



Fuelling Academy Footballers: A Parent and Guardian Knowledge Questionnaire

Rationale

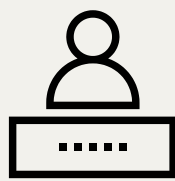
- Sport nutrition plays a vital role in supporting the health, growth and performance of young athletes, particularly within football academy environments where training and match demands are increasing.
- Adequate energy intake, macronutrient consumption and hydration are essential to support both performance and physiological development (Smith, Holmes and McAllister, 2015).
- Young athletes are highly reliant on parents and guardians for meal provision and dietary behaviours, making caregivers key determinants of nutritional intake and habits (Birch and Ventura, 2009).
- Previous research has demonstrated limited sport nutrition knowledge among athletes and caregivers, particularly in areas such as carbohydrate (CHO) intake, hydration and recovery nutrition (Walsh et al., 2011).
- Cole et al. (2025) identified low sport nutrition knowledge among caregivers supporting football academy players, with participants achieving an average score of approximately 43% correct responses.
- Limited research has explored parental sport nutrition knowledge within younger academy football populations (Trakman et al., 2018).

Methods



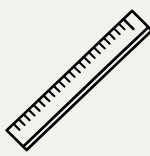
Design

Quantitative study with cross-sectional design



Participants:

Parents & Guardians of academy players age 7–11 years. Total of **n=46** participants took part in the study.



Measure:

A 31-item questionnaire adapted from the PEAKS Nutrition Knowledge Questionnaire (Trakman et al., 2018) assessed general and sport-specific nutrition knowledge. Participants were given two weeks to complete the Microsoft Forms questionnaire to allow sufficient time for participation and ensure a fair opportunity for responses.

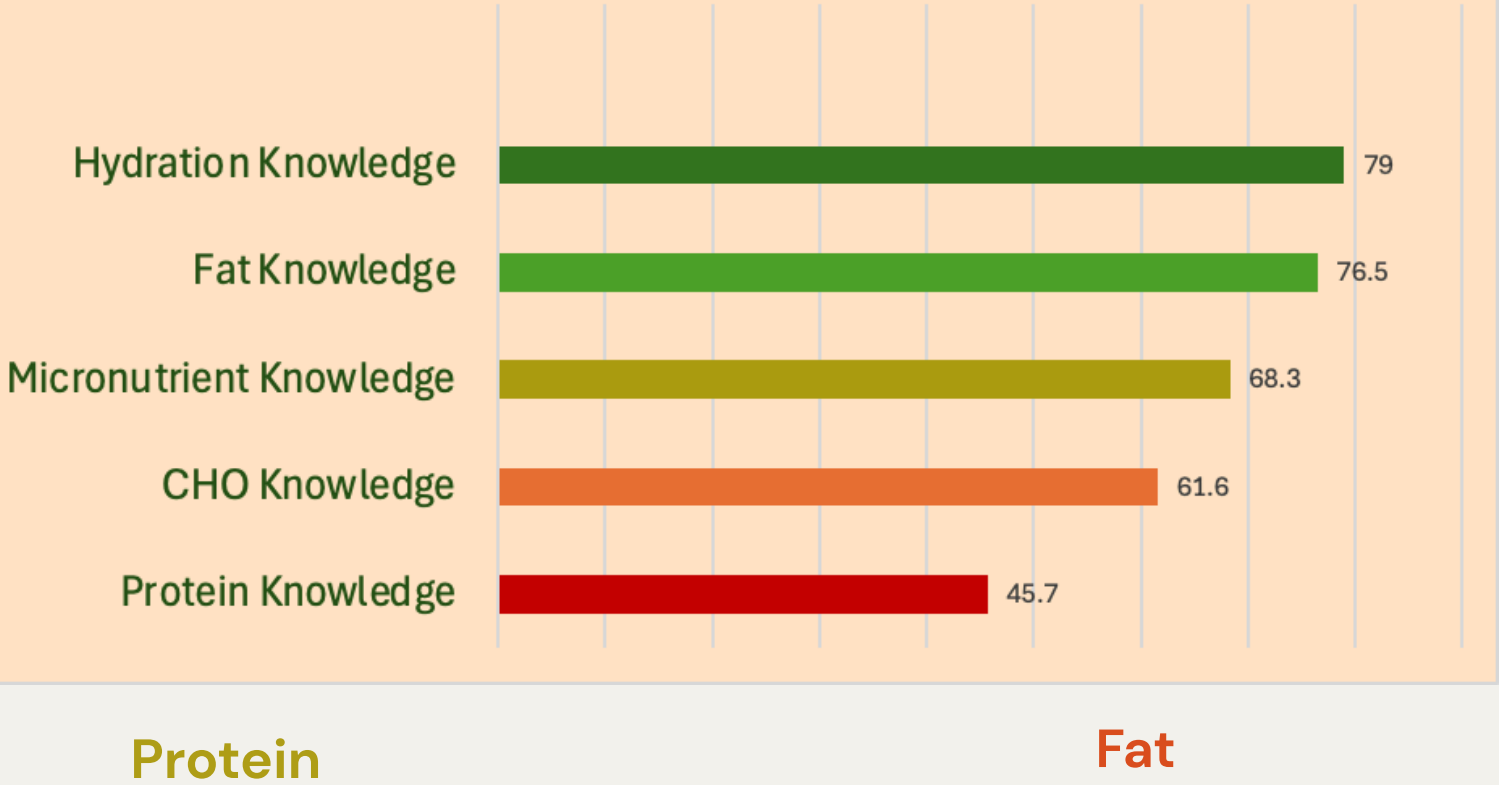


Analysis:

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to identify patterns in sport nutrition knowledge.

Results–Overall Nutrition Knowledge by Theme

Percentage Correct Across Nutrition Knowledge Themes



Knowledge surrounding macronutrient intake demonstrated several misconceptions. Only **39.1%** of participants correctly identified that consuming more protein than the body requires can contribute to fat gain. Protein-related nutrition knowledge appeared relatively limited, with participants achieving an average score of **45.7%**. A considerable variability in responses was also evident with a mean score of **2.74 ± 1.56 out of 6**.

Fat-related nutrition knowledge appeared relatively strong overall, with participants achieving a mean score of **4.59 ± 1.07 out of 6**, equating to an average score of **76.5%**. Despite relatively strong overall fat-related nutrition knowledge, understanding surrounding the role of fat as a fuel source during exercise remained inconsistent.

Carbohydrates

CHO-related nutrition knowledge appeared moderate overall, with participants achieving a mean CHO knowledge score of **3.70 ± 1.28 out of 6**, equating to an average score of **61.6%**. However, inconsistencies in CHO fuelling knowledge were evident, with **61%** of participants incorrectly believing that young athletes should not consume CHO during breaks in match play.

Hydration and Micronutrients

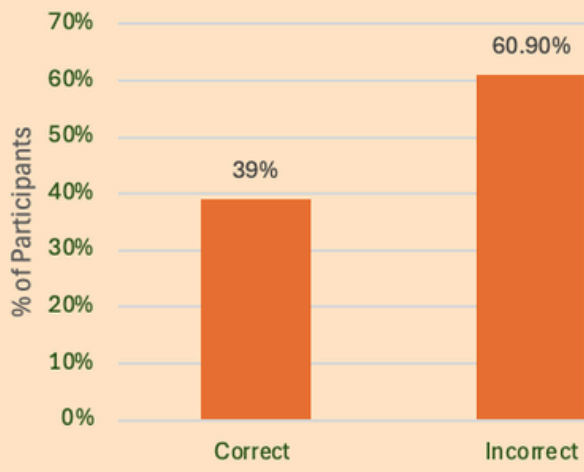
Hydration-related nutrition knowledge appeared relatively strong overall, with participants achieving a mean score of **2.37 ± 0.64 out of 3 (79.0%)**. Responses also demonstrated relatively low variability, suggesting greater consistency in hydration-related understanding among participants. In comparison, micronutrient-related nutrition knowledge appeared more moderate, with participants achieving a mean score of **3.41 ± 1.07 out of 5**, equating to an average score of **68.3%**.

Summary of Overall Results

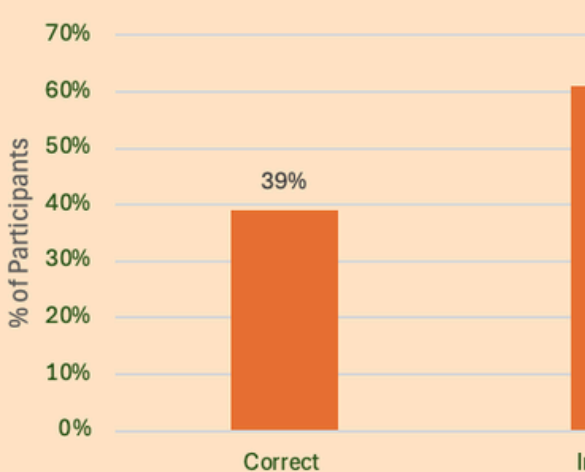
Participants achieved a mean sport nutrition knowledge score of **18.26 ± 3.36 out of 31**, equating to an average questionnaire score of **58.9%**. Scores ranged from as low as 11 to 27 correct responses, indicating variability in parental sport nutrition knowledge.

Common misconceptions from study

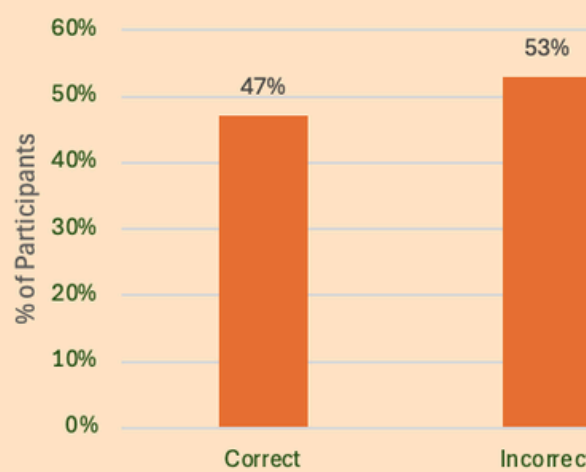
Q1. Consuming more protein than the body requires can contribute to fat gain?



Q20. Should young athletes consume CHO during breaks between matches?



Q22. When we exercise at a low intensity, our body mostly uses fat as a fuel?



Summary of research

Parents and guardians demonstrated moderate overall sport nutrition knowledge, with hydration and fat-related knowledge appearing strongest, while protein-related knowledge was weakest. Several misconceptions regarding CHO fuelling and protein intake were identified. These findings highlight the potential need for targeted sport nutrition education within academy football environments to better support the health, development and performance of young athletes.

References

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