

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cultivating clean sport environment with athlete support personnel (ASP): A study on anti-doping knowledge, attitudes, and practices of ASP

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OPEN ACCESS

Citation: Lim MC, Nair G, Chua EW, Tuan Mahmood TM, Imran F-H, Shamsuddin AF, et al. (2024) Cultivating clean sport environment with athlete support personnel (ASP): A study on anti-doping knowledge, attitudes, and practices of ASP. PLoS ONE 19(12): e0314716. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0314716>

Editor: Clementswami Sukumaran, Government Law College, INDIA

Received: July 31, 2024

Accepted: November 15, 2024

Published: December 5, 2024

Peer Review History: PLOS recognizes the benefits of transparency in the peer review process; therefore, we enable the publication of all of the content of peer review and author responses alongside final, published articles. The editorial history of this article is available here: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0314716>

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Data Availability Statement: "All relevant data are within the paper and its [Supporting Information files](#)."

Abstract

Athlete support personnel (ASP) work closely with, treat, or assist an athlete participating in or preparing for sports competition. Their involvement in preventing and eliminating doping is crucial. This study investigated the knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to doping in sports among ASP from Southeast Asian countries. An anonymized self-administered questionnaire assessing knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to doping in sports issues was administered to ASP from Southeast Asian countries. Overall, 596 respondents from eleven countries participated in the study. The majority were male (67.1%), non-health-care professionals (89.4%), and retired elite athletes (57.7%). Their knowledge was found to be poor, reflected in a mean score of 16.1±5.4 out of 30. Attitudes towards doping, as measured by the Performance Enhancement Attitude Scale (PEAS), scored 18.1±9.4, indicating a negative attitude. While some respondents provided information on medication and supplements use in sports to athletes, only 11.8% reported regular updates on doping in sports topics. Meanwhile, the knowledge and PEAS scores were significantly different between the genders ($p = 0.04$; $p = 0.02$). The knowledge score was also negatively correlated with the PEAS ($p < 0.01$). This study highlights significant knowledge gaps among ASP in Southeast Asia regarding anti-doping practices. Enhancing their knowledge and fostering positive attitudes toward anti-doping efforts can promote a culture of doping-free sports, particularly among the emerging generation of young athletes they support.