



## Prevalence of Use of Sports Trainer Services in Japanese High Schools: A Nationwide Survey

Yosuke Shibata<sup>1\*</sup>, Yasunari Kurita<sup>1,2</sup>, Kaho Morishita<sup>1,3</sup>, Toshiyuki Ojima<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hamamatsu University School of Medicine, Hamamatsu, Japan

<sup>2</sup> Tokoha University, Shizuoka, Japan

<sup>3</sup> Seirei Health Care Division, Hamamatsu, Japan



OPEN ACCESS



DOI : <https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v5i6.706>

### Sections Info

#### Article history:

Submitted: October 10, 2024

Final Revised: November 13, 2024

Accepted: November 21, 2024

Published: December 07, 2024

#### Keywords:

Adolescent;

School teachers;

Students;

Youth sports.



### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Sports trainers contribute to the safety of adolescent athletes. The status of sports trainer services (STS) that use a trainer-certified system and trainer perceptions differ among countries, and reports from different countries are needed to promote the global use of STS. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of STS and the reasons for its use in Japanese high schools. **Method:** A cross-sectional study was conducted in 2022. Participants were all club activity coaches from all high schools (around 70,000 coaches) in Japan. The primary outcome was the prevalence of STS use. We obtained information on the payment status when STS was used and the reasons they were not. **Results:** Of the 6045 coaches included, 10.5% used STS. Volunteer trainers comprised 29.9%, and if they were paid a fee, it needed to be more for a living. The most common reason for not using STS was "no suitable person" (70.8%). **Novelty:** This was the first large-scale survey of the prevalence of STS use in Japanese high schools. The prevalence of STS use in Japanese high schools was low.

### INTRODUCTION

Sports participation is common among adolescents. Globally, 47.0%–53.0% of adolescents participate in sports (Aubert et al., 2022). However, injuries often occur in sports (Japan Sport Council, 2023; Prieto-González et al., 2021), with approximately 57.0% of injuries in Japanese high schools occurring in sports clubs. Prevention and coping with sports injuries are essential issues in schools.

In Japan, sports trainers are attracting attention because of their ability to contribute to the safety of adolescent athletes. Sports trainers can provide first aid and appropriate rehabilitation and injury prevention exercise programs. There are several types of sports trainers, including athletic trainers, who mainly provide first aid and rehabilitation (Hirschhorn et al., 2023), and strength trainers, who mainly provide strength training and help improve movement using resistance exercise (National Strength and Conditioning Association).

In some countries, such as the United States and Canada, athletic trainers are regarded as quasi-medical qualifications. In the United States, to become an athletic trainer, they must graduate with a master's degree and pass a comprehensive test at the National Athletic Trainers' Association, b) Athletic trainer is a well-established profession (Lacy et al., 2023), c) and employed in approximately 66.0% of high schools (Huggins et al., 2019). In Canada, athletic trainers must complete the bachelor's degree and athletic therapy program at Canadian Athletic Therapists Association -accredited institution. There is no national qualification for athletic trainers in Japan, but the Japan Sports Association certifies an athletic trainer. To become an athletic trainer, they must have

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