

ATTITUDES TOWARDS DOPING – A COMPARISON OF ATHLETES, NON-ATHLETES AND SPORT EXPERTS

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ABSTRACT. We are examining this topic in Hungary as a pilot study - the attitudes towards doping – a comparison of athletes, non-athletes, and sport experts. We know for a fact that the use of performance enhancing drugs has been around for several hundred years, but there has not been any major research on the attitudes towards doping. So we compared opinions on doping use by not only comparing athletes, non-athletes, and sport experts opinions but also by the gender and age of the participants' who filled out our survey forms. The aim of this study is to explore participants' attitudes towards doping use in sport. We also looked into the psychosocial effect of performance enhancing drugs on athletes.

Keywords: *doping, athletes, attitudes*

Introduction

The estimated range of various doping substances and procedures used in sports ranges from 10% to 90% (Yesalis & Bahrke, 2005). In the past years this topic has been researched mainly by the biomedical point of view, even though psychosocial approaches are also key factors in the fight against doping (Hanspeter, Lamprecht & Kamber, 2014). While this topic is well researched in international literature, we did not find any comprehensive articles on the attitude towards doping use here in Hungary. This scientific field is very important because doping is not only harmful to the physical health of athletes, it brings problems to their athletic identification as well (Kirby, Moran, & Guerin, 2011).

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Material and methods

For our research we sent out online surveys, which were anonymously filled out by 358 participants. From the information that we received, we divided the answers into different sections. Firstly, the social groups i.e. students at the University of Physical Education, the faculty at the University of Physical Education, and people who do not have any contact with the University. Secondly, the separation of gender, where there is a difference in male and females. Finally, we examine age groups, divided accordingly, <30, 30-50, >50. We used SPSS 22.0 program to analyse the answers received through our survey. After the frequency tables were made, a Chi square test was used to analyse cross tabulation of the survey data.

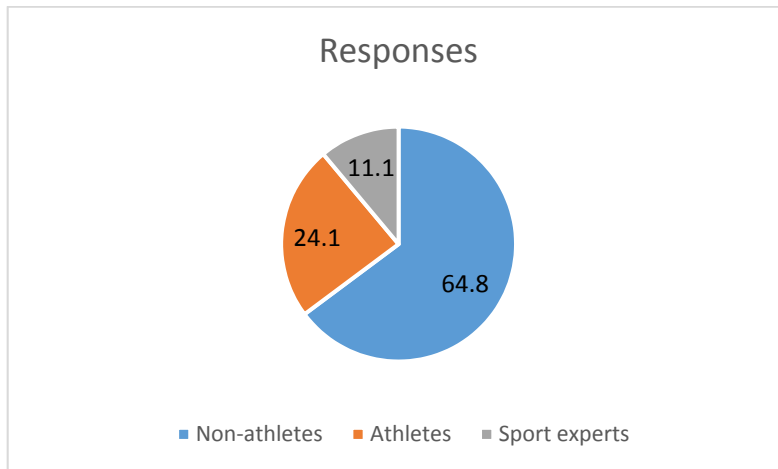


Fig. 1. Participants ratio

Results

Our research reports on attitudes towards doping in Hungary from various surveys aimed at the non-athletes of general population, elite athletes and sport experts. Analysis of the data showed that the opinions of men and women involved in the study reflected a clear difference in their attitudes toward the use of doping ($\chi^2=7.59$, $p<.006$). There was a question where we asked if they think doping use is existent in their own sport, and the results showed a difference between genders ($\chi^2=11.0$, $p<0.004$).

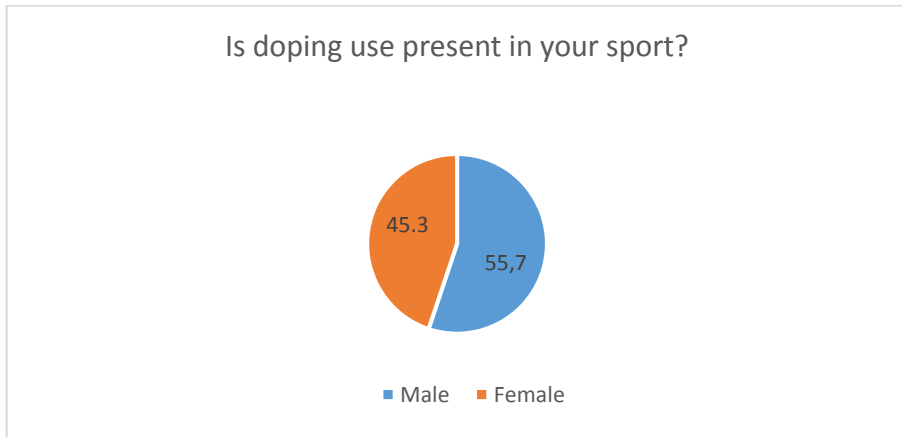


Fig. 2. The opinion on doping use in own sport, by gender

We got similar results when we asked if they would use doping substances if their international results would depend on it ($\chi^2=13.45$, $p<0.000$).

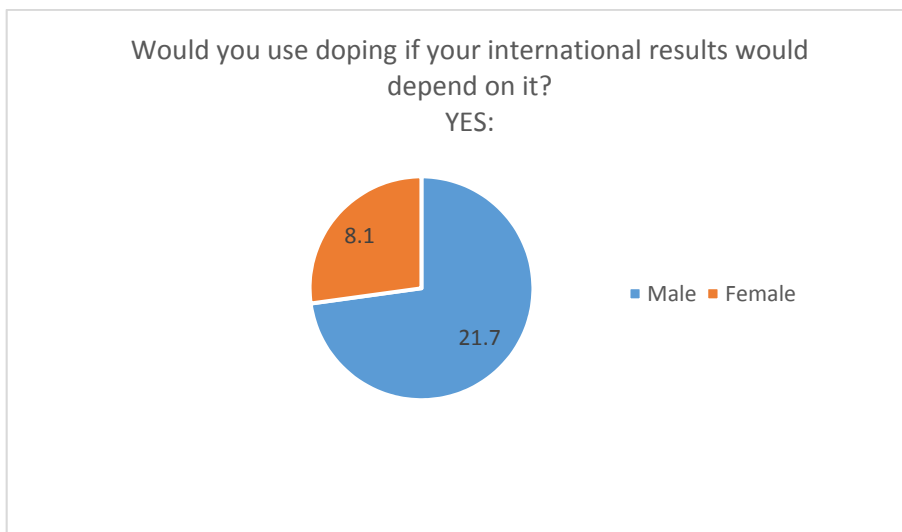


Fig. 3. Opinion on doping use for international results, by gender

This result is reflected in the different age groups. For example more people under the age of 30 would use doping, then those above the age of 30 ($\chi^2=8.36$, $p<0.015$).

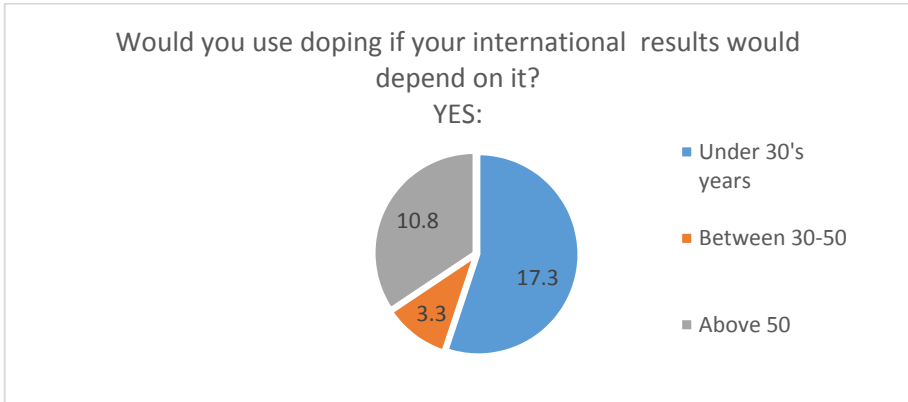


Fig. 4. Opinion on doping use for international results, by age

Non-athletes are less likely to think that Hungarian athletes use doping than student athletes ($\chi^2=13.63$, $p<0.001$). People who do not criticize doping, rationalize that it is essential in professional sports ($\chi^2=7.96$, $p<0.047$).

This was the 75% of the responses who's answered no for condemning doping use.

When we asked "Do you condemn doping use?" 85.9 % of the responders chose yes. We found that 90.4 % of women and 80,1% of men condemn the use of doping. So women are less tolerant of doping use than men.

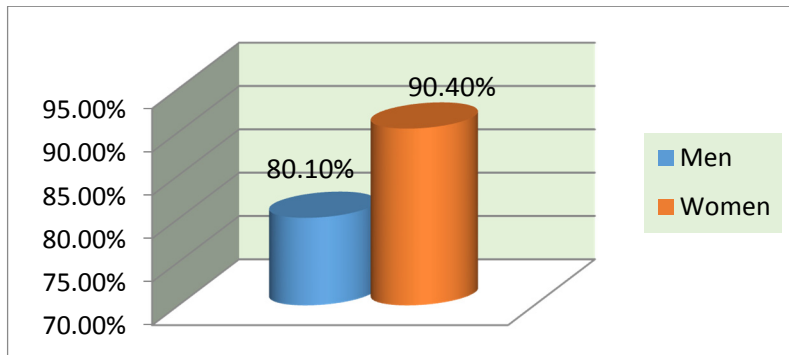


Fig. 5. Condemning the use of doping by gender

This result is reflected in the different age groups as well, people above age 50 condemn the use of doping more than the younger people.

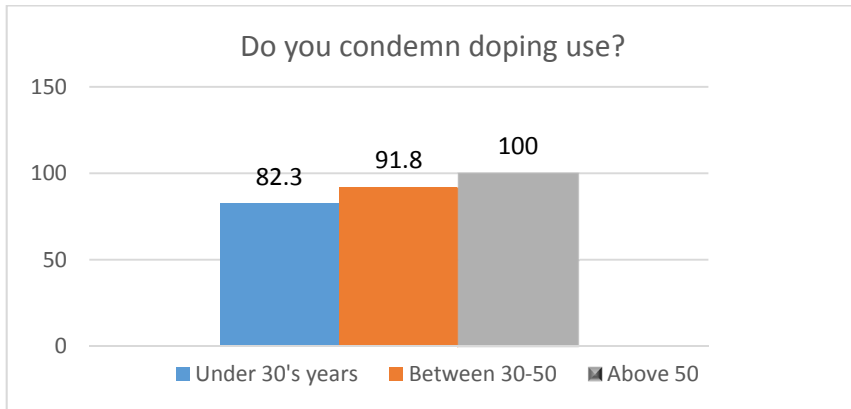


Fig. 6. Condemning the use of doping by age

Conclusions

Our findings suggest gender and age have an impact on attitudes regarding doping. Young males are more accepting of doping use. Our results conclusively show that doping is accepted because of the belief that it is indispensable at the top level of competition. This phenomenon is called a “false consensus effect”, which often appears in subcultures as an egocentric bias (Ross, Greene & House, 1977). Our future research will develop further insights about attitudes towards doping. We will continue to explore the topic with standardized test of a representative sample.

According to our results, doping is accepted because of the belief that it is indispensable at the top level of competition. This phenomenon is called a “false consensus effect”. In psychology, the false-consensus effect or false-consensus bias is an attribution type of cognitive bias whereby people tend to overestimate the extent to which their opinions, beliefs, preferences, values, and habits are normal and typical of those of others, basically they think that others also think the same way that they do. This cognitive bias tends to lead to the perception of a consensus that does not exist, a “false consensus”. Lance Armstrong’s story is one of the most known doping violations. Here is what he said in an interview at the Oprah Show.

Oprah: “Did you feel by any mean that you were cheating? “

Armstrong: “No, and that’s terrifying. He had not felt like he was cheating because cheating meant to gain unfair rival over a foe, implying that all his rivals were also cheating.

The another story from the Russian Scandal, here is what they said after their caught on the ARD TV: “They tell the coaches that without doping, winning is impossible, and the coaches say the same thing to their athletes. Because of this, neither the athletes nor the coaches feel that they are doing something wrong.”

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