

Nutrition Development Among Dance Undergraduates in Sri Lanka

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Dance undergraduates in Sri Lankan traditional dance undergo intensive physical training requiring adequate nutrition for strength, endurance, injury prevention, recovery, and artistic performance. Despite these critical demands, their understanding and application of nutritional science remain underexplored. Although the International Association for Dance Medicine & Science (IADMS) offers comprehensive nutritional guidelines for dancers, their integration into Sri Lankan dance education is limited. This gap potentially compromises students' physical readiness, performance quality, and long-term well-being, particularly given the vigorous nature of traditional dance forms with their dynamic movements, powerful footwork, leaps, and whirls. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of nutrition development among dance undergraduates in Sri Lanka. It aimed to identify challenges and barriers to adequate nutrition and generate recommendations for promoting healthy eating practices within university dance education. Using purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 dance undergraduates from four Sri Lankan universities, University of the Visual and Performing Arts, the University of Kelaniya, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, and the University of Colombo (Sri Pali Campus). Participants were enrolled dance undergraduates, aged 18+, with at least one academic year completed, willing to participate, and able to communicate in Sinhala or English. Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Six interconnected themes emerged, revealing participants' lived experiences. While students recognized nutrition's importance for performance and well-being, they reported numerous barriers, including limited nutritional knowledge, financial constraints, inadequate access to healthy food, demanding schedules, and challenging hostel conditions. Participants emphasized the need for structured nutrition education, institutional support, and affordable healthy meals within university settings. The study concludes that the nutrition development of dance undergraduates in Sri Lanka is influenced by personal, educational, financial, and environmental factors. Integrating evidence-based nutrition education into dance curricula and strengthening institutional support can significantly enhance dancers' health, well-being, and artistic performance, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of dance education in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: *Dance education, Dance undergraduates, Nutrition development, Phenomenology, Universities*