

Young Athletes Pushed To Doping By Parental Pressure

A research from the University of Kent has shown that pressure to be perfect from parents makes young male athletes feel positive about doping.

The research from the [University's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences](#) revealed that pressure from parents makes junior athletes more likely to use banned substances to improve sporting performance. It was suggested by lead researcher Daniel Madigan that anti-doping programs because of the risks identified in the findings should target junior athletes early in their sporting career. Madigan also suggested that parents should be made of the potential consequences of such pressure on their children.

The first-of-its-kind research, which was published by the *Journal of Sports Sciences*, discovered that attitudes of young athletes are more influenced by their parents than anyone else. Perfectionism and attitudes towards doping in 129 male British junior athletes (mean age 17.3 years) were examined by the research in four different aspects of perfectionism.

It was found by the study that there was a positive relationship with positive doping attitudes only from parental pressure. The researchers examined other factors such as the striving of athletes for perfection, pressure from their coach to be perfect, and their concerns about making mistakes. Perfectionistic strivings additionally showed a negative relationship in a multiple regression analysis controlling for the overlap between the four aspects. A structural equation model that examined the relationships between all variables suggested that pressure from coaches had a negative indirect effect on attitudes towards doping via perfectionistic strivings. It was indicated by findings of this study that perceived parental pressure to be perfect may be a factor that contributes to vulnerability of athletes to doping where perfectionistic strivings may be a protective factor.

This study also disclosed the price young athletes may choose to pay to meet their parents' expectations and dreams with the rise of so-called "tiger" parenting where strict and demanding parents push their children to high achievement levels.

The study will now be widened for examining if young female athletes are similar and if the findings of this study are the same for those taking part in team versus individual sports.

Daniel Madigan, who is a PhD student, said the problem of pressure from parents watching their children play sports is widely known, with referees and sporting bodies highlighting the difficulties and taking steps to prevent it.

Perfectionism and attitudes towards doping in junior athletes (Daniel Madigan; Professor Joachim Stoeber, School of Psychology, University of Kent; Professor Louis Passfield, School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, University of Kent) is published online in the Journal of Sports Sciences.

In another development, Windsor Lancer athletes visited St. Anne's high school recently to make students aware of the dangers of using performance enhancing drugs. This visit was part of the Succeed Clean program that started with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport back in 2010 for encouraging young athletes to avoid doping to improve their performance.

Liz Vandeborn, the region's community coordinator for the centre for ethics, said when a lot of people think about [doping in sport](#), they think about males, who are taking [testosterone](#), taking steroids but a growing population of females are actually using steroids at an increasingly alarming rate.