

# PREVALENCE OF RAPID WEIGHT LOSS PRACTICES AND THEIR PROFILES AMONG NON-ELITE COMBAT ATHLETES IN KUCHING, EAST MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** Rapid Weight Loss (RWL) is a common practice in combat sports where weight is classified to ensure equitable competition in terms of strength and agility. This study aimed to investigate the profiles of non-elite combat athletes and their RWL practices. **Material and methods.** This research was a cross-sectional study conducted in Kuching, Sarawak. Data were collected using a validated self-administered dual-language questionnaire. **Results.** A total of 65 respondents participated in the study; two-thirds were male, and the majority were taekwondo athletes. About 66% of the respondents reported to have practised rapid weight loss, with average weight loss of 3.4 kg (SD = 1.90) and highest weight loss of 4.9 kg (SD = 3.16). The most common RWL methods used were exercising more (69.8%), gradual dieting (51.1%), and training in heated rooms (20.8%). Physical trainers and training colleagues were rated as persons having the most influence on the use of RWL by the respondents. The perceived adverse effects which were mentioned the most frequently by the respondents were fatigue (69.2%), decreased vigour (50.8%), and muscle cramps (46.2%). As for the type of combat sport practised, muay thai and jiu jitsu had the highest number of respondents who used RWL. There were significant differences in RWL practices depending on the influences of training colleagues, physicians/doctors, physical trainers, parents, dieticians, and former athletes as well as perceived adverse effects of RWL. **Conclusions.** The findings of the current study were observed to be similar to those of research involving elite combat sport athletes where the prevalence of RWL was reasonably high, with similar characteristics. A proper regulatory programme should be put in place to assist both the athletes and their coaches/trainers in implementing proper weight control.

**Key words:** striking and non-striking combat sports, extreme weight loss, perceived adverse effects of rapid weight loss