University of Huddersfield Repository

Prince, Rebecca, Synnott, John and Ioannou, Maria

Investigating the Risky Behaviour of Elite Athletes

Original Citation


This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/29454/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.

http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/
In recent years there has been an increase in the amount of coverage regarding the off-field behaviour of elite athletes and they are often reported to engage in risky behaviour. There are many cases publicised in the media such as the Edward Lee ‘Fast Eddie’ Johnson, Jr, case, a former NFL player, who was involved with drugs and was convicted of sexual battery and child molestation. Another example is the more recent case of Adam Johnson, a former England football player, who was convicted of sexual activity with a underage girl. Much of the previous research has focused on collegiate athletes. This current research aims to explore the factors contributing to risky behaviour within elite athletes. A sample of elite athletes will be assessed and will asked to be complete a specifically tailored questionnaire consisting of multiple scales with the purpose of examining the factors which can lead to such risky behaviour. The paper discusses the implications of the expected findings as well as direction for future research.

The study will use a sample of elite athletes and former elite athletes (control group) from around the world in order to investigate their risky behaviour and the factors which contribute to these behaviours. To do this a specifically designed questionnaire will be administered to all the participants via an online secure website. The questionnaire will include a number of the following scales:

- A demographic questionnaire.
- An informed consent form.
- The Sense of Power Scale (Anderson et al. 2000)
- Personality Attributes Questionnaire (JHJ) short form (Spence & Helmreich, 1970)
- Self-Report Psychopathy Scale (SRP-2) (Paulhus & Williams, in press)
- Domains Specific Risk Taking Scale (DSSRT) (Rink & Weber, 2006)
- The Sensation-Seeking Index (Kelly, Johnson, Adams, Rumpa, Mufidi, & Kelly, 1994; Ramchelwan & Rumpa)
- The Comprehensive Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire (CAEQ) (Demple & Hogan, 2003, 2010b).

Using these scales the study will investigate the influence of the following main aspects on risk taking:

- Power stance
- Personality
- Psychopathy
- Sensation-seeking
- Alcohol use

Data collection will take place over a 3 month period in which follow up sessions will be administered to participants who took part in the study. Any participant who does not complete the study at the end of the period will be in contact, which will be built into the questionnaire. The results will be used to draw conclusions about certain factors that may influence risky behaviour. The findings will be compared to existing body of research as well as new future research that can be conducted in depth qualitative information otherwise not available through a questionnaire. The number of interviews will be determined based on the response rate of the participants to the questionnaire.

Implications of results

Through the findings it will be possible to determine a training scheme to help educate existing and aspiring athletes in both a professional and collegiate setting in order to reduce the proneness of these risky behaviours. A reduction of these risky behaviours will have to be in the athlete's control and understanding of their own risky behaviour. This study will also help publicise certain risk factors that may lead to the onset of risky behaviour and to put in place preventive measures for athletes in the future.

The long term is hoped that by reducing risky behaviour in athletes it may decrease these behaviours in the general population, in particular young athletes. By educating of athletes level it may also help to reduce these behaviours throughout their lives whether that be as a professional athlete or in another profession.

Through the study it is hoped that a greater understanding of the factors associated with risky behaviour can be identified. This would provide an opportunity for intervention and prevention measures to be put into place at a very early age.