

# PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS IN SPORTS

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# Performance Enhancement Drugs in Sports

## Research Question

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What are the factors that influence individuals in sports to use performance enhancement drugs?

## Introduction

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The means through which individuals enhance their performance in sports is constantly changing. Some of the issues that have raised in relation to performance enhancement are connected with the creation of new substances that elude drug tests. The evolution of substances and strategies used to evade tests shows the determination of individuals to use the drugs. Therefore, it is essential to investigate the factors that influence people to use these substances despite the dangers of being banned from participating in sporting events.

## Literature Review

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The use of performance enhancement drugs in sports is prohibited on the grounds of health risks to the athletes and the immoral value of not playing fairly (Waddington 2005). Although many athletes have been identified for having used drugs to enhance their performance, collecting actual data is a challenge for various reasons. Firstly, testing cannot be carried out on all athletes because the practice is not economically viable (Van Raalte & Andersen 2007). Secondly, current testing methods are not always accurate because users and manufacturers of enhancement substances are ahead in masking the substances in the athletes' bodies (Tobar 2005). Finally, it is not possible to obtain data on self-reported users of the drugs because they are taken in secrecy. The current legisla-

tion by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is a punitive measure that concentrates on punishing athletes who use the prohibited substances (Strelan & Boeckmann 2006). It is essential to identify the factors that influence employees to use these substances in order to create the effective preventive measures.

The current legislation that deals with doping in sports are based on the perceptual deterrence theory. The theory is based on the role of legal sanctions in influencing behavior (Sokolowska 2006). The theory is supported by the rational models of human behavior that explains how individuals make decisions. The rational models of human behavior asserts that people's decisions are based on a conscious cost-benefit analysis (Simon et al. 2006). The models suggest that people reach them by evaluating the utility and probability of the outcomes (Nagin & Pogarsky 2003). The current legislation defines the prohibited drugs and substances and the punitive measures associated with their usage. The punitive measures are meant to deter athletes from using the performance enhancement substances. The theory's limitation is that it ignores the fact that sometimes people make irrational decisions based on subjective notions (Jones, Hanton & Connaughton 2007). Therefore, the theory can be used in conjunction with the prospect theory to evaluate the factors influencing athletes to use performance enhancement drugs.

The prospect theory can support the deterrence one because it acknowledges that misconceptions and biases influence the decision making process, making it irrational. According to this theory, individuals' decisions vary depending on how prospective outcomes of a decision are framed as either losses or gains (Edwards et al. 2001). Understanding the decision making process of athletes can help policy makers to design preventive messages that will have the significant influence on the athletes (Abhyankar, O'Connor &

Lawton 2008). In addition, the understanding of the process can highlight the factors that affect the athletes' decision to use performance-enhancing drugs (Diehm & Armatas 2004).

## Research Philosophy, Strategy and Methodology

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The research philosophy used in this paper is phenomenological because the research topic relates to a social phenomenon that cannot be evaluated without consideration of subjectivity (Panneerselvam 2004). The problem of performance enhancing drugs is a social one that is influenced by subjectivity such as internal decision processes. Decision making sometimes is irrational and based on internal biases and perceptions. The investigation of the factors that influence athletes to use performance enhancing drugs will, therefore, encounter socially constructed results. According to phenomenological paradigm, human interests drive science, which contrasts with the positivist paradigm that science is value-free. Therefore, the research topic related to social problems such as drug enhancement in sports can be completely covered using phenomenological philosophy. In addition, phenomenological philosophy uses small samples that are investigated in depth and can comprise a large number of people. This contrasts with the positivist philosophy that focuses on large samples (Cresswell & Eklund 2007). Since my research sample involves students from my university, phenomenological philosophy is the best one for the research. The results of the phenomenological philosophy produce qualitative data that is detailed and subjective. It was clear from the literature review that decision making process can either be rational or irrational. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the value of subjectivity, especially in a topic like this that involves people's internal mental processes during decision making. Phenomenological philosophy allows for subjectivity and, thus, suits to this research.

The research involves a topic that focuses on the value of gathered information rather than the numerical aspect of the information. Therefore, the best research strategy for this research is ethnography, which concentrates on observed human patterns. This research strategy can be successfully employed in the phenomenological philosophy because the latter accepts subjectivity that is characteristic of ethnography. The research uses a questionnaire as the methodological tool for collecting data. The use of the questionnaire is essential because it is easy to administer questionnaires with the help of delegation. The questionnaires can be administered by another person on behalf of the researcher, thus giving the researcher time. Questionnaires are best suited to this research because some respondents may feel uncomfortable while attending face-to-face interview because of the perception that doping is inappropriate. The questionnaire, therefore, provides a channel where the respondent can give genuine information while enjoying the comfort of solitude.

## Ethical Implication of the Research

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This research followed the university policies on ethical academic conduct. The findings and materials used in this research are original. While referring to the ideas from other works, proper referencing has been carried out to acknowledge the original author's work. In any research, the anonymity of the respondents is crucial. The importance of anonymity is heightened further where the research topic has legal implications or reputation issues. Information on the use of drug enhancement in sports can ruin the reputation and career of the respondents. To ensure that their reputation and careers are intact, this research assured the respondents that they would not be identified and the information provided would remain confidential. The university requires students to fill in the

consent form. The latter ensures that the respondents voluntarily provide information to the researcher and are fully aware of the implications of their involvement. Before the commencement of this research, a consent form was filled, submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, and approved. The approval was an indication that the research has ascertained its adherence to the Staffordshire University ethical standards.

## Data Collection Method

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The research aims to investigate the factors that influence athletes to use performance enhancing drugs. The chosen data collection method is the use of questionnaires. The research topic is highly subjective, which means that the results may vary considerably. This calls for a data collection method that can gather a vast amount of data to have a thorough understanding of the research topic. The use of questionnaires meets this threshold because they can be issued to different respondents even in the absence of the researcher (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006). The researcher can delegate the duty to another person, which saves time while accomplishing a massive task. In comparison to the interviews, the use of questionnaire prevails because the first ones require the researcher to be present during the survey. Respondents in this research may feel uncomfortable while providing information related to their doping activities because the latter is considered to be a vice in the society. To avoid close scrutiny, such respondents may prefer questionnaires to interview questions. However, this data collection has its limitation that may hinder its effectiveness. The absence of the researcher when the respondent fills in the questionnaire limits the researcher's ability to gauge time dedicated to the questionnaire. In addition, there is no probing for more information like in interviews. Despite the shortfalls, the use of questionnaires is the best data collection method because of the many subjective results

expected from the respondents. Before administering the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted using ten students.

## Data Analysis From the Pilot Study

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From the pilot study, three main factors emerged as the most compelling ones for athletes to use performance enhancing drugs and substances. The first factor was to maintain the status quo of athletic record and respect. Many athletes feel threatened when other champions break their records and occupy their positions of respect. They regard the status quo as a prestigious state that must be maintained at all costs. When the competition is extremely stiff to allow them to win naturally, they seek for help from performance enhancing drugs.

The second factor included the lucrative monetary prizes associated with winning. Across the various sports, people are amply rewarded when they win. The financial gains from winning are so attractive that athletes can do anything to win even using the performance enhancing drugs.

The third factor was the prevalence of drug usage among the top performers in various sports. When top performers continuously use the drugs without being caught, they keep enjoying success at the expense of other athletes. However, the prevalence of the drug usage may compel others to participate in doping so that they can compete head-to-head. These results indicate that the research philosophy, strategy, and methodology are reliable and valid to answer the research question and achieve the objectives. Therefore, the research philosophy, strategy, and methodology are appropriate for the study.

The pilot study provided useful information that enabled the re-

searcher to adjust the questions to enhance clarity. The researcher obtained information on the time needed to fill in the questionnaire. The information helped the researcher to predict the amount of time that can be used for allocating the respondents. The changes made to the questionnaire improved enhanced the prospects of the research results.

## Critical Evaluation of the Proposal

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The phenomenological philosophy used in this research is the most suitable compared with other philosophies such as the positivist one. The positivist philosophy provides no room for subjectivity, which is a core aspect in this study (Kumar 2005). This leaves the phenomenological philosophy as the most appropriate one for the research. The use of the questionnaire in this research as the preferred data collection methodology was used to identify many subjective probable causes of doping. The use of other data collection tools such as interviews would have been time consuming and would have covered a limited number of respondents. Therefore, the use of questionnaires was the best choice. The preference of questionnaires as the best data collection methodology has its limitations such as lack of probing for more information.

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