

"Protective Factors against Doping in Elite Sport in the PAN-RADO Region: An Investigation of Self-Compassion and Mindfulness"

Tier 1

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Social science research on doping behaviour has mainly focused on doping risk factors and largely neglected the crucial role played by “protective factors” as essential to the future of the field. Understanding and characterising protective factors against doping can better equip National Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs) to promote clean sport education, thereby protecting the health and wellbeing of athletes.

Preliminary research has demonstrated that higher levels of mindfulness and self-compassion are associated with lower levels of doping use, perfectionistic beliefs about, and with higher levels of resilience and self-care, and improved athletic performance.

Such factors have never been investigated in the PAN-RADO Region, where clean sport education programmes remain limited. Therefore, our aim is to advance scientific knowledge on the protective mechanisms against doping and to specifically examine the role of mindfulness and self-compassion across at least ten countries in the Region (Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, Peru and Puerto Rico). At the core of our work is the health of athletes, who will also be our primary target audience.

We will use a cross-sectional survey design and recruit a large sample of elite athletes (at least 1500) from the said countries. Our survey will include a number of validated screening tools in Spanish about self-compassion, mindfulness, sport anxiety, perfectionism, and doping susceptibility. Participant athletes will also be invited to take part in a podcast series and to share their insights and experiences on doping in sport, with an emphasis on discussing the psychological and behavioural characteristics that protected them from doping. The podcast series will be made available in an attractive digital format in both Spanish and English language and shared on the most relevant communication channels, such as Apple Music, Spotify, and YouTube, expecting to reach out to at least 10,000. A series of webinars for professionals working with them (e.g. trainers, medical physicians, others) and policy mapping workshops with NADO representatives from all the participants counties will be organised.

As a legacy, we would like to contribute towards more informed decision-making and play a crucial role in the prevention of doping behaviour in the PAN-RADO Region, while focusing on a positive psychology approach emphasising the role of mindfulness and self-compassion. Novel educational and policy tools will also be prepared and shared during a project conference and a policy round table on “Clean Sport”. Invited panellists

will include keystakeholders, including athletes, professionals working with them, policy makers (Ministry of Sport and Health), WADA and National Olympic Committees representatives of American Latin countries. The events will be streamed live and recorded for further dissemination via the project multimedia platforms. The results of this project will also be made available to the global scientific and non-scientific community via peer-reviewed publications in scientific journals leaving an immediate and long-lasting legacy of this project in Latin America and beyond.