

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT
BUCHAREST**

DOCTORAL SCHOOL



ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

**Title of the doctoral thesis: ANTI-DOPING EDUCATION STRATEGIES BASED ON
ACTIV-PARTICIPATIVE METHODS FOR HIGH LEVEL ATHLETES
(14-16 year old)**

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Introduction

Sports education has the role of promoting ethical values and behaviors, thus contributing to the protection of athletes and the development of sports activities. It also allows you to create a considerable impact on the general public, strengthening their knowledge and level of understanding of sport.

In World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) documents, education is defined as "the process of instilling values and developing behaviors that promote and protect the spirit of sport, as well as the prevention of intentional and unintentional doping."

The qualitative improvement of the level of education in sport is absolutely necessary in the context of complex changes in family life, community, multicultural society and globalization. Quality education means a different approach, by involving specialists of different categories, practitioners of physical exercises, but also educational partners, starting with parents, civil society, media and the community, in joint projects aimed at sustainable procurement.

Motivation and purpose

From the practice of anti-doping education in which I have participated, so far, as an ANAD advisor, I have found that athletes do not have enough information, do not ask for advice or do not make correct decisions, which is why there are positive doping cases, of the most diverse kind. Here are some examples: *an athlete who took a cold pill, without packaging, because her grandmother gave it to her; an athlete who took a food supplement from the gym because the colleagues were also taking it.*

On the other hand, the educational materials intended for anti-doping education are not specialized for 14-16 year olds, and those that exist are not translated into Romanian.

The research conducted at ANAD between 2008 and 2010 (Vâjială et al, 2010) regarding the risk of consumption shows that this risk is very high in junior athletes, especially those in second, third and lower places, and that athletes have the greatest trust in the physician and the coach. Young and adult athletes are "role models" for juniors and, that is why anti-doping education is very important in this age group. Even if they reject the idea of doping in others, when it comes to their self-image (physical and mental) they are willing to resort to prohibited substances. Given this risk, it is recommended to set up more psychological counseling centers for athletes and as many psychologist positions as possible in sports clubs.

A wider dissemination of anti-doping rules is needed for athletes up to 18 years of age and, especially, for boys' groups.

Part I of the thesis

The theoretical background

Part I of the thesis includes four chapters in which we wanted to highlight the most important aspects of anti-doping education in all its forms.

In the first chapter, we detailed anti-doping education as a component of sports education, education for clean sport and the relationship with the other components of education, the relationship of anti-doping education with physical, intellectual, moral, civic and aesthetic education. We have listed anti-doping education campaigns at national and international level and we have conducted a SWOT analysis on anti-doping education in Romania.

In the second chapter, I have substantiated anti-doping education from a psychological point of view with psychological, social and situational factors. We have addressed morality in sports, motivational climate and moral development through the stages of moral development.

In the third chapter, I have substantiated moral education from a pedagogical point of view. We have detailed the models of moral development, negative moral education and situationism, the objectives of moral education, the contents of moral education, the methodology of moral education, the structure of moral education programs and the purposes of anti-doping education.

In the fourth chapter, I detailed the conclusions of the theoretical part.

Part II of the thesis

Part II of the thesis comprises four studies on the effectiveness of anti-doping education in athletes aged 14 – 16 years, which have highlighted the following aspects:

- Establishing a theoretical-conceptual model regarding the conditional internal factors of doping behavior, differentiated by a certain age category;
- Identifying, based on the specific literature, the components of moral education that will be applied in anti-doping education of athletes, within the experimental research.

Study on athletes' attitudes towards the consumption of doping substances

The purpose of the study aimed to investigate the opinion of those aged 14-16 years, regarding the use of prohibited substances and methods to increase sports performance.

Research Questions

1. To the people in the athlete's entourage who are against the use of prohibited substances or methods and the reasons why some athletes resort to doping?
2. Do the type of sport, gender, age and context (social and individual factors, the environment in which the athlete carries out his activity) influence doping in sport?

Results

The answer to the first question is that the institutions authorized to fight against doping must first inform and educate the coaches and, secondly, the athlete's entourage. The lack of information about doping, the pressure felt and the high level of records in competitions, as well as the fact that athletes can quickly perform better are the main factors that lead them to resort to doping.

People with a great influence on athletes (especially coaches, parents and teammates) can support the athlete in adopting a correct behavior, namely not to consume prohibited substances, even if the pressure of competitions and the high level of records is very high.

In relation to the second question of our research, it was found that gender matters very little, but nevertheless, doping is mostly found in boys. The coach's advice, the pressure of competition and substance addiction are what determine the athlete to use doping. Athletes resort to doping due to the pressure of their colleagues, the lack of time required for training and due to the pressure of the competition. The entourage can influence the pro-doping attitude.

Study on the effectiveness of an anti-doping education program for a junior rugby team

The purpose The study aimed to highlight the effects of providing an anti-doping education program with the help of active-participatory methods, a relationship of risk factors nature at the level of a group of rugby athletes, aged 14 – 16 years.

We started from the assumption that the effectiveness of the anti-doping education program depends on the internal personality factors of the athletes, as risk factors for the consumption of doping substances.

The subjects of the study were 30 athletes aged between 14 and 16 years old, members of a U16 rugby team with whom we went through an **anti-doping education program**.

Results

Athletes have personality traits predominantly characteristic of A type personality, considered to be prone to adopting risky behaviors. This risk is all the greater when it is found that the level of self-awareness is low, and the public self-awareness is of medium level. We can consider that the influences of the educational program are exerted mainly at the level of momentary states, and less on personality traits. Thus, constant interventions (associated or not with participation in competitions) are justified.

We can say that there is a great need to present anti-doping information and topics in a systematic manner.

Particularities of anti-doping education in classes with integrated sports program

The purpose - The study aimed to highlight the specificity of anti-doping education at the level of sports students (aged 14 – 16 years), in classes with integrated sports program, offered through a different method and means of instruction.

Research hypothesis

The effectiveness of the anti-doping education program depends on the nature of the training methods and means used for developing student-athletes' skills.

Results

The athletes who were tested were greatly influenced in terms of their awareness, opinion, attitude and habits regarding doping.

Gender is another factor influencing attitudes towards doping. It is observed that doping phenomenon is present especially in boys.

Under extreme conditions, many athletes are willing to use a prohibited substance if it would increase their chances of obtaining a contract or professional funding, if they have performed poorly, if they have suffered an injury and need to recover quickly, if their colleagues do so, and the competition is not fair, if it has been offered to them by someone they trust (e.g., coach, friend, teammate, family member) etc.

After the third test we can conclude that the athletes did not improve their attitude towards doping, although they were **more informed** (in the last 4 weeks) about the content of prohibited substances in supplements, food and/or energy drinks consumed and they asked for anti-doping advice from other athletes in the team, coaches, physicians, official anti-doping sources (e.g. WADA, ANAD). We consider this aspect a real progress in the attitude towards

the field of anti-doping education and an important premise for their career from the perspective of clean sport.

Increasing the effectiveness of anti-doping education through active-participatory methods

The purpose The study aimed to highlight the specificity of anti-doping education at the level of junior athletes (14 – 16 years old), in relation to the effects of providing an anti-doping education program based on active-participatory methods. From the previous study, carried out in mosaic classes, with an integrated sports program, it was found that the intervention of six lessons did not produce the desired effects at the attitudinal level. Therefore, within this study, a series of changes were introduced in terms of anti-doping education program design and application.

Research hypothesis

The application of a 12-lessons anti-doping education program based on active-participatory methods will contribute to increasing the level of competence of athletes in the field of *clean* sport.

Results

Athletes have gained knowledge in particular regarding the list of supplements that are 100% guaranteed not to contain prohibited substances, presented by the national anti-doping organization. They understood that they had to ask for anti-doping information/advice from people in the club or people in the medical field. They consider that "Athletes can only be sanctioned if they provide a positive urine test" and check whether the ingested drugs contain prohibited substances.

From this model it results that the level of information and knowledge gained after the anti-doping program negatively influences the feedback (athletes do not consider that the program helped them, although they have changed their opinions and attitude in some respects, overall they say that the course did not help them, **it may be an attitude of bravery because they do not want to accept the negative effects of doping**).

This fact can be seen from the second pathway of the model, which shows that the information and knowledge gained have a strong positive influence on doping resistance. We are facing a situation of cognitive dissonance (athletes have certain opinions, but express the opposite).

Personal contributions

From an academic point of view, we believe that the research carried out in the paper "*Anti-doping education strategies based on active-participatory methods, intended for elite athletes (14-16 years old)*" will bring added value to anti-doping education and beyond.

The classic means and the way in which anti-doping education is carried out in educational institutions in our country can lead to a plateau in terms of students' motivation, and the appearance of novelty elements, of any form, are welcome. The curriculum we propose is a new concept, adapted to the requirements of the International Standard for Education and the educational requirements in Romania.

The novelty element brought by the paper is **the school curriculum** that we have created, a curriculum that can be a very effective mean of increasing the interest in the anti-doping field.

Through the originality and timeliness of the education program used, the present research corresponds to the needs related to the optimization of anti-doping education within the educational process of high school students.

The introduction of anti-doping notions in the school curriculum is a natural action in the context of a coherent anti-doping policy at national level, an important step having been taken previously: the training of future physical education and sports teachers, of future coaches by introducing an anti-doping education course in the university curriculum.

The results of this study indicate that there is a need to develop the future anti-doping educational curriculum, in particular the challenge of making a deliberate effort to equip athletes with the moral skills necessary to resist doping in sport.

The research carried out highlighted, through the results obtained, the need to include anti-doping information in the school curriculum.

We consider as a limiting factor in the anti-doping education of athletes the fact that, so far, the anti-doping campaigns carried out at national level, compared to those carried out at international level, have been carried out exclusively through non-formal and informal education: round tables, debates, conferences, media shows, etc., although, at the level of the vocational sports high schools, in formal education, there is a theoretical discipline in which skills could be developed in the direction of developing a pro-active behavior, to prevent juvenile doping and doping in general.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the four studies and the established curriculum, we can say that this work can be helpful to specialists in the field of anti-doping education.