans and Francaux (2000) also suggest that for them to play for the national team for a long time, players should use creative monohydrate supplements.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

A majority (78%) of the players who took part in the Kenya Cup League were below the age of 25 years. As far as their level of education was concerned, 65% of the players had tertiary/university education. Similarly, 74% of the players’ occupations were students. As for their experience, 50% of the players had played rugby between 3-6 years. A majority (71.7%) had played for the national team in less than 2 years. Generally, few players (above 30 years) play the game of rugby. This implies that the game is not a professional sport. In addition, more players possessed high levels of education which would enable assimilate the importance of nutrition for good health. Since most of the players were students, it is possible they were not able to afford the cost of dietary supplements. The study recommended that youth programmes should be established to tap talents at the grass root level. The game of rugby should be made professional. Further research should be conducted among women rugby teams and other demographic characteristic apart from those in the present study.

**REFERENCES**


