

DRUG TESTING HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES/EXTRA-CURRICULAR PARTICIPANTS

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapters

I.	INTRODUCTION	3
	Statement of the Problem & Significance	3
	Purpose of the Study	3
	Research Question.....	3
	Definition of Terms.....	4
	Assumptions.....	4
	Limitations.....	4
	Summary.....	5
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
	History.....	6
	Rise of Teen Drug Use.....	6-7
	Effects on Participation/Abuse.....	7-10
	Summary.....	10-11
III.	METHODOLOGY.....	12
	Research Design.....	12
	Setting.....	12
	Participants and Sampling.....	13
	Instruments.....	13
	Procedure.....	13
IV.	ANALYSIS OF DATA.....	14
	Research Question(s) & Findings.....	14
	Summary of Results.....	16
V.	DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS.....	17
	Discussion of Results.....	17
	Problems Encountered in the Research Process.....	17
	Implications.....	18
	Future Areas of Research.....	19
	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	19
	REFERENCES.....	20

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem and Significance

Collegiate student-athletes and professional athletes are not allowed to use drugs; therefore, high schools need to implement drug testing of student-athletes and extra-curricular participants that are governed by state high school associations to avoid the further spread of drug abuse among high school students. “In 1995, the United States Supreme Court ruled that drug testing for high school athletes was constitutional, and some districts expanded their policies to include middle schools. Proponents of testing at the high school level say that it offers students a way to say no to drugs and that it serves as a deterrent” (Pilon, 2013, para.5). Even though this has been legal and constitutional since 1995, the problem of substance abuse amongst high school student-athletes remains a widespread problem in this country.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to reveal that student-athletes need to be subjected to random drug testing in order to deter them from abusing drugs at such a young age. Many teens smoke marijuana; if student-athletes knew that they would not be able to participate in high school sports and extra-curricular activities such as band and cheer, they might choose to say not to smoking marijuana. More and more drugs are being abused by young people each year; random drug testing could serve as a deterrent to student-athletes trying any of these drugs. Collegiate student-athletes are randomly drug tested as are professional athletes; therefore, high school athletes should be subjected to the same testing and similar penalties.

Research Question

Should the City X District mandate random drug testing for participation in high school athletics/extra-curricular participants?

Definition of Terms

Random drug testing – drug tests would be conducted at random with no notice to those being tested, and student-athletes would be randomly selected by the last four digits of their social security numbers.

Drug abuse – abuse of any illegal substance or prescribed medication for which the student-athlete does not hold a prescription.

MISSHSAA –this is the acronym for the Mississippi High School Activities Association which is the governing body for all sanctioned extra-curricular activities in Mississippi high schools.

Assumptions

Modeling appropriate conduct for high school students is critical. Student-athletes and those students who represent the school in extra-curricular activities must know in high school that they are not allowed to abuse street drugs or prescription medication for which they do not hold a prescription. Teaching high school student-athletes that consuming illegal substances not only alters their minds and may harm their bodies but also this behavior can keep them from being able to participate in sports and extra-curricular activities. Those high school student-athletes who are fortunate enough to play on the college level also need to be prepared for drug testing that is done in college.

Limitations

Limitations in this study include but are not limited to the fact that some parents are going to fight mandatory drug testing of their high school age children, some schools do not have the money to conduct the testing, and some people are not going to enforce the penalties for student-athletes failing the drug tests.

Summary

In summary, high school athletes and students that participate in extra-curricular activities cannot be allowed to abuse drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, and performance-enhancing steroids if these drugs are not legal and if they are not permitted to be used by collegiate student-athletes, professional athletes, and other professions. Random drug testing can deter student-athletes and students who represent their high school in other extra-curricular activities from using illicit drugs and possibly avoid harmful side effects that drugs can cause like suicide from performance-enhancing drugs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History

As noted in the introduction, “In 1995, the United States Supreme Court ruled that drug testing for high school athletes was constitutional, and some districts expanded their policies to include middle schools. Proponents of testing at the high school level say that it offers students a way to say no to drugs and that it serves as a deterrent” (Pilon, 2013, para.5). Even though this has been legal and constitutional since 1995, the problem of substance abuse amongst high school student-athletes remained a widespread problem in this country. Some states have made random, mandatory drug testing the norm for students who participate in athletics and extra-curricular activities.

In June of 2002, the U.S. Supreme court gave public schools a broader amount of control over drug testing by allowing them to test middle school aged children as well as high school students and broaden the scope of students tested from student-athletes to all students participating in extra-curricular activities (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 3). This statute allowed high schools to test all students who represent the entire school without student-athletes feeling singled out from the rest of the student population. Even though this process is Constitutional, school districts need to be cautious when adopting a policy and ensure that it aligns with the Constitution and the local, state, and federal guidelines (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 8).

Rise of Teen Drug Use

A study published in 2017 gave rise to the need for drug testing of high school student-athletes and extra-curricular participants due to the fact that teen drug use was on the rise any

way (Johnston, et al, 2017). According to the research team that conducted this study, “Substance use by American young people has proven to be a rapidly changing phenomenon, requiring frequent assessments and reassessments” (Johnston, et al, 2017, p. 1). Teen drug use leads these young people down the path to further drug use and possible abuse and addiction. This study provided a large enough sample to gage the behavior of teens on a national scale and spanned over a 5 year period of follow-ups to record and monitor the behavior of the participants. The rate of drug use amongst teens was alarming and gave rise to the idea of using drug testing amongst this age group.

Effects on Participation

Did drug testing affect student participation? Did drug testing deter student drug use. Research revealed that there were many proponents and opponents of mandatory, random drug testing for high school student-athletes and extra-curricular participants. New Jersey was the first state to institute drug testing for high school student-athletes (Pilon, 2013, para.7). Other states followed, but the abuse of steroids seemed to still be occurring. In 2007, a study was conducted with 5 schools who had mandated drug testing and 6 schools who had not made drug testing a must (Goldberg, 2007). This study was called SATURN, Student Athletes Testing Using Random Notification, and Goldberg found that random testing had very little effect on the athletes in the study. Goldberg (2007) asserted that this studied revealed that:

...drug testing is better understood. Although drug testing did not appear to reduce school sport participation as some had suggested it would, it did not reduce past 30-day drug or a combination of drug and alcohol use, and only intermittently lowered past year use.

Armed with this information, parents, schools and policy-makers now can make

evidence-based, cost-effective decisions about how best to protect the health and well-being of young athletes.

(Goldberg, 2007, para.8). From this research, the reader assumed that drug testing amongst high school student-athletes did not reduce drug use or participation in the schools studied. This researcher conducted this study over a two year period at the 11 schools, 5 of which had mandatory testing and 6 who did not, and the results of the survey showed that there was no significant difference reported in the 5 surveys over the two year period of reduced drug abuse at the schools who conduct testing as compared to those schools who do not conduct random testing (Goldberg, 2007, para. 10-12). Goldberg (2007) also asserted that most schools would not have the sophisticated testing that was used in this two-year study with which to conduct their testing.

Schools that conduct drug testing generally only tested those students who participate in extra-curricular activities. “In random testing, students are selected regardless of their drug use history and may include students required to do a drug test as a condition of participation in an extracurricular activity” (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 2). Schools adopted drug testing for a variety of reasons according the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The reasons for drug testing high school students included:

- Avoid drug abuse
- Resist peer pressure to use illicit drugs
- Identify young users to provide early intervention
- Identify those who already need treatment
- Avoid learning problems and disruptive classroom behavior

(National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 4).

Research showed that various consequences are used for failing a drug test in high school; the aim of school districts that drug test was to “prevent future illicit use” (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 9). So, the punishment scales documented usually had a similar pattern:

- 1st offense – notify parents, mandatory counseling, and follow-up test
- 2nd offense – suspend from team/activity
- 3rd offense – expel from team/activity and require rehabilitation

(National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 10).

Different schools had different policies in the research consulted, but most of them had this general format.

Pilon (2013) highlighted a story of steroid abuse leading to suicide. “One case that triggered alarm involved Taylor Hooton, 17, of Plano, Tex., whose 2003 suicide widened concerns about high school students’ use of performance-enhancing drugs” (para. 3). This student-athlete committed suicide, and his parents lobbied for drug-testing of high school student-athletes. His father later asserted that he did not know if the testing was effective or if the students were merely finding a way to avoid failing the tests (Pilon, 2013, para. 3).

Some research showed that drug testing had positive impacts in New Jersey, the state that first made testing mandatory. As of 2013, New Jersey, Texas, and Illinois were the only states mentioned in research consulted that maintains mandatory, random drug testing of student-athletes and participants in extra-curricular activity (Pilon 2013, para. 1). Florida mandated

testing in 2007, but did not have funding to continue the program after that initial year (Pilon, 2013, para. 4). Pilon (2013) went on to show that “The New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association...is in its seventh year of testing. It will test 500 student-athletes this year during its championship events, roughly the same number as last year, at a cost of about \$100,000. The rate of positive tests has never exceeded 1 percent (para. 8). So, mandatory, random drug testing yielded positive results in New Jersey which is evident in the low percentage of students testing positive.

Seaman High School in Kansas found that random drug testing had a positive impact on student athletes (Mason, 2016, para. 1). “Ninety-seven percent of students tested throughout the school year came up drug free. The remaining 3 percent included some false positives that were cleared up with proof of prescription” (Mason, 2016, para. 3). So, this school provided an example of a school that found success in using drug testing to deter drug use.

Summary

Testing high school age student-athletes for illicit drugs was made legal almost 25 years ago in 1995 while testing students in extra-curricular activities was made legal only about 17 years ago in 2002 (Pilon, 2013, para.5 & National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2017, para. 3). Did drug testing work in deterring student drug abuse and did the benefits outweigh the costs of implementing random, mandatory drug testing? The answer to this question made this study necessary.

Arming young people with knowledge, testing them to help them and not to punish them, and following the guidelines and standing firm in enforcement of those guidelines helped schools like those in New Jersey keep their number of positive drug tests low. Avoiding tragedies like

suicide from steroid abuse and traveling down the path of life-long drug and alcohol abuse were what brought about testing of high school student-athletes from the beginning. Research shows that some schools decreased drug use and had very few students to test positive after putting the program into place.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This problem in this study is to determine whether or not high school athletes and students who participate in extra-curricular activities should be drug tested. This study surveyed parents, student-athletes, students involved in extra-curricular activities, and coaches to determine attitudes about mandatory random drug testing of these high school students at City X High School.

Setting

The setting of this study is a rural high school in the state of Mississippi. The population of this study includes the student-athletes, students who participate in extra-curricular activities through the MISSHSAA, their parents, and the coaches/sponsors of a 4A high school in a rural community in Mississippi. The student-athletes range from 14-19 years of age. The parents of these athletes range from 27 to 50. The coaches range in age from 26-48. Most of the participants in this study are from conservative backgrounds which could influence how they feel about mandatory random drug-testing.

The people of this area are of average means with a high level of poverty as well. According to Cubit (2018), the population of

City X is the 115th most populated city in the state of Mississippi out of 362 cities. The largest City X racial/ethnic groups are White (61.5%) followed by Black (34.3%) and Hispanic (2.3%). In 2017, the median household income of City X residents was \$40,250. City X households made slightly more than Lucedale households (\$40,078) and

Moss Point households (\$39,705). However, 19.5% of City X residents live in poverty.

The median age for City X residents is 51.3 years young

(Cubit, 2018, para.1-4). These statistics just reveal the breakdown of race, income, and age in this community. This is the population in which this survey will use to gather data to complete this research project.

Participants and Sampling

This is a class 4A high school with 513 high school students according to the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MISSHSAA); the classification system followed by the MISSHSAA takes the schools with between 475 and 625 to rank students in class 4A. This school has 212 students that participate in “activities” governed by the MISSHSAA which includes all sports and activities (baseball, volleyball, football, fast-pitch softball, boys’ and girls’ basketball, boys’ and girls’ soccer, powerlifting, boys’ and girls’ track, band, choir, debate, and cheer) in which our students participate. There are numerous single parent households; so, this study will only require one parent survey per athlete to be completed. There will be 28 coaches/sponsors who will complete surveys due to the fact that some coaches coach or sponsor more than one sport/activity.

Instruments

A 10-question survey was used to gain insight on parents, students, and coaches’ attitudes about implementing a mandatory random drug-testing policy at City X High School.

Procedure

On January 3, 2020, the athletic director of City X High School conducted a mandatory meeting for all student-athletes, extra-curricular participants, parents of these students, and coaches/sponsors of sports and activities. The athletic director administered the surveys by distributing them to all participants; he gave them 5 minutes to complete the survey and took them up.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question(s) & Findings

Should the City X District mandate random drug testing for participation in high school athletics/extra-curricular participants?

Figure 1: Results of Survey

QUESTION	STUDENTS	PARENTS	COACHES
Should random mandatory drug testing be implemented at City X High School for all student-athletes and extra-curricular participants?	112 of 178 62.9% yes 60 of 178 33.7% no 6 of 178 3.3% neutral	146 of 226 64.6% yes 66 of 226 29.2% no 14 of 226 6.2% neutral	28 of 28 100% yes
Did you know that using illegal drugs and/or performance enhancing drugs are banned for college and pro-athletes, band members, and other extra-curricular participants?	160 of 178 89.8% yes 18 of 178 10.1% no	226 of 226 100% yes	28 of 28 100% yes
Should students be punished if they test negative for illegal substances?	100 of 178 56.1% yes 78 of 178 43.8% no	135 of 226 59.7% yes 91 of 226 40.2% no	28 of 28 100% yes
Should coaches/sponsors drug tested?	170 of 178 95.5% yes 8 of 178 4.5% no	226 of 226 100% yes	28 of 28 100% yes
Should a rehabilitation system be established?	100 of 178 56.1% yes 60 of 178 33.7% no 18 of 178 10.1% neutral	220 of 226 97.3% yes 6 of 226 2.7% no	28 of 28 100% yes
Should only student-athletes be tested?	100 of 178 56.1% yes 78 of 178 43.9% no	26 of 226 11.5% yes 200 of 226 88.5% no	28 of 28 100% no
Should only extra-curricular participants be tested?	78 of 178 43.9% yes	10 of 226 4.4% yes	28 of 28 100% no

	100 of 178 56.1% no	216 of 226 95.6% no	
Should testing be done at school?	10 of 178 5.6% yes 168 of 178 94.4% no	146 of 226 64.6% yes 66 of 226 29.2% no	28 of 28 100% yes
Should an outside agency perform the testing?	112 of 178 62.9% yes 66 of 178 37.1% no	220 of 226 97.3% yes 6 of 226 2.7% no	20 of 28 71.4% yes 8 of 28 28.5% no
Should results remain private?	178 of 178 100% yes	226 of 226 100% yes	28 of 28 100% no

Summary of Results

A total of 432 people were surveyed, and 66.2% of the total surveyed agreed that City X High School should implement a random mandatory drug testing program. All the coaches/sponsors agree that student-athletes, extra-curricular participants, and coaches/sponsors should be drug tested. Very few participants felt that only student-athletes or only extra-curricular participants should be the only group tested. 81.4% of the total participants thought that an outside agency should perform the testing and only 42.6% of the total surveyed felt that the test should be performed at school; this was due to the fact that only 5.6% of the students surveyed thought the testing should be conducted at school. 100% of the participants felt that the results should remain private. 80.5% of the participants felt that there should be some sort of rehabilitation program should be established while only 60.9% of the participants felt that those who tested positive should be punished.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Results

In looking at the results, 100% of the adults surveyed were aware that use of illegal drugs and performance-enhancing drugs were prohibited on the college and pro levels of sports and other activities while only 89.8% of the students surveyed answered that they were aware of this fact. This revealed to the researcher that more awareness needs to be promoted at the middle school ages. A total of 432 people were surveyed, and 66.2% of the total surveyed agreed that City X High School should implement a random mandatory drug testing program which could reflect that the participants feel there may be a problem with drug use in this school system.

All the coaches/sponsors agreed that student-athletes, extra-curricular participants, and coaches/sponsors should be drug tested; 5 of these coaches surveyed are parents as well. Very few participants felt that only student-athletes or only extra-curricular participants should be the only group tested. 81.4% of the total participants thought that an outside agency should perform the testing and only 42.6% of the total surveyed felt that the test should be performed at school; this was due to the fact that only 5.6% of the students surveyed thought the testing should be conducted at school which reflects that they do not want other students to know that they are being tested. 100% of the participants felt that the results should remain private which indicates that no one felt that private health information should be shared.

80.5% of the participants felt that there should be some sort of rehabilitation program should be established while only 60.9% of the participants felt that those who tested positive should be punished. These statistics may be indicative of the fact that some participants felt that

rehabilitation itself would be punishment. There would be no reason to implement the testing though if there was no punishment for those who tested positive.

Problems Encountered in the Research Process

The only problem encountered was some student-athletes, extra-curricular participants, and parents did not show up to participate. 178 students of 203 were surveyed while only 226 of 316 parents on record for these students were surveyed.

Implications

The implications of this research included but are not limited to the following ideas. There is some sort of drug use at City X High School with so many participants advocating the random mandatory drug testing policing. City X needs to add the restriction of illicit drug use to their present drug education program so that all student-athletes and extra-curricular participants are aware that drug use is not allowed. City X High School needs to establish protocol for testing by establishing a testing policy, a punishment policy, a rehabilitation plan, and a reinstatement of eligibility for participation policy.

Future Areas of Research

City X should research the cost of implementing a drug testing policy. The school should also look into what other schools do for punishment, rehabilitation, and reinstatement of students to athletic and extra-curricular activities. The school should research the prevalence of drug use as well as the types of drugs being used by students at the school to better equip themselves to help students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this survey were that City X high needs a drug testing policy for student-athletes, extra-curricular participants, and coaches/sponsors. The results revealed that City X people who participated in the survey must feel that there is drug use within their school and amongst those participating in sports and extra-curricular activities. The results of this survey reflected that City X needs to educate students more about the use of drugs amongst athletes and extra-curricular participants as well. City X should conduct further research on the cost of implementing a drug testing policy; what other schools do for punishment, rehabilitation, and reinstatement of students to athletic and extra-curricular activities; and the prevalence of drug use as well as the types of drugs being used by students at the school to better equip themselves to help students.

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APPENDICES