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The Role of Athlete Education in Preventing Doping and its Legal Aspects

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the pivotal role of athlete education in combating doping in professional sports, emphasizing its preventive value and legal implications. Doping, the use of prohibited substances or methods to enhance performance, poses significant ethical, health, and reputational challenges. Despite rigorous testing and enforcement by bodies like the World Anti-Doping Agency, doping persists, often due to athletes' unawareness, cultural pressures, or inadequate educational frameworks. This research examines how holistic, value-based educational programs, which prioritize personal integrity and fair play, compare to traditional information-based approaches in shaping athletes' attitudes toward anti-doping policies. A literature review indicates that well-structured educational initiatives enhance athletes' perceptions of policy legitimacy, trustworthiness, and procedural fairness, fostering voluntary compliance with anti-doping measures. The study also navigates the complex legal landscape, particularly the strict liability standard, which holds athletes accountable for banned substances in their bodies, regardless of intent. While this principle ensures fairness, it has drawn criticism for harsh penalties in cases of unintentional doping, such as through contaminated supplements, prompting calls for balancing enforcement with athletes' rights. By integrating insights from ethical and legal scholarship, this paper advocates for comprehensive educational reforms to address knowledge gaps and cultural influences, ultimately reducing doping incidents. The findings underscore the need for a synergistic approach combining robust education with equitable legal frameworks to uphold the integrity of sports while safeguarding athletes' well-being.

I. INTRODUCTION

Doping is one of the most critical problems in sports if and only if the competition manners are being questioned and there are bets on the health of all athletes. And despite strict regulations and testing, some organizations, including the World Anti-Doping Agency, have completely failed to eradicate the use of performance-enhancing drugs. From rules to enforcement and through education of the athletes, all efforts in doping prevention must be

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equal. Additional advantages include the educational programs that raise awareness among the athletes of the ethical, health, and legal implications surrounding doping². This can have the positive effect of deterrence in the decision-making of a few athletes against doping.

This study investigates the relationship between athlete education and legal doping in preventing doping. The article reviews how education shapes the knowledge of the anti-doping legal position of athletes and whether current approaches to educating athletes adequately respond to these challenges. The work is therefore presented with the ultimate view of stressing the need for legal information in doping education: better to equip the athletes with doping rules complexities and contribute to a larger goal, namely that of ensuring sport is clean.

In this regards, the article reviews the old anti-doping programs and examines, therefore how educational programs affect the perception of doping and adherence of athletes towards anti-doping policies. Recent literature reveals that educational effective interventions relate to increased acceptance of policies meaning that effective educational interventions increase compliance with anti-doping laws³. It relates to the ethical and legal dilemmas affecting athletes, especially under the doctrine of strict liability, where an athlete would be liable to whatever was found in the system which has been banned. Such findings suggest the need for better educational strategies that create clean sport values and reduce the number of inadvertent rule infractions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Doping in Sports and Its Impact on Integrity and Health

History of research into doping in sports has shown that the problem is relevant to the health of athletes, sport ethics, and integrity. The use of performance-enhancing drugs and techniques poses a threat to the ideas of fair play and poses greater risks for athletes' health⁴ in their cardiovascular, hormonal, and psychological settings⁵. Møller's work defines how doping violates sport's core values and subsequently risks the health of athletes participating in this sport, particularly youths whose definition of sport may be shaped by what is perceived

² Jan Todd & Terry Todd, *Significant Events in the History of Drug Testing and the Olympic Movement: 1960-1999*, in DOPING IN ELITE SPORT: THE POLITICS OF DRUGS IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT 65, 67

(Wayne Wilson & Edward Derse eds., Human Kinetics 2001).

³ WILLIAM N. TAYLOR, MACHO MEDICINE: A HISTORY OF THE ANABOLIC STEROID EPIDEMIC 1 (1991).

⁴ Hartgens, F., & Kuipers, H. (2004). *Effects of Androgenic-Anabolic Steroids in Athletes*. Sports Medicine

⁵ Laure, P., & Binsinger, C. (2005). *Doping prevalence among preadolescent athletes: A 4-year follow-up*. British Journal of Sports Medicine.

through observed PED use⁶. Laure and Binsinger's works reported the grave health consequences encountered by preadolescent athletes associated with doping use-increased risks of addiction and permanent physical consequences⁷. Such findings lead to the demand for actions that safeguard both the well-being of athletes and the integrity of sports as an activity based on fair competition.

Anti-Doping Education (ADE): Objective and Program Structure

Anti-doping education (ADE) has aims such as setting standards for moral action, informing athletes about dangers to their health, and promoting clean sport climates. Moreover, widespread ADE programs are thought to be good catalysts for athlete behavioral and attitudinal change against doping. Backhouse and McKenna indicate that ADE should do more than being cognizant of the rules toward a moral position against doping and education on the risks of PED-related physiological harm⁸. Empirical studies are now showing that full ADE, which delivers constant education, ethical education, and decision-making skill sets, is more effective than basic ADE, which is only adopted to expose a player or coach to the basic rules and risks involved with such matters⁹.

The study by Gucciardi and Chan shows that integrity-based education leads the athlete to internalize anti-doping values, thus reducing the chances of doping in the long run¹⁰. Similarly, Engelberg and Moston emphasize the importance of social and psychological factors in ADE, where athletes who hold a strong ethical base and anti-doping education have a lesser rate of doping intent¹¹. This shows that ADE programs with deep ethical and psychological components are needed to ensure adherence to anti-doping principles over the long term.

Role of ADE in Shaping Athletes' Beliefs and Intentions to Dope

It is well understood that ADE plays an important role in shaping the beliefs and intentions of athletes regarding doping. ADE has been proved to influence the perception of athletes regarding doping as positive; as a result, the intention to use PEDs reduces¹². Barkoukis and

⁶ Møller, V. (2010). *The Ethics of Doping and Anti-Doping: Redeeming the Soul of Sport?* Routledge

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Backhouse, S. H., & McKenna, J. (2012). *Doping in sport: A review of policy, prevention, and intervention strategies*. Sports Medicine.

⁹ Engelberg, T., & Moston, S. (2014). *The role of education programs in anti-doping: A review of evidence*. Journal of Sports Sciences

¹⁰ Gucciardi, D. F., & Chan, D. K. C. (2014). *Integrity as a protective factor against doping in sport*. Psychology of Sport and Exercise.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Lentillon-Kaestner, V., & Carstairs, C. (2010). *Doping use among young elite cyclists: A qualitative psychosociological approach*. Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports.

Lazuras discovered that ADE does not only prevent an athlete from doping but also helps the athlete to counter social influence, and as a result, doping is neither deemed acceptable nor tolerable in that culture¹³. ADE also establishes social and descriptive norms, so when the athletes find that doping is socially unacceptable, then such acts are less likely to occur in them.

The study by Overbye and Wagner indicates that the effectiveness of ADE also fosters trust in anti-doping authorities. An athlete, being knowledgeable about how anti-doping works and the rules, is more likely to believe in the justness of the authorities in anti-doping¹⁴. It is because it is necessary that athletes who distrust organizations for anti-doping are more inclined to view even legitimate rules as arbitrary and hence not comply and adhere with them.

Legal Frameworks and Anti-Doping Policies

Legal frameworks governing anti-doping rest around WADA's Code that brings anti-doping policies within countries and sports onto an equal level¹⁵. WADA Code is an international effort at producing a uniform outlawed substances list, testing practice, and sanctions across nations and, by extension, among sports¹⁶. According to Houlihan's research, this international code affirms fair competition because it enforces equal measures to stop doping through uniformity in doping efforts among athletes of different countries¹⁷.

National anti-doping laws and policies vary from one another according to the legal standards and enforcement mechanisms existing within each country. For example, the U.S. and Australia enjoy robust national anti-doping organizations functioning under the auspices of each country's legal regimes but otherwise conform to WADA requirements¹⁸. The paper on regional variation in international adoption by Hanstad, Smith, and Waddington underscores how the local legal structure may facilitate or allow obstructions to ADE effectiveness through the implementation strategies¹⁹. This reflects the need for flexible anti-doping policies addressing global requirements and regional needs.

¹³ Overbye, M., & Wagner, U. (2013). *Experiences, attitudes and trust: A qualitative study of elite athletes' perception of anti-doping policy*. International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics.

¹⁴ World Anti-Doping Agency. (2021). *The World Anti-Doping Code*. WADA

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Houlihan, B. (2002). *Dying to Win: Doping in Sport and the Development of Anti-Doping Policy*. Council of Europe Publishing.

¹⁷ U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. (2021). *USADA's Role in Anti-Doping Programs*. USADA.

¹⁸ Hanstad, D. V., Smith, A., & Waddington, I. (2008). *The establishment of the World Anti-Doping Agency: A study of the management of organizational change and unplanned outcomes*. International Review for the Sociology of Sport.

¹⁹ Gelfand, M. J., et al. (2011). *Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study*. Science.

Culture and Society Influence Anti-Doping Education

Culture and social factors have a deep impact on the efficacy of anti-doping education. Gelfand's concept of cultural "tightness-looseness may be applied here: perhaps tight cultures, that are better at strictly controlling through more prescriptive norms for people's behaviors, will enforce anti-doping policies more effectively while looser cultures with more lenient norms will face more challenges in reaching comparable compliance levels, and extra tailoring of ADE approaches may be required by them to reach higher levels.

Cross-national studies also show that societal perceptions of doping and public attitudes toward anti-doping regulation shape ADE outcomes. Waddington research indicates that the responses of athletes to ADE vary across cultural and legal contexts. Some nations emphasize ethical training while in others, hardcore enforcement is followed²⁰. Case studies on anti-doping programs enacted in countries like Japan and Australia further document context-sensitive approaches toward ADE that encourage greater compliance by focusing on particular cultural values and attitudes²¹.

III. INTRODUCTION TO DOPING IN SPORTS

Doping in sports is defined as the use of banned performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) or methods that violate sports regulations. Its history spans back to ancient Olympic Games where athletes reportedly used special diets to enhance performance²². The issue gained global attention in the 1960s with high-profile doping cases, leading to increased regulation²³. Overview of Common Doping Substances and Methods: The most frequently used doping agents include anabolic steroids, stimulants, erythropoietin (EPO), and blood doping²⁴. These enhance endurance, strength, and recovery, but are associated with adverse health effects such as cardiovascular disease and hormonal imbalance²⁵. Impact on Athlete Health and Sports Integrity: Doping presents considerable risks to athlete health, including psychological harm, dependency, and increased mortality risks²⁶. It also compromises fair competition and public trust in sports, as it skews performance outcomes and undermines the integrity of competitive

²⁰ Lee, M. C., & Kwok, P. (2020). *The impact of social and cultural factors on doping attitudes and behavior*. Asian Journal of Sports Science.

²¹ Waddington, I. (2019). *Doping in Sport: Global Ethical Issues*. Routledge.

²² Møller, V. (2010). *The Ethics of Doping and Anti-Doping: Redeeming the Soul of Sport?* Routledge.

²³ WADA. (2021). *A Brief History of Anti-Doping*. World Anti-Doping Agency.

²⁴ Bahrke, M. S., & Yesalis, C. E. (2002). *Performance-Enhancing Substances in Sport and Exercise*. Human Kinetics.

²⁵ Hartgens, F., & Kuipers, H. (2004). *Effects of Androgenic-Anabolic Steroids in Athletes*. Sports Medicine.

²⁶ Laure, P., & Binsinger, C. (2005). *Doping prevalence among preadolescent athletes: A 4-year follow-up*. British Journal of Sports Medicine.

sports²⁷.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF ANTI-DOPING EDUCATION FOR ATHLETES

Anti-doping education aims to prevent doping by fostering a commitment to clean sports and educating athletes on health risks, ethical considerations, and regulatory compliance²⁸. Education is considered key in encouraging adherence to ethical standards and building resilience against doping pressures²⁹. Comprehensive ADE includes regular training, workshops, and digital resources covering substance risks, legal obligations, and decision-making frameworks³⁰. It seeks to embed ethical standards, encouraging informed and ethical choices regarding performance enhancement³¹. Basic ADE may only cover rules and risks, whereas comprehensive programs also address ethics, self-efficacy, and the psychological reasons behind doping³². Studies show comprehensive ADE leads to deeper understanding and commitment to doping prevention among athletes³³.

V. BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT OF ANTI-DOPING EDUCATION ON ATHLETES

Anti-doping education positively shapes athletes' beliefs and attitudes toward doping, reducing their intent to dope³⁴. Research suggests that educated athletes demonstrate greater resilience against peer pressure and temptation to use PEDs³⁵. ADE influences social norms by encouraging a collective understanding that doping is unethical. This can create a ripple effect, promoting an anti-doping culture where clean competition is the shared norm³⁶. Effective ADE builds trust in anti-doping authorities by explaining rules and the testing process. Athletes who understand the importance of anti-doping measures tend to view these

²⁷ Pitsch, W., & Emrich, E. (2012). *The frequency of doping in elite sport: Results of a replication study*. International Review for the Sociology of Sport.

²⁸ Backhouse, S. H., & McKenna, J. (2012). *Doping in sport: A review of policy, prevention, and intervention strategies*. Sports Medicine.

Mazanov, J., & Huybers, T. (2010). *An empirical model of athlete decisions to use performance-enhancing drugs: Qualitative evidence*. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health.

²⁹ Petróczi, A. (2007). *Attitudes and doping: A structural equation analysis of the relationship between athletes' attitudes, sport orientation and doping behavior*. Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy.

³⁰ Engelberg, T., & Moston, S. (2014). *The role of education programs in anti-doping: A review of evidence*. Journal of Sports Sciences.

³¹ WADA. (2021). *The Education Strategy of the World Anti-Doping Agency*. World Anti-Doping Agency.

³² Gucciardi, D. F., & Chan, D. K. C. (2014). *Integrity as a protective factor against doping in sport*. Psychology of Sport and Exercise.

³³ Mazanov, J., & Huybers, T. (2010). *An empirical model of athlete decisions to use performance-enhancing drugs: Qualitative evidence*. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health.

³⁴ Barkoukis, V., & Lazuras, L. (2015). *The impact of anti-doping policies on athletes' intentions to dope*. Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports.

³⁵ Donovan, R. J., Egger, G., Kapernick, V., & Mendoza, J. (2002). *A conceptual framework for achieving performance-enhancing drug compliance in sport*. Sports Medicine.

³⁶ Lentillon-Kaestner, V., & Carstairs, C. (2010). *Doping use among young elite cyclists: A qualitative psychosociological approach*. Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports.

organizations as more legitimate³⁷.

VI. LEGAL FRAMEWORKS GOVERNING ANTI-DOPING POLICIES

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code provides a global standard, promoting uniformity across sports and countries³⁸. The code includes lists of prohibited substances, standardized testing, and penalties for violations³⁹. Different countries adopt WADA guidelines within their own legal frameworks, reflecting national priorities and legal requirements⁴⁰. For instance, the U.S. and Australia have robust national anti-doping organizations that work alongside WADA⁴¹. Athletes are required to comply with testing and avoid banned substances. They have legal rights, including the right to fair hearing if accused of doping⁴². This balance is essential in upholding fairness and accountability⁴³.

VII. ROLE OF CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL FACTORS IN ANTI-DOPING EDUCATION

Cultural norms impact how anti-doping education is perceived and implemented. In "tight" cultures with strong adherence to social norms, athletes may show higher compliance⁴⁴. Conversely, "loose" cultures may require more adaptive approaches to achieve compliance⁴⁵. Studies suggest that anti-doping education's effectiveness varies internationally. Cultural perceptions of doping, societal attitudes, and local enforcement standards impact ADE outcomes⁴⁶. Country-specific case studies demonstrate how tailored anti-doping strategies can be effective. For example, Japan's emphasis on ethical training aligns with cultural values, contributing to high compliance⁴⁷, whereas other countries may emphasize strict monitoring and enforcement⁴⁸.

³⁷ Overbye, M., & Wagner, U. (2013). *Experiences, attitudes and trust: A qualitative study of elite athletes' perception of anti-doping policy*. International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics.

³⁸ World Anti-Doping Agency. (2021). *The World Anti-Doping Code*. WADA.

³⁹ Houlihan, B. (2002). *Dying to Win: Doping in Sport and the Development of Anti-Doping Policy*. Council of Europe Publishing.

⁴⁰ Hanstad, D. V., Smith, A., & Waddington, I. (2008). *The establishment of the World Anti-Doping Agency: A study of the management of organizational change and unplanned outcomes*. International Review for the Sociology of Sport.

⁴¹ U.S. Anti-Doping Agency. (2021). *USADA's Role in Anti-Doping Programs*. USADA.

⁴² Ritchie, I. (2014). *From Fair Play to Consent Theory: Fairness, Legal Moralism and Doping in Sport*. Journal of Sport History.

⁴³ McLaren, R. H. (2016). *The Independent Person Report*. World Anti-Doping Agency.

⁴⁴ Gelfand, M. J., et al. (2011). *Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study*. Science

⁴⁵ Lee, M. C., & Kwok, P. (2020). *The impact of social and cultural factors on doping attitudes and behavior*. Asian Journal of Sports Science.

⁴⁶ Waddington, I. (2019). *Doping in Sport: Global Ethical Issues*. Routledge.

⁴⁷ Hori, H. (2017). *Anti-Doping Education in Japan: Cultural Perspectives and Policy Implementation*. Japan Journal of Physical Education.

⁴⁸ Engelberg, T., & Moston, S. (2016). *Legal and policy approaches to doping prevention: Case studies*. International Journal of Law in Context.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Education plays a critical role in the fight against doping in sports, as it instills essential values such as integrity, honesty, and compliance among athletes. By implementing comprehensive anti-doping education programs that encompass ethical discussions and practical information, we can significantly enhance athletes' understanding of the regulations and encourage their support for clean sports practices.

However, the complex legal landscape presents numerous challenges, particularly with the strict liability standard that often imposes heavy and sometimes unfair burdens on athletes. This research highlights the urgent need to create educational interventions that not only impart knowledge about the dangers of doping and the associated regulations but also address the pressing legal concerns that athletes face. Such initiatives would foster a fairer and more transparent system for all involved.

Moreover, effective anti-doping education must be culturally adapted to resonate with diverse athlete populations, making it an essential tool for nurturing long-term adherence to the values of clean sport. By empowering athletes with the right knowledge and support, we can build a robust foundation for integrity in sports that prioritizes fair competition and ethical behavior.
