https://doi.org/10.33472/AFJBS.6.6.2024.7288-7299

African Journal of Biological Sciences

Journal homepage: http://www.afjbs.com

Research Paper Open Access

Exploring Public Awareness and Attitudes towards Dietary Supplements

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Article Info

Volume 6, Issue 6, July 2024

Received: 26 May 2024

Accepted: 24 June 2024

Published: 18 July 2024

doi: 10.33472/AFJBS.6.6.2024.7288-7299

ABSTRACT:

Dietary supplements play a significant role in modern healthcare, yet public awareness and attitudes towards these products remain diverse and complex. This study aimed to assess the level of public awareness and understanding of dietary supplements, as well as to explore attitudes and behaviors towards their use. A method of data collection and sampling was employed, including a survey questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of the population. Data analysis involved quantitative measures of awareness levels, attitudes, and usage patterns, complemented by qualitative insights into perceptions, beliefs, and motivations. Results revealed a moderate level of overall awareness regarding dietary supplements, with a notable variation in knowledge across different age groups and educational backgrounds. Attitudes towards supplements ranged from skepticism and caution to enthusiasm and trust, influenced by factors such as media exposure, personal experiences, and healthcare provider recommendations. Common misconceptions and concerns were identified, including issues related to safety, efficacy, regulation, and necessity. These findings highlight the importance of targeted education campaigns, evidence-based information dissemination, and regulatory initiatives to promote informed decision-making and responsible supplement usage among the public. In conclusion, this study contributes to a better understanding of public perceptions towards dietary supplements and underscores the need for tailored interventions to improve awareness, address misconceptions, and promote rational use within the broader context of public health promotion.

KEYWORDS: Dietary Supplements, Attitudes And Behaviours, Awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dietary supplements are products intended to supplement the diet and provide additional nutrients that may be missing or insufficient in a person's regular diet. These supplements can come in various forms, including pills, capsules, powders, liquids, and gummies. They typically contain vitamins, minerals, amino acids, herbs, botanicals, enzymes, or other substances.

The purpose of dietary supplements is to support overall health and well-being by filling nutritional gaps or addressing specific health concerns.

In recent years, dietary supplements have gained widespread popularity and have become an integral part of many individuals' health and wellness routines. These products, ranging from vitamins and minerals to herbal extracts and probiotics, are marketed as enhancers of nutrition, performance, and overall well-being. The growing availability and promotion of dietary supplements have sparked debates and discussions regarding their efficacy, safety, and appropriate usage.

Understanding public awareness and attitudes towards dietary supplements is crucial in the context of modern healthcare practices. While some individuals embrace supplements as beneficial additions to their diets, others. express skepticism or caution, citing concerns about potential risks, lack of regulation, and conflicting information in the media. Additionally, varying levels of knowledge and misconceptions about supplements contribute to a complex landscape of consumer behaviors and decision-making processes.

This research paper aims to delve deeper into the topic of public awareness and attitude towards dietary supplements, examining the factors influencing perceptions, behaviors, and choices related to supplement use. By exploring these dynamics, we seek to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on supplement safety, education, and public health promotion strategies. Through a comprehensive analysis of survey data, interviews, and existing literature, this study sheds light on the diverse perspectives and experiences of individuals regarding dietary supplements. Ultimately, our findings aim to inform evidence- based recommendations for promoting informed decision-making, fostering responsible supplement usage, and enhancing public health outcomes in the realm of nutritional supplementation.

OBJECTIVES -

- To determine the overall level of awareness regarding dietary supplements, including knowledge of different types, benefits, and potential risks.
- To identify common attitudes and perceptions towards dietary supplements, such as beliefs about their efficacy, safety, and necessity.
- To explore factors influencing supplement use, including sources of information, healthcare provider recommendations, personal experiences, and demographic variables.
- To examine any existing misconceptions or concerns surrounding dietary supplements and their impact on consumer behaviors and decision-making processes.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research being conducted is experimental research done to find the true hypothesis, the samples selected are the general public with the age group of 18-50 and a certain sample size is chosen.

HYPOTHESIS-

Null hypothesis (H0): The public knows nothing about dietary supplements.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): The public has a good amount of knowledge about dietary supplements.

SAMPLE-

The sampling process in this study aimed to ensure a representative reflection of the target population's views on dietary supplements. A random sampling method was employed to select participants from various demographic backgrounds, including age, gender and education level. This approach was chosen to minimize selection bias and enhance the generalizability of the findings. However, it's important to note that certain limitations may exist, such as the potential for self-selection bias among participants who voluntarily chose to participate. Despite these limitations, the sample size was determined through power analysis to ensure statistical reliability, with a total of 100 participants included in the study. This sample size was deemed sufficient based on the research objectives and allowed for meaningful insights into public awareness and attitudes towards dietary supplements.

The demographic characteristics of the sample were diverse, with participants ranging from young adults to older individuals, representing various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. Ethical considerations were also addressed, with informed consent obtained from all participants, and measures were taken to protect their privacy and confidentiality throughout the study. Overall, the sampling approach adopted in this research paper aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of public perceptions and behaviors regarding dietary supplements.

SAMPLING-

You can combine probability and convenience sampling techniques to carry out a questionnaire study on exploring knowledge of dietary supplements among the general public. Here is an idea for a strategy:

1. Specify the target demographics: Indicate the characteristics of your target market, such as adults between the ages of 18-50 years who take dietary supplements.
2. Obtain a sampling frame: Make a list of potential participants from a variety of places, such as social networking sites, online forums, college or university directories, or regional community groups geared towards young adults.
3. Probability sampling: Use a random sampling method, such as simple random sampling or stratified random sampling, to select a representative sample from the sampling frame. This helps ensure that each individual in the target population has an equal chance of being selected.
4. Convenience sampling: You can add convenience sampling to your probability sample by enlisting participants from accessible locations or young adults' specific social media groups.
5. Convenience sampling can help attain a bigger sample size more quickly, but it should be used in conjunction with probability sampling because it may add bias.
6. Calculating the sample size: Based on factors including the research objectives, the available resources, and statistical power, determine the ideal sample size. If you want to ensure that the sample size is appropriate for insightful analysis, think about consulting a statistician. The sample size comprised of 100 adults.
7. Participant recruitment and data collection: Use numerous ways to contact the chosen participants, such as email invites, social media posts, or online survey platforms. Give participants a link to the survey and clear instructions so they may complete it whenever is most convenient.
8. Informed consent: Before the participants begin the questionnaire, get their informed consent. Confidentiality is guaranteed, the study's goal is clearly stated, and contact information is provided in case any questions or issues arise.
9. Data analysis: Depending on your study aims and data characteristics, analyze the responses when data collection is complete using relevant statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, or regression analysis.

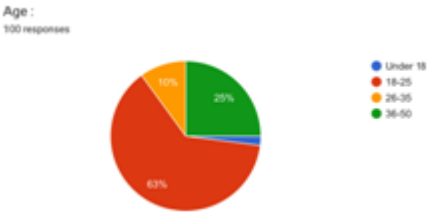
METHOD USED FOR DATA COLLECTION -

The simple random sampling method from probability sampling was used; a questionnaire was formed, circulated and utilized as the primary method of data collection, and samples of 100 young adults were collected. The questionnaire aimed to gather information regarding participants' intake of dietary supplements, their miss misconceptions about them, the types of supplements they take and do they have any positive or negative effects after taking dietary supplements.

3. RESULTS-

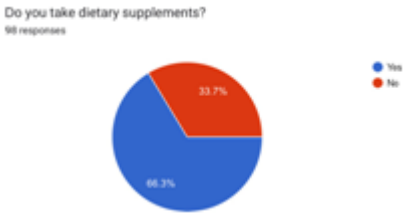
Research results contribute new insights, data, or theories to the existing body of knowledge in a particular field. They expand understanding and may challenge or confirm existing theories.

Results provide evidence to support or refute hypotheses formulated at the outset of the research. They demonstrate the validity and reliability of the research methods employed.

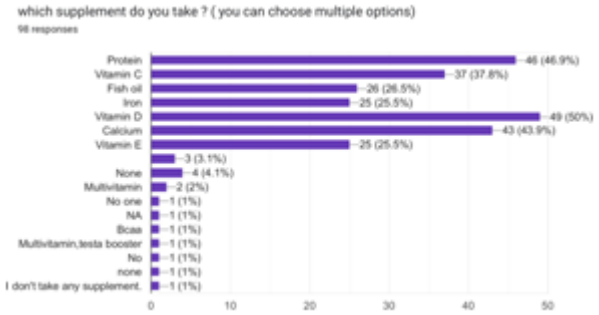


- The highest number of responses were received from the age group of 18-25 and the least amount of responses were from under the ageof 18.

- Most of the respondents were female I.e. about 52%.



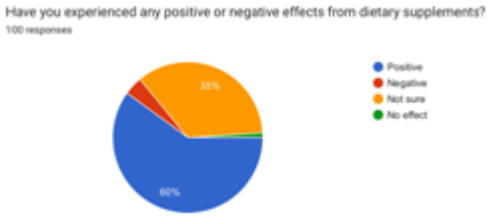
- About 33.7% of people don't take supplements and It's understandable - everyone has their own unique needs and preferences. However, it's worth noting that 66.3% of people do take supplements and experience a variety of health benefits.



- Around 35% of people are not sure and the rest of the people have no or negative effects after

taking dietary supplements.

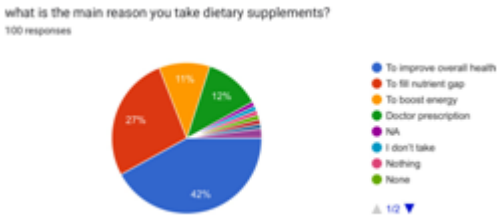
- According to these statistics, almost 50% of the population prefers to take vitamin D which means most people are aware of their deficiency of vitamin D that's why they are willing to take vitamin D supplements. We get vitamin D from sunlight in day-to-day life, but still, people are taking it in supplement form.
- Around 46% of people take protein as a supplement to gain maximum health benefits like gaining muscle mass, losing fat etc.
- Around 43% of the population take calcium whereas iron, fish oil and vitamin E are taken by about 25% of people.
- Only 2% of people take multivitamins.
- This question is meant to explore the misconception of dietary supplements among the general public according to this data around 33% of the population thinks that dietary supplements are always safe because they are natural but the truth is not all supplements are natural.
- Around 33% of people think that dietary supplements can cure or prevent any illness or disease but that's not true.
- All the options above are incorrect but still, many people believe it to be true. Only 29% of people. Only 29% of people chose 'none' which indicates they have enough knowledge about dietary supplements.



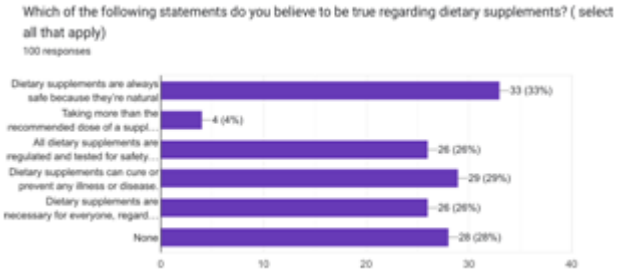
- Around 60% of the population encountered positive effects of dietary supplements on them whereas

- Only 31% of the population feels very confident about their knowledge of dietary supplementswhereas 54% people are somewhat confident and 15% are not confident at all.

- Around 37% of the population takes supplementsdaily.
- 10% of the people take the supplement everymonth.
- 20% of people take supplements every week.
- 14% of the people take supplements occasionally.
- The rest of the 19% do not take supplements atall.



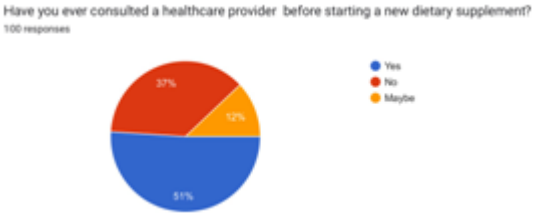
- Almost half the population takes supplements to improve their overall health.
- moreover, 27% of the population uses dietary supplements to fill their nutrient gap and 11% of people take them to boost their energy.
- Only 12% of the population takes supplements due to doctors' prescriptions.



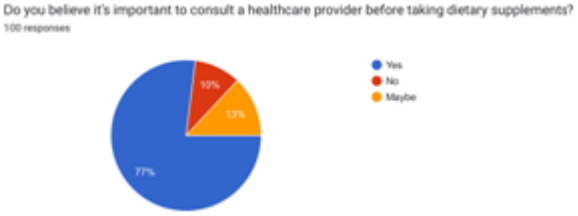
- Around 43% of the population gets information about dietary supplements through healthcare providers. One-fourth of the population gets information from the Internet.
- 10% and 9% of information is received by friends and family, respectively.
- And 8% of information is obtained through social media.

- Around 78% of people read the label and ingredients list before purchasing dietary supplements. Whereas 13% of people do not care toread the label and ingredients list and 9% do. People are not sure about it.

- Almost 50% of the population is not sure about it,but 28% of people think that there are risks associated with taking dietary supplements and 30 % of people think there is no risk.

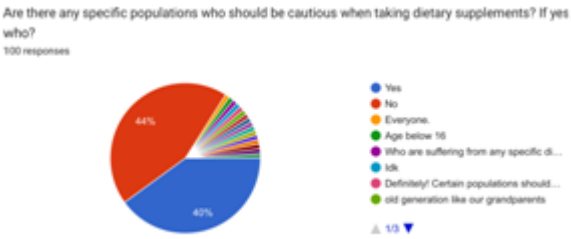


- More than 50% of the people consulted with the healthcare provider before starting a new dietary supplement. Whereas 37% of the people have not consulted with the healthcare provider and 12%.People are unsure.

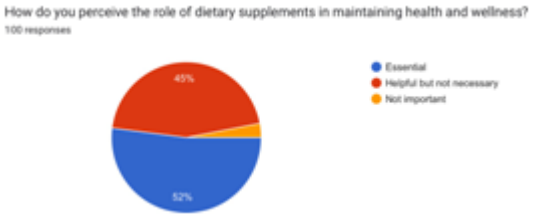


- 77% of individuals believe in consulting a healthcare provider before starting any dietary supplement, while 10% are unconcerned about its importance. Additionally, 13% are unsure about whether to consult a healthcare provider before starting a dietary supplement.

- Nearly half of the population is somewhat familiar with the regulations governing dietary supplements, with 29% being very familiar and 22% not familiar at all.



- 44% of the population holds the belief that there is no specific population that should be cautious whentaking dietary supplements, while 40 % acknowledge the importance of caution in certain groups.
- Also there are a few responses of people for the above-given question.



- 52% of the population perceives dietary supplements as essential, while 45% view them as helpful but not indispensable, with a minority considering them unimportant.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study shed light on the complex public awareness and attitudes toward dietary supplements. The following discussion provides an in- depth analysis of key findings, their implications, and recommendations for furtherresearch and practice.

Our study revealed varying levels of awareness and attitudes towards dietary supplements among the participants. While a significant portion of the sample expressed familiarity with supplements, there was a notable gap in knowledge regarding their safety, efficacy, and appropriate usage.

Approximately 66.3% of the participants in the study reported the use of dietary supplements, with calcium, vitamin D, and protein being the most commonly consumed supplements among them. Around 37% of the participants reported taking supplements daily, while 19% stated that they never use supplements, and an additional 20% reported using supplements every week.

In terms of safety and regulations, around 25% of respondents know nothing about regulations governing dietary supplements while 49% people are somewhat familiar.

Around 43% of individuals obtain information about dietary supplements from healthcare providers, 25% rely on the Internet for information,and 10% seek advice from friends.

Nearly 80% of people stated that they read the labels and ingredients list before purchasing anysupplement. Despite this gap, attitudes towards supplements were generally positive, with many participants perceiving them as beneficial for healthand well-being.

52% of people noted the role of dietary supplements in maintaining health and wellness as essential. Also, 60% of users experienced a positive effect after using dietary supplements And 35% of users are not sure about its effect on them.

Approximately 33 % of people hold the misconception that all supplements are always safe to consume because they are natural. Additionally, 29% of individuals believe that dietary supplements can cure and prevent any disease. Furthermore, 26% of participants think that all supplements are tested and regulated for safety and efficacy by the government. From this study, I have found that people have a lot of misconception regarding dietary supplements.

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. They emphasize the need for targeted educational interventions aimed at improving public knowledgeabout dietary supplements.

More than 50% of people feel very confident About their knowledge of dietary supplements whereas 15% of people are not confident at All. Our research revealed that approximately 42% of individuals use dietary supplements to enhance their overall health, while 27% utilize them to address nutrient deficiencies. Furthermore, 11% of respondents reported using supplements to increase their energy levels, and 12% indicated using them based on a doctor's prescription.

Healthcare providers play a crucial role in guiding patients towards safe and effective supplement choices, emphasizing the importance of open communication and shared

decision-making.
In our research, it was found that approximately 51% of individuals consulted a healthcare provider before starting a new dietary supplement, while 37% of people never sought such consultation. Also, 77% of respondents consider it important to seek advice from a healthcare provider before starting any new dietary supplement, while 10% do not deem it necessary.
In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights into public perceptions of dietary supplements, highlighting the need for comprehensive education and regulatory measures to support informed consumer choices. Byaddressing knowledge gaps and building trust in the industry, we can enhance public health outcomes and promote a balanced approach to supplementusage.

5. CONCLUSION

This research provides valuable insights into thegeneral public's perception and attitudes toward dietary supplements. A thorough analysis of survey data has revealed several key findings that help us better understand consumer behaviours and attitudes in this area.
Participants reported a high level of dietary supplement awareness, with many reporting regularuse or considering supplement intake. Despite this awareness, there is still a large gap in knowledge about the safety, effectiveness, and proper use of dietary supplements. This emphasizes the importance of targeted educational efforts to increase public understanding and support evidence-based decision-making.
Consumers were generally positive about dietary supplements, with some perceiving benefits such asimproved health and well-being. However, therewere also varying levels of skepticism and uncertainty, especially among younger respondents and those with less prior knowledge.
It is essential to take action to address misinformation and promote transparency in the supplement industry. Educational campaigns targeting consumers and healthcare professionals need to be prioritized to spread accurate and science-backed information. Regulatory measures need to continue to evolve to ensure product safety and truthful labelling, as well as ethical marketing practices.
Moreover, attitudes towards dietary supplements are not static but subject to evolution over time, reflecting shifting societal norms, scientific advancements, and legislative developments. As public awareness of health and wellness issues continues to expand, there is a growing demand for transparency, accountability, and evidence-based practices within the supplement industry. Calls for tighter regulation, improved product quality standards, and enhanced consumer protection measures underscore the need for collaborative efforts among policymakers, healthcare professionals, industry stakeholders, and advocacy groups.
In light of the global trends towards holistic approaches to health and preventive medicine, the role of dietary supplements is likely to remain prominent, with an emphasis on personalized nutrition, functional foods, and integrative healthcare models. However, realizing the full potential of supplements in promoting public health requires a balanced approach that acknowledges both their benefits and limitations. By fostering a culture of critical thinking, scientific literacy, and responsible consumption, stakeholders can empower individuals to make informed choices thatalign with their health goals and values.
In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing
body of literature on public perceptions of dietary supplements. By addressing knowledge gaps, fostering informed decision- making, and advocating for responsible industry practices, we can empower individuals to make health-conscious choices and promote overall well-being.

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