

Sources of Information about Prohibited Doping Substances for Elite Athletes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Doping in sports, which is the use of performance-enhancing substance, is potentially harmful to the health of the athletes and is quite unethical because it gives them an unfair competitive edge. This practice is considered a deadly game by the national and international sports organizations. This paper therefore, focuses on the sources of information about doping substances for athletes. A total of 225 (two hundred and twenty five) athletes were sampled for the study from 8 (eight) States in Nigeria using simple, purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Frequency counts, percentages and X^2 -test analysis were used to analyze the data collected at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that co-athletes, coaches, other team officials and athletes' support personnel were the main sources of information of performance enhancing substances for the athletes. Books, journals and magazines were also cited as sources of information for obtaining doping substances by the respondents. The study highlighted the strategies for the effective control of sources of awareness of doping in sport. Athletes should be protected and have support network to help cope with sport-related pressure and stress from co-athletes, team coaches and other athletes' support personnel. They should be informed about the various consequences of doping substances before, during and after sports competitions. Job status of coaches should not be strictly based on positive performance outcome of the athletes.

Keywords: Information, Doping substances, Over-ambitious athletes, Elite Athletes.

Introduction

Doping, the use of drugs to enhance sports performance, has occurred throughout history and is responsible, not only for some improved sporting performances, but also for unethical, unfair, unhealthy and deadly practice among the athletes. As a result of unhealthy and unethical reasons, in 1967, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) agreed to ban or restrict certain substances used to enhance physical performances. Yet, some athletes continued to experiment outside the

rules of the competition, the use of the performance-enhancing substances in spite of the awareness of the risks awaiting them if discovered through drug testing.

The Nigerian elite athletes like their counterparts in the world are also exposed to various sources of information about doping substance such as, ergogenic and psychoactive drugs. Athletes may be aware of the performance enhancing substances through the athletes' support personnel. Many have held the coaches, team physicians and trainers

who are constantly faced with the need for good performance, responsible when they are more rewarded financially and tied the enhancement of their working status to excellent performance of their athletes or winning a medal at- all- cost. For instance, in 1998, the Nigerian Drug law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) accused some sports handlers of encouraging athletes' involvement in doping. Similarly, Raplan (2001) and Council of Europe (2002) reported that some coaches, trainers and sports physicians went as far as suggesting the use of doping substances in order to be seen as top flight handlers and trainers and to retain their jobs. For instance, Michael, a world class sprinter was allegedly informed by his coach about how he could enhance his physical performance using growth supplements (a mixture of anabolic-androgenic steroid and human growth hormone) (WHO, 2002 ; Ojeikere, 2009) .

Similarly, coaches such as, Trevor Graham for US athletes, Manfred Edward for East Germany Head of Department Sports Federation and former trainer of disgraced Marian Jones, Tim Montgomery, Justin Gatlin and Ben Johnson were banned for life for violating doping rules (US Anti-Doping Agency, 2008; Peter, 2008). With the banning of amphetamine, those prone to doping turned to over-the -counter drugs (OTC) containing performance -enhancing substances such as ephedrine, pseudo-ephedrine through information available to them for the purchase in community pharmaceutical stores.

Banned substances including anabolic steroids, are widely advertised in life style magazines and gymnasias. Furthermore, it seems that, there are no control on mail order, internet sales of drugs used in sports and other mass-media. Athletes may have reported little difficulty in

obtaining information about doping substances from friends or non-athletes, who initially purchased them with the intention of presenting the athletes as gift. The indiscriminate sales of psychoactive drugs in both opened and closed markets by the quacks, and prescription of drugs by pharmacists, medicine shop -owners and unauthorized vendors either in private and public hospitals and clinics, are some of the sources of information about the use of drugs in sports.

However, other opinions blame the athletes themselves, describing them as over-ambitious elements who wish to use all available means to achieve a competitive superiority over their opponents. Information about doping substances for the athletes may be from the custom ware-houses, commercial depots and local acculturation of the hard drugs (Oshodin, 2004). This paper therefore, examined the various sources of information about doping substances available to elite athletes in Nigeria.

The general question is 'What are the sources of information about prohibited doping substances available to male and female elite athletes?' The hypothesis raised is, 'There is no significant difference in the sources of information about prohibited doping substances available to male and female elite athletes.'

Methods

A sample of 225 elite athletes was selected in three States of Nigeria using purposive, simple and stratified random sampling techniques. The three States purposively selected were Ondo, Edo and Ogun States. A total of 75elite athletes were randomly selected in each State and stratified considering sex of the athletes, the types of sports they participated in, and for equal representation in the study. Thus, 38

males and 37 female elite athletes were selected from each of the three States.

A self-developed instrument titled 'Sources of Information about Prohibited Doping Substances for the Elite Athletes Questionnaire' was used for the study. The instrument contained two sections A and B. Section A contained items on bio-data of the participants while Section B contained items related to the sources of information about prohibited doping substances used by elite athletes in Nigeria. The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained by experts in Human Kinetics and Health Education and Measurement and Evaluation. A Reliability Coefficient of 0.74 of the instrument was obtained using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation method.

The instrument was administered to 225 elite athletes in their various sports training centre/State stadium during sports training sessions (morning and evening) by the researcher, with the services of two research assistants in each State. The 225 copies of the instrument administered to the participants were duly completed and returned. Thus, making a 100% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using frequent counts, percentages and χ^2 -test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Question: What are the sources of information about prohibited doping substances available to the elite athletes?

Table 1: Percentage analysis on the sources of information about prohibited doping substances available to the elite athletes

S/N	Sources of information about prohibited doping substances	Male		Female		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
I	Friends who are non-athletes	9	9.9	7	6.3	16	7.1
Ii	Mass media / Advertisements	13	11.4	22	7.2	35	15.6
Iii	Teammates / Other athletes	31	27.2	40	36.0	71	31.6
Iv	Books and Journals	3	2.6	8	7.2	11	4.9
V	Coaches	47	41.2	13	11.7	60	26.7
Vi	Sports Organizers	0	0	8	7.2	8	3.6
Vii	Team Physicians	3	2.6	5	4.5	8	3.6
Viii	Other team officials	8	7.0	8	7.2	16	7.1

Table 1 revealed that 31.6% of the total participants indicated co-athletes or teammates as the major source of information on doping substances. Other sources of information about performance-enhancing substances for the participants include coaches (26.7%), the mass-media (15.6%), other team officials (7.1%), books and journal (4.9%) and sports trainers and team

physicians with 3.6% representatively. The result revealed that teammates, coaches and mass media are the leading sources through which elite athletes in Nigeria gather information about prohibited doping substances.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the sources of information about prohibited doping substances available to elite athletes in Nigeria

Table 2: X²- test analysis on sources of information available to male and female elite athletes in the use of prohibited doping substances

S/ N	Sources of information about prohibited doping substances	Sex		df	X ² - cal	X ² -tab	R
		Male	Female	7	281.04	14.07	*S
i	Non –athlete friends	9	7				
ii	Mass media / Advertisements	13	22				
iii	Other athletes teammates	31	40				
v	Books and Journals	3	8				
v	Coaches	47	13				
vi	Sports Organizers	0	8				
vii	Team Physicians	3	5				
viii	Other team officials	8	8				

p<0.05 level of significance

*Significant

Table 2 showed that X² - cal value of 281.04 was greater than X²-tab value of 14.07 at df = 7 and p< 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there was a significance difference in the sources of information about prohibited doping substances used by male and female elite athletes. Co-athletes and coaches were the sources used significantly and more frequently than other sources.

Discussion

The study revealed the major sources of information about performance –enhancing substances used by the elite athletes. Findings in this study indicated that athletes' major sources of information on prohibited doping substances were co-athletes and coaches. Some athletes were over-ambitious and used all means or channels available to them to achieve competitive superiority over their opponents. Thus, athletes might resort to some artificial assistance as suggested by co-athletes. This finding is consistent with the report of Tony (2003), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2005), United Nations (2005 and Synthetic Reports (2007) that some athletes were aware of

prohibited doping substances through interactions with other athletes or teammates during national and international sports competitions.

Similarly, the athletes' support personnel especially, the coaches were identified in this study as source of awareness of doping substances used by male and female athletes. Some coaches went as far as suggesting to the athletes the use of performance-enhancing substances in order to be seen as top sports handlers to retain their jobs and to enjoy financial reward awaiting them (Vioet, 2001; Weiss and Laties, 2002). Moreover, other sources of information on doping substances as revealed in this study included, mass media through advertisement, friends who are non-athletes and other team officials. This finding is similar to the reports of World Health Organization (WHO), 1993; Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (1998), Raplan (2001) and Ojeikere (2009) that elite athletes' awareness of various doping substances could be traced to sports coaches, co athletes, mass media, open markets and other sources.

Furthermore, books and health life magazines and journals of various categories were also revealed in this

study, as the channels of obtaining information on the use of performance-enhancing substances. This is also similar to the reports of Emiola (1990), Graphery (1995) and Synthetic Report (2007) that, majority of the elite athletes were students who were interested in consulting books, journals and other related magazines to enrich their knowledge on the awareness of doping substances used to artificially enhance their sports performances.

Information about performance-enhancing substances could also be traced to the team physicians, sports organizers, underground agents in the custom ware – houses and even commercial depots as revealed in this study. This is similar to the findings of Dammy (1991), Horman (1996) and Fricker (2007) that at elite level, athletes were exposed to various situations and channels of information on unethical means of winning in sports contests at all-cost.

Conclusion

It could be deduced from the study that the awareness of the various sources of performance-enhancing substances by the elite athletes ranged from the coaches, co-athletes, advertisements (mass media) to sports organizers and other team officials. This is responsible for the use of performance-enhancing substances by the athletes through various methods such as injection, oral intake, chemical and physical manipulations, and blood doping regardless of the side effects on their body systems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore, recommended that:

1. Athletes should be informed officially the various consequences of using doping

substances before, during and after sports competitions.

2. The status of athletes' support personnel should not be strictly based on the top performance level of their athletes.
3. Athletes should be protected and have support network to cope with sports-related pressure and stress from team coaches and other athletes' support personnel.
4. There should be an effort to intensify doping tests before and after sports and games competitions at both national and international sports competitions.
5. The rules and regulations guiding the effective conduct of the sports and games at the national and international levels should be strictly followed.

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