

Qualitative Investigation of Athletes' Perceptions of Cheating in Sport

Saulius Šukys, Diana Karanauskienė, Jolita Šmigelskaitė
Lithuanian Sports University, Kaunas, Lithuania

ABSTRACT

Background. The aim of the present study was to give voice to elite athletes exploring their perceptions of cheating in sport.

Methods. Utilizing a purposeful sampling technique, 11 athletes were interviewed – one woman and 10 men from football (F, $n = 6$), rugby league (R, $n = 2$), and three from athletics (A). Athletes' perceptions related to cheating in sport were explored by individual semi-structured interviews. Interpretive thematic data analysis was conducted in several stages, beginning with the exploration of the recorded materials. Credibility of the results was established by member checking. For data transferability and repeatability, we described the process of data collection, processing and analysis in detail.

Results. Analysis of interview data allows to distinguish the following broad themes: the perceived forms of cheating in sport, causes of cheating, initiators of cheating, and athletes' views on the evaluation of cheating, and as a separate theme – athletes' insights on cheating in children's sport.

Conclusions. The findings offer insights of adult athletes on cheating in sport. Athletes are aware of the prevalence of cheating in all sports, emphasizing that it is an illegal phenomenon and associate it with the potential financial benefits, corruption, match fixing, and the use of doing. The study highlights financial insecurity of athletes as a reason for cheating. When evaluating cheating, athletes are not categorical or tend to cheat themselves, but they would justify it more if it helped a team. As to cheating in children's sport, adult athletes noted the role of a coach and especially the parents in cheating in order to gain an advantage for their child. Also, the focus on the protective factor of children against cheating was emphasized.

Keywords: cheating, athletes' perceptions, adult sport, children sport.

INTRODUCTION

Cheating in sport is a complex phenomenon. It can be defined as deceptive behaviour intended to break the rules and make illegitimate gains (Reddiford, 1998). Or, as Loland (2002) maintains, "cheating is an attempt to gain an advantage by violating the shared interpretation of the basic rules (the ethos) of the parties engaged without being caught and held responsible for it" (p. 96). It can be argued, one of most common features of cheating is to benefit ourselves or the team by unethical means. Cheating might take different forms such as sabotage (spreading false information about the rivals, putting obstacles for them to participate in the competition, etc.), doping,

and manipulating with the results of the game (match fixing) (Preston & Szymamanski, 2003). Despite widespread discussions on the meaning of cheating (Loland, 2005; Morris, 2014; Russell, 2014), it is agreed that these behaviours result in negative consequences for the opponents and are considered as unethical, illegal, socially and culturally undesirable (Ponseti et al., 2012).

Due to the complexity of the cheating phenomenon, it has attracted attention of researchers aiming to understand factors that enforce athletes to cheat while participating in sport. Studies suggest that intention to cheat or cheating behaviour is related to various personality and context variables

(Potgieter, 2013). A meta-analysis conducted by Ntoumanis, Ng, Barkoukis, and Backhouse (2014), which aimed to determine the effect of psychological and social contextual factors on doping intention and use, showed that perceived social norms and positive attitudes towards doping were the strongest positive correlates of doping intentions and behaviours. Another recent study showed relationship between such personality traits as Machiavellianism and psychopathy and doping attitudes (Nicholls, Madigan, Backhouse, & Levy, 2017). According to them, those who tend to manipulate other people, think only about themselves, are deceitful, impulsive, have little empathy for others, are highly aggressive, and demonstrate more positive attitudes towards doping. Empirical evidence also has shown cheating relationship with success perception and motivation in sport, e.g., those athletes with ego achievement goals more accept cheating than those with task orientation (Lucidi et al., 2017; Ring & Kavussanu, 2018a). Some studies also emphasized the importance of values for attitudes towards success in sport and cheating behaviours (Lucidi et al., 2017). Research focusing on motivation revealed the importance of autonomous motivation in decision making related with doping intention (Barkoukis, Lazuras, Tsorbatzoudis, & Rodafines, 2011).

Evidence on the antisocial behaviour of athletes (Kavussanu, 2019) has drawn attention to psychological mechanisms which assumed to felicitate negative behaviour. Based on Bandura's (2002) theory, six mechanisms of moral disengagement have been identified in sport (see Boardley & Kavussanu, 2007, 2009). The findings support the positive relationship between moral disengagement and doping likelihood (Kavussanu & Ring, 2017), as well as justification of cheating (Sukys, 2013). Interestingly, displacement of personal responsibility has been found to be one of the most frequent mechanisms that felicitates bodybuilders' use of doping (Boardley, Grix, & Dewar, 2014). So, when people considered some of their behaviours as the desire to benefit from others, they viewed themselves as moral even when their behaviour was immoral. This is especially true in sports activities when athletes tend to cheat for personal or team-based gain (Moore, 2017). Hill (2011) argues that in sport players could reasonably be morally criticised for not cheating as the player's duty is to make sufficient effort to achieve victory.

It should be noted that athletes' behavioural decisions and behaviours depend on the prevailing

norms in the team and the coach. Research showed positive association between coaching styles and athletes' positive intentions towards doping (Ntoumanis, Barkoukis, Gucciardi, & Chan, 2017), ego motivational climate created by coaches and athletes' predisposition to acceptance of cheating (Palau et al., 2013). On the other hand, athletes' capability to resist antisocial behaviour in sport also remains important. Some studies related to doping likelihood concluded that athletes with high doping self-regulatory efficacy were less likely to use banned substances to improve their performance (Ring & Kavussanu, 2018b). Therefore, athletes who are able to resist the use of prohibited substances do not feel the need to shift responsibility to another individual, such as their coach, for certain actions. Thus, despite situational factors, athlete's values (Lucidi et al., 2017), moral identity (Kavussanu & Ring, 2017), personal stance against cheating (Erickson, McKenna, & Backhouse, 2015) have led to a conclusion that it is important to understand athletes' perspectives on cheating in sport.

Currently there is little understanding of how athletes perceive cheating in sport. Most of the aforementioned studies made interesting insights on the relationship between cheating and personal as well as situational factors, but most of them were quantitative in nature and addressed doping issues. However, a qualitative investigation can provide more reliable information for questions related to unethical practise (Pitsch, Emrich, & Klein, 2007). To date, some studies applying qualitative research interviewed athletes on how they perceived the doping testing system (Overbye, 2016), young elite athletes' attitudes towards doping (Bloodworth & McNamee, 2010), opinions and beliefs on doping (Erickson, McKenna, & Backhouse, 2015), acceptance of doping and reasons for doping among cyclists (Lentillon-Kaestner & Carstairs, 2010), moral disengagement mechanism among bodybuilders with the experience of using performance-enhancing drugs (Boardley, Grix, & Dewar, 2014). While doping is associated with deception, it is only one form of cheating. For this reason, the studies mentioned above very limitedly reveal how athletes perceive cheating in sports activities. To the best of our knowledge, only one qualitative study of Irish athletes' beliefs about cheating in sport was conducted for Irish Sports Council (Moran, Guerin, MacIntyre, & McCaffrey, 2004). Due to the report nature of this study, just some insights how athletes define cheating in

sport, use of performance-enhancing drugs, and how cheating could be removed from sport were presented. Such scarcity of studies related with cheating could be explained by difficult access to elite athletes when applying interview technique (Bloodworth & McNamee, 2010).

These insights serve as a solid foundation for in-depth understanding of athletes' perceptions of cheating in sport, specifically, how elite athletes define cheating in sport, factors and personal experiences related to cheating and outcomes of such behaviour. Such research will assist in the development of evidence-informed interventions that target athletes and coaches. Therefore, the *aim* of the present study was to give voice to elite athletes exploring their perceptions of cheating in sport.

METHODS

Participants and procedures. Utilizing a purposeful sampling technique, 11 athletes were interviewed – one woman and 10 men from football ($n = 6$), rugby league ($n = 2$), and three from athletics. Athletes competing in a higher level of the country and with no less than 10 years of participation in their current sport were targeted for this study. Thus, research participants were 18–35 years old, and their experience in sport was 12–20 years. They had encountered with various forms of cheating in sport, including doping related interaction in their practice, were aware of cheating cases not only in their current sports, and might be well-positioned to offer insights related to the research aim of exploring perceptions of athletes on cheating in sport. As to the sample size, some studies (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) suggest that data saturation could be attained from six interviews, however, we followed the suggestion to take no less than 10 interviewees (Francis et al., 2010) when applying content data analysis.

Before taking part in individual semi-structured interviews, informed consent from all research participants was received. The participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality in this study, and that their individual comments about cheating in sport would not be linked to their name. The convenient time and place for the interviews were agreed with the research participants. The interview place chosen was comfortable to the research participants. It was their work premises or training environment, which created a familiar atmosphere for friendly dialogues. None of the

participants objected to audio recording of the interviews. Each interview lasted from 30 to 40 minutes.

Data collection. Athletes' perceptions related to cheating in sport were explored by individual semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen because it allows learning more about the respondent's experiences and perceptions (Smith & Sparks, 2009). The interview guide consisted of four sections of questions. First section questions began with a discussion of the athletes' background, including their sports experience and performance in the current sport. All other questions focused on how athletes perceived cheating in sports (e.g., *It is possible to cheat in sport? What is cheating in sport? How does cheating occur?*), their experiences and intentions related to cheating (*Have you ever encountered cheating? Would you agree to cheat?*), evaluation of cheating (*What do you think about cheating athletes? When would you justify cheating?*), cheating in children sports (*Is cheating common in children's sport? How does it take place?*). Although each athlete was asked the same initial questions, their responses dictated the follow-up questioning. For example, some athletes' answers were brief, but at the same time specific and well-directed, so they were asked probing questions to clarify the answers to the questions.

Data analysis. Interpretive thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted in several stages, beginning with the exploration of the recorded materials. Next, each recording was carefully transcribed verbatim, inserting the comments about the location, duration, peculiarities of respondent's behaviour, their attitudes and disposition of the conversation as well as non-verbal language, which was used in the analysis as well. All the authors read and re-read the transcripts to know the content better. At the same time each of them recorded their initial impressions and ideas. Then members of the research team separately coded the interview transcripts. The preliminary codes were reviewed by the whole team and then collated into themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis goes beyond organising and describing data to interpreting it, thus the next stage was theorising the patterns and attributing broader meanings and implications to the data. The authors (Braun & Clarke, 2006) suggest being reflexive and interactive with the data, so it was more important, what the developed themes revealed about athletes' position towards cheating in sport.

Trustworthiness. The study included coaches with different work experience to get a wider range of opinions on how moral behaviour could be developed in sports activities. The audio-recorded conversations made it possible to analyse the exact statements of the informants. Credibility of the results was established by member checking, i.e., the text was presented to the interview participants. For data transferability and repeatability, we described the process of data collection, processing and analysis in detail (Creswell, 2009).

RESULTS

Analysis of interview data allows to distinguish the following broad themes: the perceived forms of cheating in sport, causes of cheating, initiators of cheating, and athletes' views on the evaluation of cheating, and as a separate theme – athletes' insights on cheating in children's sport. These themes represent different perceptions of cheating in the sports context. Throughout the text, we used illustrative examples from the interview dialogues. All quotes were translated by the researchers into English, and the letters used were the abbreviations of sports, but not the names of interview participants.

The perceived forms of cheating in sport. Athletes' perceptions of cheating were similar. Speaking about the relevance of the problem and possibilities to cheat today, athletes referred not only to their personal experiences, but also cases of cheating publicized in the media or on television. Cheating was a relevant topic for athletes, they followed the updates of the list of doping, as well as the information of seminars in certain sports federations that dealt with the issues how to avoid offers to cheat.

All athletes in the study believed that cheating was possible in sports activities. It should be noted that all interviewees had encountered cheating cases personally. Only several of them refused to do that or were not offered to use any unauthorized means. However, all of them admitted that in their environment they often faced situations where there was a suspicion of their competitors' illegal actions or even their own team members' cheating. The relevance of the problem receives much attention because cheating is gaining significant financial benefits nowadays.

Research participants provided a multifaceted picture of cheating in their sport. They agreed that cheating was illegal: an illegal form of making money (*"...betting is widespread around the world,*

thus people attempt to make money illegally", match fixing (*"At all times there were agreements, and now they are gaining financial advantage when betting takes place"*), intentional violation of rules (*"It is an attempt to achieve a good result violating the rules"*), betting (*"In betting you don't have to achieve a result, you can bet against yourself and get profit"*), drugs (*"Unfair behaviour when you are "pumping" something unauthorized, illegal in yourself, or you may surrender to corruption, or apply similar methods..."*) unauthorized means (*"Unauthorized means, let's say, doping, bribery, which allow achieving those objectives, but the question is whether or not the athlete deserves it ..."*).

Athletes defined cheating giving examples of its different forms which showed how cheating took place. Thus, the main forms of cheating mentioned were: betting, when athletes were determined to lose the match or to carry out a number of specific actions, the use of doping, agreements, match fixing, and dissemination of unauthorized information.

Although athletes provided different forms of cheating, it was found that each interpreted and evaluated situations differently. Athletes in team sports mentioned bribery, corruption and match fixing as predominant forms of cheating while athletes in individual sports referred to the use of doping and other unauthorized substances which allowed the athlete to increase their strength and endurance. It is also worth mentioning that when providing examples, athletes did not have a firm approach to cheating in certain situations because in the course of interviews they doubted about acceptable or unacceptable behaviours. This shows that athletes sometimes could not distinguish between cheating and the game tactics.

The causes of cheating. One question addressed in the interviews was what caused cheating. Some participants representing team sports gave priority to money (i.e. financial benefit), e.g. *"cheating when betting is only for money"*, *"...most often because of money, or when people are frightened and they have no choice, but this is also because of money"*. Another mentioned reason for cheating was low income of athletes (*"In Lithuania people earn very little in my sport, students don't get anything at all. Offers to cheat are very beneficial. If athletes have to live on their own, most often they agree"*). Other reasons are the desire to get to a higher league (*"... the higher the league, the more profitable the contract"*), to lower the price (*"One team wants a player from the opposing team. During the match,*

the desired athlete is deliberately injured, then he does not play for several months, and if his leg is broken – even for a year. His contract price falls. And the rival team buys him cheaper. Medical professionals heal him and he plays well again, but being bought at a lower price”).

Other reasons mentioned were more psychological, such as revenge (“... *in addition to money they want to revenge, it happens that players revenge one upon another, principles mean a lot*”, emotions (“*There are many situations, but the winner is the team that is emotionally as a fist, where everyone stands for others*”), and desire to win at any cost (“*The reason is aiming at winning at any cost ... You should seek it at any cost, desire for victory is great*”).

Athletes also mentioned certain interested people (“*usually the mafia people are engaged in such things. They take several players from a team, fascinate them little by little, and they pretend they care about them and want to do something good for them ...*” (F)), and threats (“*I think there may be some kind of mafia, or it could be threatening. And threats can directly affect people. People will cheat so that their families stayed alive, or they themselves were not taken to the woods...*”).

When asked a straightforward question: *Would you agree to cheat?* the majority of respondents made a pause to contemplate. Some of them would agree to do so if this could result in or guarantee a victory for the team and would not involve financial gain. (“*Well, if the match really matters and the victory is surely guaranteed - maybe I would pretend...*”). Some participants even confessed doing so and frankly spoke about it. (“*I had to drag the time and I had to sham, and once I had a picturesque fall to convince the judges*”). Meanwhile, other athletes expressed doubts about their own cheating. However, it should be noted that none of the research participants had categorically ruled out the possibility not to cheat (“*Absolutely not in Lithuania, but if I played somewhere else abroad, in a low league, perhaps I would. But if that moment came, I do not know if I would dare*”). These participants retained the right to assess the circumstances in a particular situation and think about the opportunities to cheat. Some participants approved actions that would help the team win. They called it a white lie, which is aimed at benefiting not only for themselves but for the whole team. Sometimes, for the sake of a team victory, they agreed not to benefit themselves; they

were even determined to be suspended from game for unauthorized actions. If cheating was losing the game, then athletes were reluctant to do so (“*I am not such a person, I am not so bold, and I have no idea how to lose. I cannot imagine how this is possible. I have self-esteem ...*”).

In participant’s understanding of the causes of cheating, athletes cheat because of money, in order to gain advantages. Interestingly, that participants mentioned such a reason as threats. It was no surprise that participants also mentioned winning at all costs as a reason for cheating.

Initiators of cheating. Respondents’ experiences show that they directly or indirectly encountered cheating. This raises another question: who arranges cheating? Research participants shared different stories:

“The top story is when a person comes and wants to make friends, you do not even know him, he’s an admirer, a friend, a fan, he examines your situation, how much money you get, what your family undertakings are, whether you are well or not, or you have debts because most players have taken loans, and you want to cover the loans because interest rates are high, you are indebted, and that friend simply helps you, lends you more money, you gain his trust and you trust him; if you do him a favour in one match, then you can be morally tortured in any way because you have already done it and you have already signed a sentence to yourself that you can do it in the future. And then it starts if you refuse to do this; there is no secret, there are gangs in the world involved in it, mafia, betting, and they will threaten you to kill, to shoot you. But if you refuse to do this the first time, they will leave you, if you once agreed – you are trapped. You need to think carefully beforehand about what is better, whether you will do that one time and get some money, but the next time you will be caught and disqualified, everything will be taken away from you, you will feel a great shame, embarrassment, you may be psychologically deserted because nobody will respect you, spit, as the saying goes. There are many fans in the world that even beat players for that. It is the choice of everyone”).

Such narratives show that sport goes beyond sports arenas (“*I’ve heard rumours, I do not know how much they are true, but usually, when the state has one good athlete, cheating is always “coated” on a national scale, and this does not depend on the coach or the athlete. The state cares about its image*”). Also, athletes themselves start cheating for betting:

“There are people who make bets, they know which athletes like to go to betting points, they do not necessarily bet for themselves, for other teams. These people are candidates and they can be involved <...>. In Lithuania it is possible to bet only for the highest league, and in foreign countries you can bet for the first league because some other countries offer more options. Everyone knows that they sell the competitions, but nobody can do anything about it or prove it”).

Participants also distinguished a coach as the initiator of cheating (*“It’s a fact that the coach, the director tells about the bad situation of the team ... I do not know how it’s happening, but in one such event you can earn the season budget for the team. I think that money dooms everything”).* However, participants did not perceive a coach as the main initiator of cheating. As one participant said, *“every sport becomes your natural drug, without which you cannot live, and when you stop it, you feel some kind of abstinence. And in the end, when you feel the taste of victory, and your results start to stagnate, you look for ways to improve your results, try to do something new, and perhaps some kind of temptation occurs when you want to try something, which can be really forbidden and, in the end, you are tempted to cheat sooner or later”*.

Views on how athletes evaluate cheating in sport. The theme of assessment of cheating in sport provided three subthemes encompassing justification of cheating, condemnation of it and neutral evaluations. When speaking about cheating, athletes produced examples and situations and recognized the relevance of the topic. Cheating was mostly related to financial benefits. The majority of athletes negatively evaluated athletes who cheat, while others did not blame them.

Cheating was justified when it was considered as unavoidable (*“It is part of football, winning at any cost”*), or it cannot be detected (*“...it’s like referee’s mistake, as the president of FIFA said, he will never start watching replay like in basketball. Everyone can be wrong...”*). It was not justified, it was even condemned when it interfered with the players’ ambitions, careers (*“It’s very bad when you try to do your best and your teammate lets you down. It would be bad because if you are serious about winning, e.g. in the championship, and your best friend gets 100 EUR to lose the match, although we could win it, it’s clearly evil. Relationships with him would be very bad...”*), (*“I do not think they prove something ... they violate the athlete’s interest in achieving something by hard work. <...> You*

achieve what you can, but if you start cheating, it means it is time for you to quit sport because you do harm to yourself first of all. But you will have to live with your colleagues!”). However, some athletes were indifferent to cheating (*“It’s everybody’s own business, you are responsible for yourself”*).

Questions about the possibilities of sport without cheating and how it would be possible to decrease cheating revealed some interesting insight. Some participants suggested different means:

“It depends on the situation. Can those who are involved in cheating be caught and sentenced, or only frightened? It also depends on the professional level of the tournament or the championship. Will there be any really good players? Will the salaries increase as a result? What will happen to the worst teams? If the player is well-paid and wins trophies, what is the sense of losing then? It is a long journey to achieve that”).

According to participants, players’ financial security is another way out of the situation (*“in the first place the players need financial security. Cheating is always linked with finances. If financial well-being is ensured, then I think everything would be fine”*).

Some athletes believed that cheating could never be avoided (*“I do not know, for me cheating is like starvation in Africa – it can never be stopped, but it can be reduced. I do not think it will be ever stopped”*), *“I think that cheating can be reduced, but not destroyed. People have been cheating at all times”*).

In summary cheating is a deep-rooted problem that spoils the prestige of sport and athletes, and athletes still hardly imagine sport without cheating (*“easy victory desire always tempts”* (A)). Besides, athletes still did not clearly define the concept of cheating. Therefore, they associated it with certain situations and evaluated them differently (*“if you have children, and you need to keep your family, everything can be done for children. If the salary is small, what else can you do?”*(R), *“cheating cannot be justified, but if you are betrothed to a team, it is a beautiful lie; if it is not bad for that person, it is a white lie, a beautiful performance; but if the other team did not notice that you shammed, they think that everything is in order, but you feel that you have shammed...”*).

Cheating in children’s sports. During the interviews research participants spoke about cheating in children’s sports and the influence that cheating had on children’s personality development as well. Every participant admitted that sport had a great influence on the formation and development

of their personality. Thus, even if they could justify cheating in some cases, they were worried about it in children's sport.

Athletes were sure that children unconsciously adopted certain behaviours which were considered as commonly accepted in the environment where they were engaged in sports. Moreover, a coach or famous athletes became highly respected persons for children. They were their role models. Participants believed that parents also played an important role:

"Parents are most often involved in children's sport. Parents usually agree with the coach, although their child is not worth the basic composition of the team, but if a wealthier father wants his son to play, he wants to look at him, he just gives money to the coach, and there are no bonuses in children's sport. If they take a weaker child, the team suffers from it, but the father and the coach benefit from that").

Other athletes related cheating to coaches themselves:

"Maybe there are agreements between the coaches. It depends on a person, but in children's football, I really do not tolerate cheating and these agreements because in children's sports, victories do not mean much in life, you win or lose; you just improve for your own sake. I will not even be able to tell you which championship I won or lost being 14 years old."

Research participants maintained that the children themselves did not tend to cheat and win at any price; adults do that for them (*"... the kids do not want to cheat; they peach on one another, if only they see that something is wrong. If there is cheating, then it's only in adult sport"*). Respondents believed that children were not spoiled yet (*"A child will not come up with something that he/she needs to lose, deceive or fall down, children do not understand that, they understand it when it comes to adult sports. I think it depends on how the family cares for a child..."*).

Every athlete admitted that sport had a great influence on the formation and development of their personality. Thus, cheating in sport could do much harm to the younger generation. It is dangerous when children start observing *"where real money and real life start, then they already feel what is real cheating and deceit, how they can cheat a team or how they can lose a friend and so on..."*.

In summary, sport can play a great influence on young athlete's personality development. However, cheating could have a negative impact and important role goes to the coach and as well as parents.

DISCUSSION

Interviews with athletes gave us a better understanding of how they perceived cheating in sports and what encouraged them to cheat. The results of the study revealed that athletes are aware of the prevalence of cheating in various sports, but the concept itself is not clear to them. Cheating is more easily perceived by giving examples, its forms, or by analysing other occurrences of it in sports activities. The study established that athletes perceived cheating as match fixing, intentional rule violation, betting, and the use of doping. Such actions were considered unauthorized in sport. Previous studies also found that athletes perceived cheating as an integrity of behaviours (including doping) which gave them an unfair advantage over their competitors (Moran et al., 2004). There is a distinction between athletes' perceptions of cheating in team/contact and individual sports (Moran et al., 2004). The use of doping was relatively more frequent in individual strength, endurance, and speed sports though athletes believed that the use of doping in some sports was not conducive to improving or strengthening performance. Cheating as a tactical trick (a "cunning game") was more obvious and widespread among team and contact sports. Agreements on the outcome of the event were relevant to sports games, especially those in which there were great prizes and where it was possible to bet (Hill, 2010).

Research evidence suggests that intention to cheat related with various personal and context variables (Potgieter, 2013). The interviews also revealed that there were various reasons encouraging athletes to cheat. One of the most frequently mentioned was the desire for financial gain. On the other hand, in terms of financial benefits, the study highlighted one cause of cheating that had little emphasis in the scientific literature. It was athlete's financial insecurity that was associated with low income. Research shows that low incomes of athletes can encourage them to cheat. In addition, the study revealed another reason for cheating – the influence of others to cheat by making pressure, demonstrating violence, or causing athletes to fear. This encourages further research and a deeper interest in athlete safety and the ability to resist influence. Moreover, other studies have shown that it is the ability to resist the influence that is one of the most important protective factors against doping in sport (Erickson, McKenna, & Backhouse, 2015).

Athlete cheating can also be encouraged by the coach. The role of the coach is particularly emphasized in children's sport as athletes' intention related to doping acceptance of cheating is associated with the coaching style (Ntoumanis, Barkoukis, Gucciardi, & Chan, 2017), and the created motivational climate (Palau et al., 2013). The role of a coach in adult sports was also mentioned. However, the athletes interviewed emphasized that the coach was not seen as the main factor encouraging athletes to cheat. Various personal reasons related to personal goals in sports activities are also of great importance (Ring & Kavussanu, 2017).

The study showed that athletes believed that many of them would take risk to cheat and they did not categorically reject cheating because cheating for the sake of victory in their opinion was not cheating at all. Besides, the study revealed that athletes often appealed not to the personal, but to the benefit of the team when talking about their personal intent to cheat, simply calling it a "white lie". However, such arguments can be linked to attempts to justify themselves and to shift responsibility to others (Boardley, Grix, & Dewar, 2014). It is therefore important for athletes themselves to demonstrate strong moral stance against cheating (Erickson, McKenna, & Backhouse, 2015) or moral identity (Kavussanu & Ring, 2017).

Previous studies showed evidence of the use of doping in junior, youth, and student leagues (Mroczkowska, 2009). This study also analysed how adult athletes evaluated cheating in children's sports. Though most research participants believed that children's sport was honest, fair,

and guided by children's emotions – to compete and win, there were cases where not the children themselves, but their coaches or parents were cheating (Cruz, 2013). It should be noted that the role of parents was even more emphasized when the latter were the most fraudulent in the interest of their children in their sports activities. Another important aspect mentioned by adult athletes is that children engaged in sports are generally less likely to cheat. This is what adults encourage them to do. Thus, it is of paramount importance that young athletes do not feel that they can benefit from cheating. Therefore, it is important to develop their values, goals and attitudes towards moral behaviour in sport as a protective factor of cheating behaviour (Lucidi et al., 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

The findings offer insights of adult athletes on cheating in sport. Athletes are aware of the prevalence of cheating in all sports, emphasizing that it is an illegal phenomenon and associate it with the potential financial benefits, corruption, match fixing, and the use of doing. The study highlights financial insecurity of athletes as a reason for cheating. When evaluating cheating, athletes are not categorical or tend to cheat themselves, but they would justify it more if it helped a team. As to cheating in children's sport, adult athletes noted the role of a coach and especially the parents in cheating in order to gain an advantage for their child. Also, the focus on the protective factor of children against cheating was emphasized.

REFERENCES

- Barkoukis, V., Lazuras, L., Tsorbatzoudis, H., & Rodafinos, A. (2011). Motivational and sportspersonship profiles of elite athletes in relation to doping behavior. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 12*, 205–212. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2010.10.003
- Bloodworth, A., & McNamee, M. (2010). Clean Olympians? Doping and anti-doping: The views of talented young British athletes. *International Journal of Drug Policy, 21*, 276–282. doi: 10.1016/j.drugpo.2009.11.009
- Boardley, I. D., Grix, J., & Dewar, A. J. (2014). Moral disengagement and associated processes in performance-enhancing drug use: A national qualitative investigation. *Journal of Sports Sciences, 32*, 836–844. doi: 10.1080/02640414.2013.862842
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp0630a
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative and mixed methods approaches*. London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cruz, J. (2013). Acceptance of gamesmanship and cheating in young competitive athletes in relation to the motivational climate generated by parents and coaches. *Perceptual & Motor Skills, 117*, 290–303. doi: 10.2466/10.30.PMS.117x14z9
- Erickson, K., McKenna, J., & Backhouse, S. H. (2015). A qualitative analysis of the factors that protect athletes against doping in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 16*, 149–155. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.03.007
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? *Field Methods, 18*, 59–82.
- Francis, J.J., Johnston, M., Robertson, C., Glidewell, L., Entwistle, V., Eccles, M. P., & Grimshaw, J. M. (2010). What is an adequate sample size? Operationalising

- data saturation for theory-driven interview studies. *Psychology and Health*, 25(10), 1229–1245.
- Hill, D. (2010). A critical mass of corruption: Why some football leagues have more match-fixing than others. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 11, 38–52. doi: 10.1108/IJSMS-11-03-2010-B005
- Hill, D. (2011). *Parduotos rungtynės. Futbolas ir organizuotas nusikalstamumas*. Vilnius: Solidarumas.
- Kavussanu, M. (2019). Understanding athletes' transgressive behavior: Progress and prospects. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 42, 33–39. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2019.01.009
- Kavussanu, M., & Ring, C. (2017). Moral identity predicts doping likelihood via moral disengagement and anticipated guilt. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 39, 293–301. doi: 10.1123/jsep.2016-0333
- Lentillon-Kaestner, V., & Carstairs, C. (2010). Doping use among young elite cyclists: A qualitative psychosociological approach. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 20, 336–345. doi: org/10.1111/j.1600-0838.2009.00885.x
- Loland, S. (2002). *Fair play in sport: A moral norm system*. London: Routledge.
- Loland, S. (2005). The varieties of cheating – comments on ethical analyses in sport. *Sport in Society*, 8, 11–26. doi: 10.1080/1743043052000316597
- Lucidi, F., Zelli, A., Mallia, L., Nicolais, G., Lazuras, L., & Hagger, M. S. (2017). Moral attitudes predict cheating and gamesmanship behaviors among competitive tennis players. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 571. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00571
- Moore, E. (2017). Did Armstrong cheat? *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 11, 413–427. doi: 10.1080/17511321.2017.1292306
- Moran, A., Guerin, S., MacIntyre, T., & McCaffrey, N. (2004). *Why do athletes cheat? an investigation of Irish athletes' understanding of, and attitudes to, cheating behavior (including doping), in sport final report to Irish sports council*. Dublin: UCD Dublin.
- Morris, S. P. (2014). Deception in sports. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 41, 177–191. doi: 10.1080/00948705.2013.785419
- Nicholls, A. R., Madigan, D. J., Backhouse, S. H., & Levy, A. R. (2017). Personality traits and performance enhancing drugs: The Dark Triad and doping attitudes among competitive athletes. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 112, 113–116. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2017.02.062
- Ntoumanis, N., Barkoukis, V., Gucciardi, D.F., & Chan, D. K. C. (2017). Linking coach interpersonal style with athlete doping intentions and doping use: A prospective study. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 39, 188–198. doi: 10.1123/jsep.2016-0243
- Ntoumanis, N., Ng, J. Y., Barkoukis, V., & Backhouse, S. (2014). Personal and psychosocial predictors of doping use in physical activity settings: A meta-analysis. *Sports Medicine*, 44, 1603–1624. doi: 10.1007/s40279-014-0240-4
- Overbye, M. (2016). Doping control in sport: An investigation of how elite athletes perceive and trust the functioning of the doping testing system in their sport. *Sport Management Review*, 19, 6–22. doi: 10.1016/j.smr.2015.10.002
- Palou, P., Ponseti, F. J., Cruz, J., Vidal, J., Cantalops, J., Borràs, P. A., & Garcia-Mas, A. (2013). Acceptance of gamesmanship and cheating in young competitive athletes in relation to the motivational climate generated by parents and coaches. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 117, 290–303. doi: 10.2466%2F10.30.PMS.117x14z9
- Pitsch, W., Emrich, E., & Klein, M. (2007). Doping in elite sports in Germany: results of a www survey. *European Journal for Sport and Society*, 4, 89–102. doi: 10.1016/j.peh.2018.01.001
- Ponseti, J. F., Palou, P., Borràs, A. P., Vidal, J., Cantalops, J., Ortega, F., ... & Garcia-Mas, A. (2012). Disposition to cheating in sport questionnaire (CDED): Its application to young athletes. *Revista de Psicología del Deporte*, 21(1), 75–80.
- Potgieter, J. R. (2013). Cheating: The dark side of sport. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 35(2), 153–162.
- Preston, I., & Szymanski, S. (2003). Cheating in contests. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 19, 612–624. doi: 10.1093/oxrep/19.4.612
- Reddiford, G. (1998). Cheating and self-deception in sport. In M. J. McNamee, & S. J. Parry (Eds.), *Ethics and Sport*. London: E & FN Spon.
- Russell, J. S. (2014). Is there a normatively distinctive concept of cheating in sport (or anywhere else)? *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 41, 303–323. doi: 10.1080/00948705.2013.832266
- Ring, C., & Kavussanu, M. (2018a). The impact of achievement goals on cheating in sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 35, 98–103. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2017.11.016
- Ring, C., & Kavussanu, M. (2018b). The role of self-regulatory efficacy, moral disengagement and guilt on doping likelihood: A social cognitive theory perspective. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 36, 578–584. doi: 10.1080/02640414.2017.1324206
- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Narrative analysis and sport and exercise psychology: Understanding lives in diverse ways. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 10, 279–288. doi: 10.1016/j.psychsport.2008.07.012
- Šukys, S. (2013). Athletes' justification of cheating in sport: Relationship with moral disengagement in sport and personal factors. *Baltic Journal of Sport and Health Sciences*, 3(90), 70–77.