

Coping by doping? A qualitative inquiry into permitted and prohibited substance use in competitive rugby.

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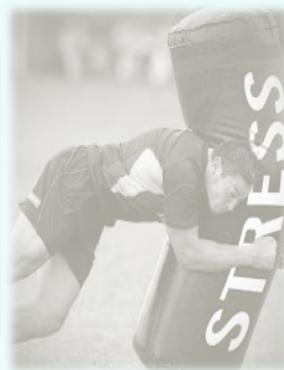
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Project Background

Stress:

- Stressors (e.g., Evans et al., 2016).
- Appraisals (e.g., Didymus & Fletcher, 2014).
- Coping (e.g., Didymus & Fletcher, 2017).
- Associations between components (e.g., Nicholls et al., 2009).



Doping:

- Practitioners' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge (e.g., Backhouse & McKenna, 2011).
- Athletes' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge (e.g., Morente-Sánchez & Zabala, 2013).
- Athletes' intentions (e.g., Lazuras et al., 2015).

Can interdisciplinarity create new
knowledge in these disciplines?



Project Background: Theoretical Underpinning

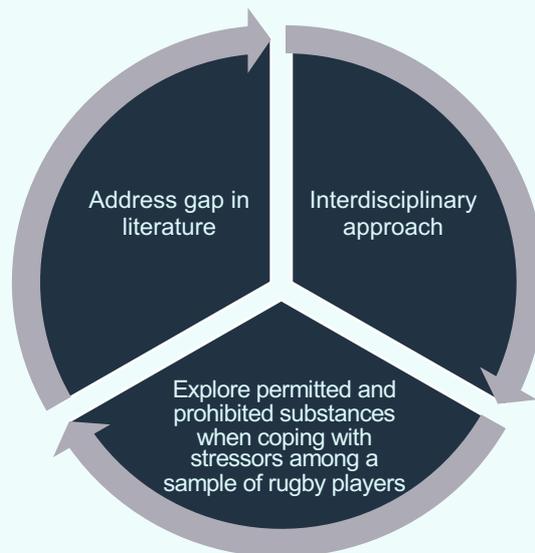
Cognitive-Motivational-Relational Theory (CMRT) of Stress and Emotions

(Lazarus, 1991, 1999, 2000).

- Stress: an imbalance in the person-environment relationship.



Rationale and Purpose



Method



Eight

Three

$M_{\text{age}} = 22.64$, $SD = 2.66$ years



National league one or above with >four years of competitive experience.

$M_{\text{experience}} = 11.27$, $SD = 5.76$ years

Purposeful sampling, information rich participants (Patton, 2002).



Method



25-98 minutes

$M_{\text{length}} = 52.40$, $SD = 27.54$ minutes

Reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) using NVivo (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Relativist stance (see Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

Worthy topic, coherence, rich rigor, credibility, and making a significant contribution.

Results: Summary

- Permitted and prohibited substances used to cope with stressors (e.g., injury, pressure to perform, selection).
- Players perceived substances to be helpful during injury rehabilitation; to facilitate sleep, performance, recovery, and selection; and to adjust bodyweight and composition.
- The health risks of permitted and prohibited substances, anti-doping rules, parents, and the athlete's persona had both protective and vulnerability roles.
- Each participant reported lifetime use of NS.
- NS consumption dovetailed stressful experiences.



Results: Coping with stressors

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Table 1
Coping with stressors.

Codes	Subthemes	Theme
Potential to take a calming drug to cope with coach behaviors Using alcohol to celebrate a win Using recreational drugs after a win Using recreational drugs to relax after a game Contemplating a magic pill to recover from injury Using alcohol and recreational drugs to cope with injury Using recreational drugs during injury rehabilitation Using PPS due to a lack of support for injury rehabilitation Using PPS to decrease injury recovery time Pressure from peers to use supplements Pressure to take pre-workouts before a match Using alcohol due to peer pressure after a game Using alcohol as an escape tactic Using alcohol to facilitate sleep Using alcohol to remain calm the night before a game Using PPS to avoid losing Using PPS to cope with pressure to perform Using PPS to facilitate training and match performance Using PPS to get stronger Using PPS to speed up recovery from training Using PPS to gain a competitive edge Using PPS to help make the team Using PPS to remain selected Using PPS to play to the crowd Using recreational drugs to cope with managing University and rugby Using recreational drugs to relax after a long library stint Using PPS to adjust weight Using PPS to get bigger Using PPS to shred fat Using PPS to supplement diet	Coping with game outcomes Coping with injury Coping with peer pressure Coping with pressure to perform Coping with selection Coping with the crowd Coping with University Coping with weight and size expectations	Cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage rugby and life stressors

Results: Banned substances to cope with injury

Lewis: "I mean, again, it's the history of rugby, players coming back from injury, you know you're injured so you're not going to get drugs tested because they know you're injured. So...it's a time period there where you can abuse it and I have known people who have used, you know, they have done drugs. Just to get themselves back fitter, obviously, you know hGH [human growth hormone] is a common one...to get over an injury quicker and come back stronger, so, you know, it's massive in rugby players."



Results: Banned substances to cope with selection



Jordan: "I had a pre-workout [drink] before an important game and I didn't really feel it but I ended up playing a lot longer than I usually do . . . I didn't know [what was in it], which is very silly of me. I did read the label though and it specifically said it contained banned substances"

Results: Banned substances to cope with a need to 'get bigger'



Steve: "There were a couple of lads and they were seriously, seriously strong boys; they were all on gear. I spoke to one of them for advice and he said 'seriously if you want to get big and strong, this stuff does work like magic, you will put on big numbers very quickly' . . . For me, if you want to be healthy and take steroids properly, it should be a combination of injectables and orals."

Results: Recreational drugs to cope with peer pressure/'a big win'



John: "In terms of the peer pressure thing, [it's] like 'oooh all the other boys are doing it, let's do it' . . . I've done MDMA once . . . I've done cocaine a couple of times, which I thought was okay. And I've done magic mushrooms, which was really fun. It's kind of like, it sounds stupid but it [cocaine] would kind of be like a treat . . . after the [stadium] win we went on a bit of a bender"

Results: Protective factors

Table 2
Protective factors that influenced the players' non-engagement with permitted and prohibited substances.

Codes	Subthemes	Theme
Risk of being banned from rugby Risk of being caught Perceived stigmatism associated with drug use Substances being listed as banned or illegal Belief in the power of a correct diet Belief in natural rugby ability Belief that PPS would not help performance Alcohol is frowned upon Players being deselected for using PPS Costs of a steroid cycle Costs of supplements Lack of knowledge about how to inject safely Lack of knowledge about the complexities of PPS Digestive problems Headaches after taking pre-workout substances Health problems associated with cycling off of steroids Medical implications of taking beta-blockers Potential for accidental death from drug use Parents being open about drug use Parents having a strong anti-doping stance Risk of disappointing a parent Being happy without rugby Having a moral compass Having strong anti-doping values Not knowing where to source drugs Time involved with using PPS correctly Pleasure of performing without PPS Protecting own professionalism	Anti-doping rules Beliefs Culture of rugby Financial costs of doping Lack of education Medical implications Parents Persona Practicalities Professionalism	Transactional qualities that protect rugby players

Protective factors: Health problems associated with supplements



John: "I mean you feel like you could wrestle a bear or something. Obviously, you couldn't but you kind of, you do feel like 'I'm really, really strong, I'm really energetic.' You have terrible come downs off pre-workout though. Normally I got really bad headaches...I had a really terrible come down after the gym session."

Protective factors: Anti-doping rules and WADA prohibited list



RULES

Steve: "If banned substances weren't banned, more people would take them because everyone wants to be the best. If they weren't illegal obviously they'd be legal so then people would take them...whether it be steroids or whatever you use, if it became legal, people would use them because it would advantage them in some way and everyone's always looking for the advantage to win."

Protective factors: Parents and significant others



Antonio: "My parents. Yeah, I mean I enjoy playing rugby too much to give it all away...[using illegal substances] wouldn't go down well with people around me."

Vulnerability factors: Education

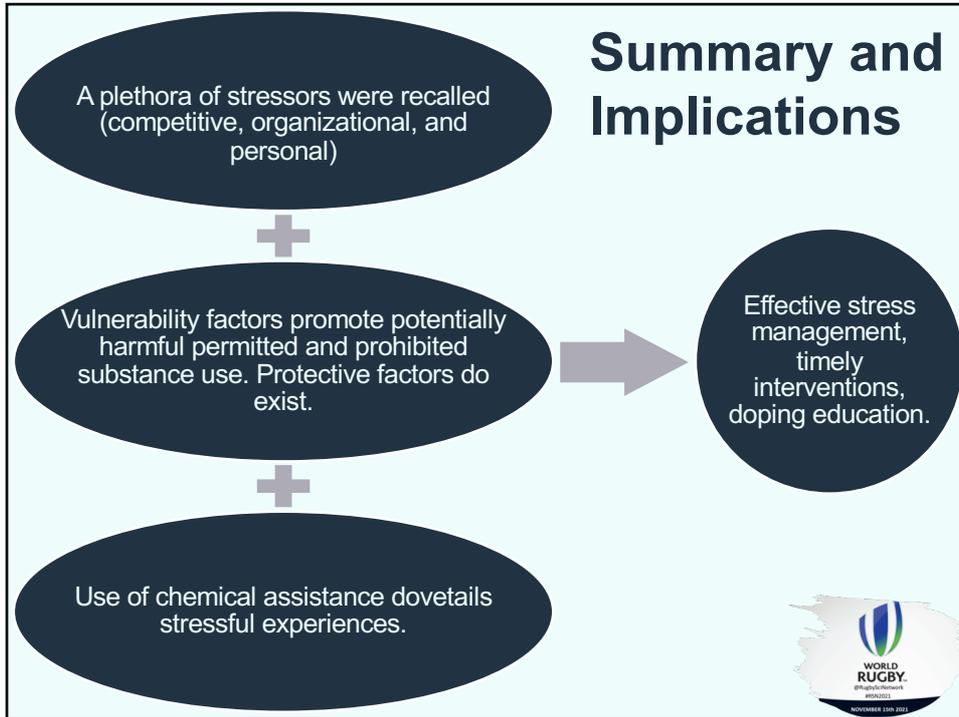


John: "I've kinda grown through education, like that Dave Crosland thing...[it's] kind of cliché but I think you should just learn about what you're putting in your body. It's your choice, isn't it? . . . the media put the onus on steroids that they're so terrible and crap for everyone. They're not actually, they're just . . . before you make statements like that, maybe educate yourself."

Vulnerability factors: Role Models

Ron: "There's a lot of people who have taken illegal stuff...peptides and growth hormone. Players are backing it to say that, you know, because your body's under so much stress, the contact sessions, your body can't physically take it for the recovery time, for how much you train. I've seen a lot of people who I play with who have done it and you do see how much it improves their game off the field as well as on the pitch."





Concluding Thoughts

- Move beyond the cheating narrative: rugby players' had diminished capacities to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from situations that promote potentially harmful substance use.
- Collective and coordinated action should be taken on the dopogenic environment to reduce player vulnerability.

A red circle with a diagonal slash over the word 'CHEATING' in bold black letters.

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The slide features a light blue background. At the top left is the title 'Concluding Thoughts' in a large, bold, dark blue font. Below the title are two bullet points in a dark blue font. To the right of the first bullet point is a red 'no cheating' sign. In the bottom right corner is the Leeds Beckett University logo, which consists of a stylized rose icon and the text 'LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY'.

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thank you!



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