

# The Role of Coaches and Parents/Guardians in Promoting Anti-Doping Among the Youth in Grassroots Sports in Kenya.

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Tier: 2

This study aims to investigate the knowledge and attitude of parents and coaches of athletes participating in grassroots sports including soccer, swimming, basketball, and track, and field athletics. The main objective is to establish anti-doping knowledge and attitudes of parents/guardians and coaches and predicting factors predisposing coaches and parents to support or deter doping in grassroots youth sports. This will be achieved through a multi-method approach, involving two studies:

1) focus groups and 2) the survey.

Anti-doping studies so far conducted in Kenya have focused on athletes' personnel dealing with elite and sub-elite sports participants yet grassroots sports have grown tremendously to nurture and develop young participant's sports talents (Otieno, 2021) aiming to join local and international sports competitions as well as pursue sports as a career. Parents are enthusiastic not only to see their children participate in grassroots sports to get off the negative vices such as drugs and substance abuse in society but to use sport as an economic activity. Though grassroots sports have not been given prominence in research it has been a major supplier of athletes joining national teams and international clubs. Mathare youth sports organization nurtured and developed international soccer players including Macdonald Mariga, and Victor Wanyama, among others to play for international league clubs including Liverpool, Manchester United, Juventus, and inter Milan.

Kenyan youth are reported to possess various unused sporting talents, but they lack support and mentorship from the relevant authorities and committed persons of goodwill who can identify and nurture their passion to excel in sports and improve their livelihoods (Bochere, 2022). Important stakeholders to offer such support first and foremost are parents and coaches. And one way of supporting the youth is to emphasize clean sport participation.

Doping in sports is no longer an issue only at the elite level, as it has infiltrated many amateur and grassroots athletes. The doping problem however is mostly attributed to a lack of knowledge (Tobana, 2022). There is a need to change the mindset that the doping problem in Kenya is a problem only affecting the elite sports participants and especially athletics. Yet, the truth is that performance-enhancing problem affects different sports disciplines (republic of Kenya, 2014) at all levels including grassroots. Doping in grassroots sports may be attributed to various factors including achieving peak performance, peer pressure to gain fame, desire to win, seeking social belonging, and financial endorsements among others. What is the solution to the problem? Besides the usual sensitization campaigns by the local anti-doping agency, anti-doping efforts by the coaches and parents should be encouraged and supported to focus on value-based education including the development of transversal skills, such as discipline, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and prioritize molding the youth's character before emphasizing on sports performance achievements. Besides, the youth

should be protected from the negative effects of doping on health and uphold the integrity of sport. To this end, the anti-doping organization can work with the parents and coaches.

The Kenya News Agency reports “Our youths lack committed persons of goodwill who can identify and nurture their passion to excel in sports and improve their livelihoods (<https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/legislator-revives-grassroots-sports-clubs/>). The growth of grassroots sports is cited as a priority hence the need to establish the coaches' and parents' anti-doping knowledge and attitudes.

A former national football player expressed concern that county governments can play a vital role in promoting the talents of young people at the grassroots so that they can learn early enough that they can earn a living through their talents.

Developing grassroots sports (Otieno, 2021) will “deter the youth from engaging in criminal activities due to idleness and also enable them to earn from sports to sustain themselves and their families”. While there is a lot of effort being made to grow grassroots sports in Kenya there is no equal emphasis on establishing coaches' and parents' awareness of anti-doping and the right attitudes to enable them to support the youth participant in clean sports. Besides, there is currently no study that has sought to establish Athletes' support personnel awareness and attitudes to doping at the grassroots level. Anti-doping research on anti-doping in Kenya is biased towards elite and collegiate athletes and not athletes' personnel. More so no study has been carried out among grassroots athletes' personnel despite this section of the sport continuing to be a major supplier of athletes joining national teams and international clubs. This study hopes to bridge this gap and hopefully inform the national anti-doping agency to prioritize these critical stakeholders in dealing with the doping problem at the grassroots level.

According to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) 2021, the ASP is expected to first and foremost comply with anti-doping rules and policies applicable to the participants under their watch. Secondly, the ASP is expected to be of good standing to positively influence the athlete's behavior and values leading to clean sport participation. To play this role efficiently the ASP cannot, therefore, be left behind in the efforts to ensure clean sport. Mathare youth sports Association was the home for international soccer players including Macdonald Mariga, and Victor Wanyama, among others. These players have played for league clubs including Liverpool, Manchester United, Juventus, and Inter Milan. The findings of the proposed study will be useful to the national anti-doping agency as it will avail anti-doping awareness levels and attitudes of grassroots ASP. This can be used to determine the best way to incorporate them in anti-doping education programs that have in the past focused more on elite athletes. Further, the findings will be useful in informing sports policy on how to strengthen the efforts on reducing performance-enhancing substance use in sports that is currently on the rise.