# Self-reported prevalence and risk factors associated with low back pain among male university athletes in the Colombo District

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Low back pain (LBP) is a prevalent musculoskeletal issue among athletes, often influenced by sport-specific demands and individual risk factors. To our knowledge, no previous studies have examined the prevalence and factors associated with LBP among university-level male athletes in Colombo. This study aimed to identify the self-reported prevalence and risk factors associated with LBP among male university athletes in the Colombo District. A cross-sectional study was conducted on male university athletes in the Colombo District playing football, rugby, basketball, and volleyball. The study sample comprised 296 athletes with a mean age of 22.49±1.30 years with at least one year of university-level sports participation. Data on LBP prevalence, demographics, lifestyle factors, and training characteristics were collected through a structured questionnaire. A logistic regression model was used to determine the risk factors associated with LBP in participants. The results revealed that the 12-month prevalence of LBP was 62.5% whereas the lifetime and point prevalence were 73.6% and 20.3%, respectively. The distribution of LBP prevalence among sport types was as follows: football (19.0%), rugby (22.0%), basketball (14.0%) and volleyball (24.2%). Results showed that LBP led to a relatively high absence rate from training sessions (66.5%), competitions (20.5%) and classes (22.7%). Logistic regression analysis revealed that risk factors, such as age, body height, body weight, years of experience, training hours per day and week, level of competition, and smoking, were not statistically significant predictors ($p>0.05$) of LBP among the studied university athletes. LBP is highly prevalent among university athletes in the Colombo District, affecting sports and academic work. Potential risk factors, including age, experience, training duration and level of competition, did not have significant associations with LBP. Our findings indicate the necessity for specific prevention programmes and early interventions to reduce the prevalence and impact of LBP.

**Keywords:** *Low back pain*, *University athletes*, *Self-reported prevalence*, *Risk factors*