



Sport, and Use of Anabolic Androgenic Steroids among Icelandic High School Students:

A Critical Test of Three Perspectives.

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Abstract

Background

This study investigates use of anabolic androgenic steroids (AAS) among a national representative sample of high school students in Iceland. We identify three different perspectives pertinent to the use of AAS among youth. The first perspective focuses on AAS use as a individual phenomenon motivated by the desire to succeed in sport; The second perspective sees AAS use as shaped by norms and values that are embedded in social relationships of formally organized sport; and the third perspective postulates that factors outside sports that have been shown to correlate with delinquency and the use of other substances. We test several hypotheses drawn from these perspectives.



Method

We use logistic regression and predicted probabilities to analyze data from a national representative questionnaire survey of 11.031 Icelandic high school students.

Results

We find that the use of AAS is not significantly related to participation in formally organized sport with sport clubs. It is, however, positively related to informal fitness and physical training in informal contexts. There is a relatively strong relationship between the use of AAS and the use of illicit substances and a moderate relationship of AAS use with alcohol and tobacco consumption. We find a significant relationship between several social variables and AAS use indicating a consistent and significant relationship with school context, but less so to family related variables. Finally, we find that the relationship between sport participation and AAS use varies across levels of social anomie and social integration.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the use of AAS should be considered more as a social and a health problem along with other, especially illegal substances rather than limiting the discussion to sport specific issues. Our findings suggest that the main risk group that needs to be targeted in prevention efforts consists of high school students that take part in fitness and informal training outside the institution of formally organized sport. That should, however, not be done at the expense of general risk factors that effect AAS and other substance abuse in the general population. Finally, we suggest that prevention efforts should target at groups as well as individuals.

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