

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the detailed findings of the study based on the analysis discussed in Chapter 3. The presentation of the study findings is obtained from the primary data sources used in the data collection process. The study findings begin with the background of the athletes' demographics and their experience as representatives of Malaysia in local and international sports. The subsequent section focuses on the themes that emerged from the analysis conducted according to the research questions.

4.2 Demographic Information of the Respondents

A total of 5 respondents involved in this study are athletes and sports officials who have represented Malaysia in various sports such as rugby, weightlifting, and bodybuilding. The respondents consist of individuals with diverse academic qualifications, age groups, and varying years of experience in the National Sports Council (MSN). Additionally, each respondent is affiliated with different associations and states. The table below summarizes the demographic information of all study participants.

4.2.1 Summary of Respondents

Table 3: Demographic information of the Respondents

Respondent	Years of experience	Types of Sport
R1	15 years	Rugby
R2	15 years	Weightlifting
R3	10 years	Weightlifting
R4	25 years	Bodybuilder
R5	10 years	Bodybuilder

Respondent 1

The first respondent is a former national rugby player who has been experienced in this field for 15 years. He is now also a coach at university and MSN. He is 38 years old. has worked as a youth and sports officer at ADAMAS. He is from Kedah and currently works as a Lecturer at the Faculty of Sports and Recreation Management at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) Perak.

Respondent 2

The second respondent is a former National Weightlifting Athlete with 15 years of experience. He has represented Malaysia in the Asian and Commonwealth Games (Commonwealth Games / Sea Games) and broke the Asian sports record which is his achievement and fond memories at that time. He has also won the Champion and won gold and silver medals at the international level. This athlete has also conducted training abroad to improve his performance. This athlete was once stripped of his runner-up medal at the Asian sports championships due to positive doping. He had to stop due to

a severe injury due to the frequency of competitions and training. Now he shares his experience as a weightlifting coach and is also active in the Malaysian Weightlifting Association.

Respondent 3

The third respondent is a Penang State weightlifter. Born and raised in Seberang Perai, Penang. Now has been an athlete for 10 years until now. The athlete's best achievement is winning a bronze medal in Sukma in 2022. Now he has become a Malaysian Weightlifting Athlete and regularly undergoes training with the Malaysian Sports Council (MSN) to keep his abilities and performance.

Respondent 4

The fourth respondent is a former Malaysian Bodybuilder with up to 25 years of experience. Known as Badang Malaysia. This athlete has won a variety of medals both locally and internationally. The respondent has previously been prohibited from competing in Southeast Asia and international sporting events. Most recently, in 2019, he received a 4-year suspension for using performance-enhancing drugs.

Respondent 5

The fifth respondent has 10 years of experience managing the management and administration of National Bodybuilding Athletes. He is also a youth and sports officer and is quite experienced in sports nutrition research.

Summary of Respondents

The experience of interviewing all the respondents helped me to find out the content and essentials I need to answer the small research question I am currently working on.

Although the involvement of athletes in the use of PEDs in sports is not a high percentage, all the respondents were able to help me gather the information and data I

needed. This is because ethics in sports must be emphasized to uphold the principles of the sport. In the world of anti-doping rules, the principle is that one is fully responsible for the ingestion of substances, or the methods used. ADAMAS Malaysia is committed to ensuring that all players in the sports industry act in accordance with the principles of "play true, win clean and fair play".

4.3 Research Finding

This study aims to investigate the causes and effects of performance-enhancing drugs among athletes in Malaysia. Substance use, including the misuse of Performance-Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) and recreational substances, has become a prevalent issue in the world of sports. However, the specific factors contributing Performance – Enhancing Drugs among athletes in Malaysia, as well as its consequences on their health and athletic performance, remain relatively understudied. By examining the underlying causes and consequences, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the problem and suggest potential interventions to address PEDs among athletes in Malaysia effectively.

4.4 Findings of Research Question 1

Why do Malaysian athletes involve in Performance–Enhancing Drugs?

The performance-enhancing drug in sports among Malaysian athletes is a concerning issue that can have significant implications for the individuals involved, their teams, and the reputation of Malaysian sports. While it is important to note that

not all athletes engage in PEDs, there have been cases where some individuals have resorted to using banned substances to enhance their performance or for recreational purposes. The use of Performance-Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) is a major concern in the world of sports, including in Malaysia. Athletes may turn to substances such as anabolic steroids, human growth hormone (HGH), or other stimulants to improve their strength, speed, endurance, or recovery. These substances can provide unfair advantages and are strictly prohibited by international sports governing bodies such as WADA, as well as national anti-doping organizations like ADAMAS.

RQ 1 To explore the involvement of Malaysian athletes in Performance – Enhancing Drugs in sports.

Themes	Sub-themes
Self-interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance enhancement Financial gains Injury Lack of knowledge Competitive pressure
Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast result Pursuing KPI Outdated knowledge
Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of knowledge and awareness . Increase their kid’s performance. . Fast result

4.4.1 Self-interest

The involvement of PEDs in sports among Malaysian athletes can be influenced by various factors, including self-interest. While it is important to note that not all athletes engage in PEDs, some individuals may succumb to this behaviour for personal gain or

self-interest. Here are some factors that may contribute to PEDs in sports among Malaysian athletes due to self-interest:

4.4.2 Performance Enhancement

One of the main reasons athletes turn to PEDs is to enhance their performance. Performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) such as anabolic steroids, human growth hormone (HGH), and stimulants can provide an unfair advantage by increasing strength, endurance, and recovery. All participants expressed that the primary reason for athletes engaging in drug abuse is their desire to improve their performances.

“Usually take ingredients for yourself. Because I don't believe in my own strength. Both cause and reduce pain for injured athletes. Usually, will take materials 1 hour before the competition. I will be able to play and be more confident. Usually, the type of contact sport (rugby) will take. In terms of psychology, people think it will have a quick effect. Should have a long-lasting effect. In Rugby, people take marijuana to increase performance and prolong it to play.” (R1)

While according to Respondent 2,

“Throughout my involvement in this field, two weightlifters failed the doping test conducted by ADAMAS during the Perak Malaysia Games (SUKMA) 2018. They were confirmed to have taken the prohibited substance methylhexanamine. These banned substances are used to enhance performance, especially during any competition, and athletes may have taken supplements containing banned substances when they participated in SUKMA Perak in 2018.” (R2)

Respondent 3 stated that the effectiveness of PEDs has indeed been proven. Anabolic steroids do indeed help accelerate performance improvement, but reducing performance is also quick because, once the effects of the drug wear off, the body immediately loses stamina and becomes fatigued. How to detect if an athlete is using prohibited substances? One way is by observing a noticeable difference in their performance. Athletes typically have knowledge of the limits of their fellow athletes who train alongside them. For example, Athlete A may usually be able to lift only 140kg, but suddenly, in a short period of time, they can lift up to 180kg. Another way to identify such usage is during the gathering of athletes from various states, which usually takes place a day before the game. Sometimes, a table for doping tests can be seen. The following day, during the actual game, there may be athletes who unexpectedly withdraw, and from there, they can infer that they have used PEDs. In his opinion, the use of PEDs among athletes in Malaysia is a concerning issue. In terms of internal factors contributing to the use of PEDs, he believes it stems from individual desires. Some athletes want to surpass others and reach higher levels of performance, while others may feel dissatisfied with their achievements or seek shortcuts for personal gain, which is why they resort to using those substances.

“Typically, in my experience, for consistent weightlifting training, athletes start at 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, and 100% of their capacity. Most weightlifters can perform this set of exercises for two sets per training session. However, once athletes take anabolic steroids, they can perform up to eight sets per training session without feeling tired”. (R3)

Individuals who abstain from performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) are capable of achieving a comparable level of performance to those who utilize anabolic steroids,

albeit through a prolonged and unwavering commitment to training and development. Achieving the desired weight typically requires a significant duration of time. Consequently, it is imperative for athletes to consistently undergo appropriate training and cultivate the requisite competencies. Performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) are typically challenging for the general population to acquire, while athletes frequently have more convenient means of obtaining them. The majority of states possess individual suppliers. Certain athletes utilize these substances to attain their objectives expeditiously, hence resorting to their usage.

“I believe that the consumption of steroids by athletes can potentially enhance their performance by enabling them to withstand rigorous training regimens and challenging circumstances. Their physical prowess experiences a significant improvement; however, they exhibit awareness of the potential repercussions.” (R4)

According to the fifth participant, the banned substances are unquestionably advantageous in augmenting training intensity. The substances utilized by individuals are dissimilar to those consumed by street drug users. Instead, they are taken to enhance their physical and cognitive capabilities, optimize their physique, and reduce adipose tissue to facilitate the development of lean muscle mass. Individuals are capable of enduring rigorous training sessions throughout the day and into the night while maintaining the ability to continue with intensified training the following day without experiencing any adverse effects. This constitutes an advantage. The primary impetus behind athletes' use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) is their intrinsic drive. Athletes aspire to attain their objectives, and aims, and enhance their athletic abilities.

“This is because these compounds have been empirically demonstrated to be effective in augmenting performance.

Performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) have the potential to augment an athlete's energy levels and overall performance. Most athletes utilize performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) with the intention of augmenting their athletic abilities rather than maintaining them, as they are cognizant of the potential adverse consequences associated with prolonged PED usage.” (R5)

4.4.3 Financial Gains

Success in sports often leads to financial rewards, including prize money, endorsements, and sponsorship deals. Athletes may believe that using drugs to boost their performance can lead to greater success and financial benefits. The allure of financial gain can be a powerful incentive, pushing some athletes to prioritize their self-interest over fair play and the spirit of sport.

For Example, consider a hypothetical Malaysian athlete named A, who comes from a low-income background and has dreams of becoming a professional athlete in a popular sport like football or track and field. A's family struggles to make ends meet, and he lacks the financial resources to afford proper training, quality equipment, and travel expenses to compete in major tournaments or events. A recognizes that to have a chance at success in his sport, he needs to perform exceptionally well and gain recognition. However, without sufficient financial support, he finds it challenging to access the necessary resources and opportunities that could enhance his performance.

In this situation, A might start feeling the pressure to find a solution to his financial struggles. He becomes aware that some athletes use prohibited substances to gain a competitive advantage and increase their chances of winning prize money, securing sponsorship deals, or signing lucrative contracts with professional teams. A see

this as an opportunity to overcome his financial limitations and improve his prospects in the sport. Despite being aware of the potential risks and ethical implications, A might decide to take prohibited substances as a desperate measure. He hopes that the performance-enhancing effects of these substances will give him an edge over his competitors, attract attention from sponsors or scouts, and ultimately lead to financial stability for himself and his family. A's decision to use prohibited substances is driven by his financial pressures and the belief that it may offer him a shortcut to success. However, it's important to note that taking such substances is not only against the rules but also poses significant health risks and undermines the integrity of the sport.

“Any athlete, especially those who are not financially well-off, may face significant financial pressures. The pursuit of sports careers can be expensive, requiring costs for training, equipment, travel, and medical support. Some athletes may feel compelled to use prohibited substances to enhance their performance and increase their chances of winning prize money, sponsorship deals, or lucrative contracts.”

“When an athlete has gained recognition, usually an organization or brand will come forward to sponsor them. Usually, senior athletes know about the supplements they should avoid, as the best supplements may contain ingredients with some degree of risk. I think there is no guarantee of freedom from side effects or prohibited substances.” (R2)

Performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) such as anabolic steroids, growth hormones, and stimulants can provide athletes with certain advantages, such as

increased strength, endurance, and recovery. This can potentially lead to improved athletic performance and, in turn, greater success in their respective sports. Athletes may believe that by using these substances, they can outperform their competitors and achieve higher rankings, which could open opportunities for endorsements, sponsorships, and higher financial rewards.

“It is true that some athletes may believe that using drugs can lead to greater success and financial benefits, therefore it is important to note that the behaviour is frowned upon and considered unethical and against the rules in most sports”. (R5)

a) Injury

Injuries can be a significant factor that leads some athletes to consider using prohibited substances, including performance-enhancing drugs, to recover more quickly and get back into competition. Athletes who are eager to return to their sport and maintain their performance levels may feel compelled to explore alternative methods, even if they involve substances that are banned. When athletes sustain injuries, it can have a detrimental impact on their careers and aspirations. They may face pressure to return to competition as soon as possible, especially if they are professional athletes who rely on their performance for financial stability. In such cases, athletes might turn to prohibited substances to aid in their recovery, hoping to expedite the healing process and regain their competitive edge.

However, it is important to note that the use of prohibited substances as a remedy for injuries is highly discouraged and contrary to the principles of fair play and integrity in sports. Many performance-enhancing drugs not only enhance physical performance but also have potential risks and side effects. Using these substances without proper

medical guidance and supervision can exacerbate health issues and lead to further complications. It is crucial for athletes to prioritize their long-term well-being and seek appropriate medical treatments and rehabilitation methods that are within the rules and regulations of their sport. Sports medicine professionals, trainers, and physiotherapists play a crucial role in assisting athletes with injury management and helping them recover in a safe and ethical manner. Sports organizations and governing bodies have implemented various measures to address the issue of injuries and the use of prohibited substances. They provide resources and support systems to athletes, including access to medical professionals who specialize in sports injuries and rehabilitation. These organizations also enforce anti-doping regulations and conduct drug testing to maintain a level playing field and ensure fair competition.

According to Respondent 1, in a particular game in Korea, there was a potential star athlete who suffered a severe injury to the extent that they couldn't even run comfortably. In such cases, the athlete may have no choice but to receive medication through injections as part of their treatment, strictly adhering to the prescribed dosage. However, if the usage of these substances is not closely monitored, they can potentially lead to addiction. In certain instances, athletes may have a valid prescription from a doctor for a medication that is not initially listed as a prohibited item by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). However, when the next doping test is conducted, the substance may be newly classified as prohibited, resulting in a positive test for the athlete. Doping tests are often conducted unexpectedly, with some athletes being tested even before their departure for overseas games. Additionally, athletes may be called for doping tests immediately after the completion of a tournament, and there are instances where athletes are subjected to doping tests prior to award ceremonies.

“There was an instance where our athlete made the mistake of taking the medication first and then sought the doctor's signature and submitted the form. The correct procedure would be to obtain a doctor's prescription first and have it validated by the ADAMAS panel before using the medication. Sometimes, the Local Organizing Committee (LO) and athletes are not aware of these requirements. Therefore, if an athlete undergoes any treatment or receives medical care, it is mandatory for the athlete or their representative to obtain a doctor's report, whether it is from a hospital or the National Sports Institute (ISN). Typically, the National Sports Council (MSN) submits the report to ADAMAS, who then forwards it to the panel for investigation.” (R1)

Respondent 2 experienced severe injuries and breathing difficulties after consuming a medication containing prohibited substances. Although the medication was not classified as a performance-enhancing drug, it was intended to have calming and soothing effects. After consuming the prescribed medication, the patient experienced immediate relief from their discomfort. This led to his realization of the distinct categorization of steroids. Certain steroids are formulated to enhance focus in precision sports like archery or shooting, while others are intended to augment performance or boost strength in weightlifting. Long-distance runners may use steroids to improve their endurance. He received a lenient punishment due to mitigating circumstances beyond his control.

“In fact, all types of sports have interests and purposes for athletes to take PEDS. some athletes use banned substances for their mental health. Individuals hold the belief that these substances facilitate relaxation and enhance cognitive performance.” (R2)

“There are also cases where athletes take medication for their injuries, but the substances have not cleared from their bodies by the time they undergo testing, resulting in a positive result. In addition, there are athletes who turn to performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) to reduce pain. Examples of these drugs include ponstan, celebrex capsule, tramadol, marijuana, steroids, and ketum (which is not on the restricted list but is classed as a toxin). Rugby athletes are the most likely to use PEDs. On the other side, weightlifters frequently use the supplement neurobion.” (R3)

“My opinion is that in the event of an athlete sustaining an injury, it would be advisable to seek medical attention from the healthcare professionals at MSN, undergo physiotherapy, or alternatively, opt for rest as a remedial measure. The individual in question has previously suffered from an injury that necessitated medical attention from MSN. Specifically, the injury involved torn tissues and required the administration of injections. The medical professionals in that location oversaw the formulation of the injections and issued a letter of referral to inform the board of my requirement for the injections as part of my therapy. The complete recuperation process typically spans a duration of one to three weeks.” (R4)

‘I cannot deny that the injury factor is another reason why Malaysian athletes use PEDs. ermm.. for example, Lee Chong Wei, has a doping problem but he doesn't use drugs to improve his performance. he followed the doctor's advice; he took it to heal broken bones and help his bones become stronger and denser. but that's it, WADA has determined that the drugs he takes are not intended to enhance performance. He was still considered cheating, however, because the prescription affected other areas and contained drugs prohibited by WADA. Drugs, for example, have a calming effect. The drug may be considered a performance enhancer in sports such as shooting or archery that require calmness or concentration. Athletes in this sport must maintain their composure and focus. As a result, the prescription is considered illegal in the sport, and the penalties are just as harsh

for bodybuilders who use steroids. However, since the drug was not used to enhance Lee Chong Wei's performance, the punishment was relatively light. so good for him'. (R5)

b) Lack of education and awareness

Some athletes may lack proper education and awareness regarding the risks and consequences of drug abuse. They may be unaware of the potential long-term health effects, ethical implications, and the damage it can cause to their careers and personal lives. This lack of understanding can lead them to make misguided choices driven by self-interest, without fully considering the negative repercussions.

'My view is that education is an additional contributing factor. what can be seen, certain athletes may lack awareness or not be informed about the latest compilation of prohibited substances as published by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Furthermore, some athletes show a deficiency in their knowledge and understanding of the constituents found in these supplements. ha...As a result, those athletes tend to emulate the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) when they observe their peers engaging in such behavior, often without considering the possible consequences. I have witnessed an incident reported where female archers from Terengganu and Kedah, who participated in the Sarawak Malaysia Games (SUKMA), were found to have failed a doping test due to the consumption of weight loss drugs. This issue increases when the substance is found to be ineffective in facilitating weight loss, while at the same time presenting a higher risk to one's overall health. These athletes can actually also ingest food or drinks that contain prohibited substances. S. Kumar has been embroiled in legal matters for consuming a chocolate drink that was found to contain small amounts of banned substances. Although the amount is small, it still leads to a violation of doping rules. Therefore, I and my fellow athletes need to

be especially careful when evaluating claims made by vendors related to foods or beverages that are intended to reduce weight, improve well-being, or cure various ailments.’ (R1)

‘My experience with PEDs and banned substances in supplements is limited. The food supplement supplier guarantees the presence of protein for recovery and sustained energy. so, it's really important for us to realize that the main objective is to achieve the medal, things like this will cause stress. usually caused by pressure from superiors. I experienced a situation. A week before the Commonwealth Games, I suffered an injury caused by competing regularly in two months. this left me with insufficient time for proper recovery. at that time, I did not have enough training time for the SEA Games. This started when I got a recommendation from a trainer to use supplements. Unfortunately, I do not know the supplements that my trainer prescribed. at that time, I was convicted and alleged anti-doping rule violations were made following my silver medal win at the Games. After the appeal process, I was banned for only six months.’ (R2)

‘I dare to say that it is possible that the athlete does not know the components of the drug, or the supplement contains the substance. Additionally, there are athletes who accidentally take supplements that contain WADA-banned chemicals.’ (R3)

‘I take additional supplements because I believe that the supplements provided by MSN are not enough, hahahhah... especially for bodybuilders like me. When I took this supplement, I had no idea that it contained illegal chemicals; so, I just think it's harmless. In short, I just see it as a test that he needs to take.’ (R4)

c) Competitive pressure

In highly competitive sports environments, athletes may face immense pressure to excel. This pressure can come from coaches, teammates, fans, and even self-imposed expectations. To meet these expectations and stay ahead of the competition, some athletes may resort to drug abuse to maintain a competitive edge or recover quickly from injuries.

‘I know that, Usually, other considerations are due to peer pressure or influence. Athletes often misjudge the performance of others as superior to their own or believe that they are lagging their competitors. I've been through it myself. When competing in a sport like rugby, I work hard to get a place in the starting line-up. As a result, teammates put a lot of pressure on me, and I could cause other athletes to experiment with performance-enhancing drugs in sports.’
(R1)

‘Athletes use PEDs to catch up with the performance of their competitors. In my experience, some athletes also turn to PEDs to push their own limits.’(R2)

‘As an athlete, I have two categories of drug use to improve performance. The first scenario is when an athlete has not reached their limit but continues to use performance-enhancing drugs, and the second scenario is when an athlete has reached their limit but continues to use these substances. On the other hand, as far as I know, the first type is more common in Malaysia, especially among those who are relatively new to the industry. On the other hand, these

people usually don't last long. Athletes who fall into the second category are those who use performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) for their training approximately one year, six months or three months before competition. Anabolic steroids and other pills (I'm not sure of the specific name of the pill) are the two most common forms of performance enhancing drugs used by athletes.'(R3)

'I think most athletes who regularly take performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) are new athletes who want to make rapid progress and get results faster. Conversely, professional careers in sports are often short-lived for athletes who take performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) because the body cannot tolerate the substance for long periods of time.'(R5)

4.4.4 Coach

The coach plays a significant role in influencing the use of performance-enhancing drugs among Malaysian athletes. Coaches are responsible for guiding and training athletes, and their influence can extend beyond physical preparation to include psychological, emotional, and ethical aspects of performance.

'I think the influence of coaches on the use of banned substances among Malaysian athletes is an important aspect to consider. Coaches are incentivized to look after their personal interests. many have been reported where athletes from Terengganu were found to be doing doping activities during the SUKMA Perlis games. Upon further investigation, it was found that all the athletes involved were under the guidance of a coach. Certain coaches rely heavily on coaching as their primary or exclusive means of financial support. To maintain

their financial stability, it is possible that individuals may incentivize athletes to take supplements or prohibited substances. There have been reported incidents where coaches have secretly hidden banned substances in Ferrero Rocher confections, then distributed them to athletes to consume. Trainers have knowledge of various performance enhancing drugs and their potential benefits. If the coach promotes or promotes the use of the substance, the athlete may feel compelled to comply to gain a competitive advantage. Coach support can create a culture where doping is seen as a viable option for success.’ (R1)

‘My coach consistently emphasized the necessity of consuming the supplement during periods of injury. Historically, coaches have been known to advise their athletes to consume supplements as a means of optimizing their performance and achieving their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The provision of supplements was aimed at optimizing the athletic performance of the individuals in question. Coaches may have access to resources related to performance-enhancing drugs, including information, connections to suppliers, or even direct involvement in acquiring these substances. Their involvement in facilitating the use of these drugs can further entice athletes to engage in doping.’ (R2)

‘I am believing that a substantial influence is played by the coach due to the possibility that the coach will urge the athlete to take drugs or supplements. The pressure that is put on coaches to fulfill KPIs that have been set by MSN, which defines the number of medals that need to be won in a specific competition, is another aspect that has contributed to the current situation. There is also the possibility that coaches look for attention through the achievements of the athletes

they instruct. Especially in highly competitive sports, coaches typically have quite high expectations for the athletes they work with. Athletes can be driven to contemplate using performance-enhancing drugs as a quick cut to increase their performance and live up to the expectations of their coaches because of the pressure they are under to accomplish outcomes.’ (R3)

‘In my view, another factor to consider is the coach. Sometimes, coaches also play a part in the process because they are entitled to a cut in the prizes that their athletes earn. This is something that typically happens in competitions for sports that need a certain level of physical development, body composition, and endurance. Coaches have an important role in teaching and reinforcing ethical behavior in athletes. When coaches fail to emphasize the importance of fair play, integrity, and the harmful consequences of doping, athletes may be more inclined to engage in doping practices. Coaches serve as role models for athletes, and their behavior and values greatly influence their athletes' actions. If a coach has a history of involvement in doping or turns a blind eye to doping practices, it can send a message that such behaviour is acceptable or even necessary for success.’ (R5)

However, it is important to note that not all coaches engage in or promote doping practices. Many coaches prioritize the well-being and long-term development of their athletes, emphasizing the importance of clean and fair competition. Anti-doping education programs, strong institutional policies, and regular monitoring are necessary to counteract any potential negative influence from coaches and promote a culture of clean sport.

4.4.5 Parent

The influence of parents on the use of prohibited substances, such as performance-enhancing drugs (PED), among Malaysian athletes can vary depending on numerous factors. While parents can play a crucial role in shaping their children's values, behaviours, and attitudes, it's important to note that individual choices and influences from various sources contribute to the decision to use prohibited substances.

‘I feel that parents are still another aspect that affects whether or not their children use illegal substances. It is every parent's hope that their offspring will achieve success in their chosen athletic endeavors. They might view their children as still being relatively young and harbor the hope that they won't be subjected to any drug testing. Because of this, the parents permit their children to consume these substances without alerting the coaches, possibly because they believe the substances to be dietary supplements or vitamins.’(R1)

‘I believe that parents have a considerable influence on the raising and moral development of their children. The parents' morals, convictions, and perspectives on the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, as well as the importance of fair play and sportsmanship, might have an impact on their children's decisions regarding the use of PEDs. Parents who impress upon their children the significance of having integrity and acting ethically while participating in sports are more likely to prevent their children from taking illegal substances.’(R2)

‘My experience as an athlete, that parents act as examples for their offspring to follow in their footsteps. If parents engage in

behaviours that condone or support the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), it is possible that their children may be more inclined to view such actions as acceptable. On the other hand, parents who model healthy behaviours for their children, who stress the significance of putting in long hours of labour, and who oppose taking short cuts are more likely to deter their children from engaging in illegal behaviour.’ (R3)

‘Thoroughly my experience, mostly parents often play a significant role in supporting their children's athletic endeavours. Although parental support can have positive effects, an excessive amount of pressure from parents to attain success at any expense may inadvertently lead to an increased inclination towards the use of performance-enhancing drugs. The presence of impractical anticipations, heightened concentration on achieving victory, and a dearth of emphasis on the significance of sustained well-being and growth can engender a milieu that may coerce athletes to resort to performance-enhancing drugs.’ (R4)

‘I am strongly confident and believe that parents can help prevent their children from experimenting with PEDs by aggressively educating themselves and their kids about the dangers and repercussions of using illegal substances. Parents may provide their children the information they need to make wise decisions by encouraging an open discussion about the moral, medical, and legal ramifications. Athletes are exposed to a variety of external influences, such as peers, coaches, and the larger sports culture, in addition to their parents, who have a big influence. Even if parents provide instruction to the contrary, peer pressure, cultural expectations, media portrayals of success, and the desire for recognition or financial gain can all influence the decision to use PEDs.’(R5)

4.5 Research Question 2

What are the issues of Performance–Enhancing Drugs among Malaysian athletes towards their future?

The use of PEDs among Malaysian athletes, as with athletes worldwide, can have several impacts, both positive and negative. It's important to note that the use of PEDs is considered unethical and against the rules and regulations of most sporting organizations, including the Olympic Council of Malaysia and the WADA.

RQ 2	What are the impacts of PEDs intake?
Themes	Sub themes
Health	Physical Mental
Disciplinary actions	Banned Punishment Isolation
Awareness	Athlete Coach Parent

4.5.1 Health

The intake of PEDs among Malaysian athletes can have significant impacts on both their physical and mental health. PEDs refer to substances or methods that are used to improve athletic performance beyond normal levels. Some PEDs, such as anabolic steroids, can enhance muscle growth, increase strength, and improve endurance. However, they can also lead to numerous adverse effects, including short-term physical effects (i.e., cardiovascular issues, hormonal imbalances, liver damage, musculoskeletal problems), long-term physical effects (i.e., increased risk of chronic diseases, hormonal

disruptions, psychological effects), as well as mental health (dependence and addiction, mood and behavioural changes, self-esteem, and body image issues).

‘Actually, PEDs use has two effects on athlete performance. My point of view, for starters, it has an instant psychological effect by improving energy levels and decreasing pain. This has the impact of increasing enthusiasm and eagerness to perform. However, in terms of the individual athlete's physical well-being, the use of PEDs might cause weariness, depletion, or even pain when the benefits of the chemicals wear off. PEDs are most taken orally, through consumption. Athletes, on the other hand, may administer them by injections. It is critical to underline that the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) not only violates anti-doping regulations, but also poses serious hazards to both the athlete's health and the integrity of sports. The short-term benefits of improved performance must be balanced against the long-term costs, both physiologically and ethically, of their use. Athletes' psychological impacts can typically be overcome, and after serving their suspension, they can return to competition. The community's or their surroundings' perception, however, may have an effect. For instance, if a Kedah-based athlete is discovered to be doping, their villager may refer to them as a drug addict. Because of the words and opinions of others, rather than because they were not given opportunities, this can have a big negative impact on the athlete's mental health, making them feel depressed or even considering quitting the sport. On the other side, some sportsmen decide to withdraw temporarily until they can reappear and start over, erasing any unfavorable impressions. In addition, athletes use various strategies to evade detection in doping tests. For instance, when it comes to certain substances like weeds, athletes may try to eliminate the substance from their body by consuming a large quantity of salty water. This leads to increased urination, making it more difficult to detect the presence of weeds

during doping tests. However, excessive intake of salty water can have negative effects on the athletes' kidneys. The time it takes for these substances to become sufficiently diluted depends on factors such as the individual's level of physical activity, the amount of substance consumed, and the quantity of salty water ingested. It is crucial to emphasize that these tactics and methods employed by athletes to avoid being caught in doping tests are not only unethical but also directly violate anti-doping regulations. The use of such techniques undermines the fairness and integrity of sports competitions, puts the health and well-being of athletes at risk, and tarnishes the reputation of the entire sporting community.'(R1)

'What I feel, sometimes the handshakes badly while eating is one of the side effects of the residual steroids he took. when he did the test, it showed that my intestines have thinned. The physical side effects of PEDs may have been manageable for him, but the psychological effects, especially how he was perceived by the public who did not know about PEDs, proved challenging for him to deal with. At the time, people in the village mistook me for a drug addict, not realizing the difference between performance-enhancing drugs in sports and illicit substances. Even when I visit the mosque to pray, this villager will imagine that I am trying to ask for forgiveness for his supposed wrong. This situation makes me feel discouraged. However, throughout the period facing the doping issue, the family and the late Dato' Seri Zolkples Embong gave me unwavering support. They gave him enough encouragement, especially when many journalists approached me with questions. As a result, I gradually educated myself about this.'(R2)

'Throughout my experience familiar with a case where an athlete's kidney suffered significant damage, leading to its removal, directly attributed to the use of these steroids. There are also instances where athletes who have used PEDs find themselves needing to maintain

consistent usage, as discontinuing them results in even further deterioration in performance compared to their pre-PED usage levels. From a psychological standpoint, athletes who face bans often experience emotional distress, particularly those who perceive their treatment as unfair. It takes time for athletes involved in doping cases to rebuild themselves. Some athletes may feel disheartened and discouraged from returning to their sport, as they must essentially start from scratch. However, there are also athletes who view this as an opportunity to raise awareness among their peers about the importance of being cautious regarding the substances present in the supplements or vitamins they consume. In cases where athletes require medication for injury treatment, their bans are typically of short duration. During this ban period, they continue their regular training regimen but are prohibited from participating in any competitions.’(R3)

‘After undergoing a doping test and the result was positive...i was involved in a personal struggle to accept that situation. Although I received occasional advice, the results remained the same, causing me to finally accept it. The initial period of being banned was undeniably frustrating, especially when dealing with the media and dealing with the stigma that people around me imposed on me. In those challenging times, I sought peace. My wife has proven to be a constant pillar of moral support throughout the ban. Some closely selected individuals also provided their support and motivation. Some of my friends tried to help me while others distanced themselves from me during that difficult situation. This experience became the realization of who my real friends are. I express my gratitude for the moral support received from my fans and followers, even though I am faced with certain associations and friends who seem to distance themselves from me.’ (R4)

‘I emphasize that the consumption of PEDs is bound to result in side effects, regardless of whether athletes take them in small or large quantities. The specific nature of these side effects, whether they are short-term or long-term, varies based on the unique characteristics of each individual athlete's body. However, these effects are likely to manifest over time. Even if the impact may not be purely physical, the use of these substances can still have psychological effects on athletes.’ (R5)

4.5.2 Disciplinary actions

The intake of Performance-Enhancing Drugs (PEDs) among Malaysian athletes can lead to disciplinary action. Anti-doping regulations and policies are in place to maintain fair competition and protect the integrity of sports. When athletes are found to have violated these regulations by using PEDs, they may face various disciplinary consequences. Athletes who test positive for banned substances may be suspended from competition for a specified period. The length of the suspension depends on factors such as the substance used, the athlete's history, and the governing body's regulations. Suspensions can range from months to several years. If an athlete competes while under the influence of PEDs or after testing positive, their results may be disqualified. This means that any awards, titles, or records achieved during the period of PED use can be revoked.

Athletes may be required to pay fines or reimburse any prize money or financial gains obtained during the period of PED use. These penalties are imposed to deter athletes from using PEDs and to compensate for the damage caused to the sport's reputation. In sports that rely on ranking or points systems, athletes may lose their

accumulated points or ranking because of a doping violation. This can significantly impact their standing in the sport and their eligibility for future competitions. Athletes who have been found guilty of doping may be banned from participating in major international events, including the Olympic Games or World Championships, depending on the severity of the violation and the governing body's regulations.

‘For me, when an athlete tests positive for banned substances, there are established procedures that must be followed. Athletes have the option to appeal the results and present evidence to demonstrate their innocence. Typically, there is an organization responsible for protecting athletes' rights, such as ADAMAS, which assists athletes who may have been sabotaged or unknowingly consumed prohibited substances. For example, Khairul Amar, a badminton player, tested positive but claimed to have not taken any supplements or medications. His officials challenged the results and requested a new test using the B sample. The second sample tested negative, leading to the dismissal of the charges against him. If athletes under the age of 18 test positive, they may still face fines and penalties, although there could be a reduction in the severity of the punishment. For instance, the imposed fine may be less than the full amount. In some cases, the use of a nebulizer can lead to a failed doping test, but the team representative can request an appeal. However, it is crucial to assess the nature of the medication involved. Several factors come into play during the evaluation process. First, the type and suitability of the medication for the athlete are examined. Second, whether the medication provides an enhancement to stamina or performance is considered. Third, the medication should not be utilized to mask or eliminate the effects of other prohibited substances. Finally, it is determined if the medication is necessary at a specific time or if not taking it would worsen the athlete's health condition. Only if the athlete meets all four of these criteria will they be cleared of any

wrongdoing. Failure to satisfy even one of these criteria will result in disqualification.’ (R1)

‘During my active period, doping tests were conducted randomly so it was unpredictable when I would be selected for the test. Some of my friends suggested different methods of hiding the steroids I was using to avoid a positive doping test, but I decided to ignore their advice. Following the loss of the silver medal at the SEA Games, I was summoned by the Ministry of Sports (MOM) for a hearing. During the trial, I defended myself by claiming that my trainer had given me the supplement, which led to a six-month ban. As a result, I developed a strong aversion to taking any supplements for the next two years. (R2)

‘I am suggesting that when an athlete tests positive for doping, they are usually given an opportunity to appeal the decision. The investigation panels rely on the second sample (Sample B) collected simultaneously with Sample A. Many athletes may claim persecution as a defence, but this excuse is no longer widely accepted as most athletes are already aware of the consequences. Additionally, all supplements and medications are now provided by MSN itself, eliminating the need for athletes to seek additional supplements elsewhere. Typically, if an athlete has indeed taken prohibited substances, they will accept the panel's decision without resistance. Regarding the masking of anabolic steroid usage, there is currently no known immediate method for athletes to hide the effects of steroid intake. Some athletes may take weight loss medication to help cleanse their bodies from other prohibited substances by increasing urination, indirectly aiding in the cleansing process. However, if athletes genuinely believe they have been unjustly accused, such as by their coach or friends, they can fight against the allegations. To do so, they must disclose what they have consumed (whether it is related to nutrition, vitamins, or supplements) and provide compelling

evidence, including the identity of the person who provided the substances.’ (R3)

‘My unforgettable personal experience of receiving a two-year ban and suspension for violating the ASEAN Games. The violation occurred when I appeared in an advertisement while still an amateur. At the time, there was little exposure or awareness of such matters, and as an athlete, I was unaware of the rules and regulations surrounding this issue. I was suspended for the second time in 2015, initially receiving a four-year ban from 2015 to 2019. However, my sentence was unexpectedly extended by another four years, meaning this year (September 2023) marks the final year of the ban. As a result, I made the decision to leave the association and continue my own independent path with the manager who is my own wife. For now, I train on my own and go to the gym, realizing that being the best is a challenging endeavour for me.’ (R4)

‘I admit, some national athletes use performance enhancing drugs (PED) hoping not to be noticed by ADAMAS or other officials. Unfortunately, for me, the ADAMAS staff seems to be slow, probably due to insufficient staff or lack of experience. Normally, only an accompanying sports official will report any suspicious or questionable behavior by an athlete. ADAMAS does not normally initiate anti-doping procedures randomly or regularly by itself; they usually require someone to report an issue before taking action. Furthermore, ADAMAS focuses exclusively on weightlifting and bodybuilding, ignoring athletes from other sports. Although the list of prohibited substances by ADAMAS and WADA is extensive, their emphasis mainly lies on anabolic steroids. They do not pay much attention to other substances such as stimulants used by athletes in sports such as athletics, boxing, rugby, or endurance sports.’ (R5)

However, most ADAMAS officers are primarily concerned with meeting their own performance goals (KPIs). Once they have achieved these goals, they tend to lose interest and generally focus on conducting tests closer to major events like the SEA Games. Aware of this pattern, athletes take precautions and ensure they are clean well in advance before gathering for these games because they are aware that ADAMAS or WADA might suddenly perform spot checks. Coaches are also aware of this situation, so they take athletes for training abroad long before the games. It is during these training sessions outside the country that athletes use substances to enhance their performance.

The ideal time for ADAMAS or WADA to perform checks is approximately 3 to 4 months prior to the games. However, considering that it is already April this year, ADAMAS has yet to conduct any checks on the athletes. ADAMAS should prioritize regular enforcement rather than just raising awareness. While awareness is important for athletes to understand what they are consuming, it seems that most people are already familiar with performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). Surprisingly, ADAMAS does not even test for substances like cigarettes or vaping, let alone conduct urine and blood tests. If blood tests were implemented, it is likely that many athletes would test positive. ADAMAS is already established, but its current focus seems to be on promoting awareness. ADAMAS booths can be found at various events, but these efforts do not seem to have a significant impact. The awareness they promote is more geared towards the public, which deviates from ADAMAS's primary purpose. It is questionable why ADAMAS is educating the public about why athletes use PEDs. Athletes often employ masking techniques to evade detection when using PEDs. They may use masking agents to hide or disguise the substances they have taken, particularly when they anticipate a doping test soon. However, the effectiveness of masking agents

varies depending on individual body composition. While some individuals can eliminate the substances quickly, others may take longer to do so. It is important to note that masking does not guarantee that athletes will not be caught.

In cases where an athlete tests positive, WADA/ADAMAS typically collects another sample simultaneously. Moreover, during urine tests, athletes are responsible for following the entire procedure themselves. Once they have urinated, the athletes transfer the sample into their own container, seal it, place it in their sample bag, and submit it. The officials only observe the athletes during this process. If anyone other than the athlete meets the sample, it is considered invalid, and the athlete must repeat the entire process. Therefore, if the second sample (Sample B) also tests positive, it unequivocally confirms that the athlete in question has used performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). Unfortunately, in such cases, there is no recourse available.

4.5.3 Awareness

The use of PEDs among athletes can have significant impacts on both the individuals involved and the overall awareness within the sporting community. In the case of Malaysian athletes, the impact of PEDs intake can be analysed from three perspectives: individual awareness, coaches' awareness, and parent awareness. Athletes may be tempted to use PEDs due to the perceived performance benefits. However, it is crucial for Malaysian athletes to be aware that using PEDs is not only ethically wrong but also against the rules of most sporting organizations. To address the issue of PEDs, it is essential to enhance education and prevention efforts among Malaysian athletes.

Raising awareness about the risks and consequences of PED use can help athletes make informed decisions and resist the temptation to engage in doping practices.

According to Respondent 1, awareness plays a vital role in this matter, and it is the responsibility of coaches to possess knowledge regarding such substances. Coaches should be well-informed about the supplements or vitamins their athletes are consuming.

‘For me, all coaches should proactively educate athletes and parents about PEDs. Additionally, coaches need to be aware of any medications prescribed by doctors for their athletes. For example, if an athlete falls ill or is involved in an accident and receives medical treatment and medication from an outside hospital, it is important to verify whether the prescribed medication is on the list of substances prohibited by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). In such cases, the coach must inform the doctor and relevant authorities, such as the Malaysian Sports Council (MSN). Parents are also responsible for ensuring that they have knowledge of the ingredients found in supplements or vitamins before allowing their children to take them.’

(R1)

Additionally, parents should familiarize themselves with the parent's guide on anti-doping provided by the Malaysian Sports Council (MSN). An incident serves as an example where a swimmer unknowingly consumed prohibited substances. The athlete entered their mother's car and, feeling thirsty, drank water from their mother's bottle, unaware that it contained bird's nest water, which contained prohibited substances. Consequently, the athlete tested positive for the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). It is crucial for all relevant parties, including coaches, parents, doctors, and athletes, to collaborate in creating awareness and maintaining vigilance concerning the

substances athletes ingest. This joint effort can effectively prevent unintentional doping violations and ensure the presence of a clean and equitable sporting environment.

In addition, athletes also hold the responsibility of being aware of what they consume and taking ownership of their dietary choices. It is essential for athletes to be accountable for their food intake. A case that exemplifies this is Maria Sharapova, who failed to stay updated with the latest list of prohibited substances in her supplements. Consequently, she tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs), leading to the withdrawal of all her sponsorships. Moreover, athletes need to be cautious about their nutrition. A noteworthy instance involves a Thai athlete who tested positive for doping but vehemently maintained that he did not consume any supplements. However, it was discovered that prior to a game, he had consumed meat from a local shop. Subsequent investigation and analysis of the meat revealed that it had been injected with steroids. This practice was prevalent in the country he visited due to heavy reliance on the livestock industry, where steroids were administered to animals to accelerate their growth and increase their weight. It is advisable to drink water from sealed bottles or unopened containers whenever possible. Additionally, if feasible, seek treatment at the Malaysian Sports Council (MSN). In case you receive medical treatment from external clinics or hospitals, ensure to consult with the MSN regarding the medication prescribed by the doctor. Cannabis, commonly known as ganja, has been excluded from the list of prohibited substances. It is now categorized as a recreational drug or used for clinical treatment. However, there are conditions attached to its usage. Athletes are allowed to use cannabis only during the off-season and solely for recovery purposes. Once the competitive season begins, its use is strictly prohibited. It is important to note that this change in regulations is primarily applicable outside of Malaysia, such as in Thailand,

as Malaysia still does not permit the use of cannabis. If an athlete is found using cannabis in Malaysia, they will face consequences according to the existing regulations and policies.

‘Actually, for me athletes have acquired a greater understanding of prohibited drugs and substances in supplements. The proliferation of technology has made it convenient for athletes to conduct online searches for the ingredients present in a specific supplement. By doing so, they can determine if any of these ingredients are listed as prohibited substances by the WADA. Furthermore, athletes now have an even simpler option as they can directly visit the MSN to verify the contents of a supplement before consuming it.’ (R2)

‘In my view, the repercussions of a ban on athletes extend beyond the physical consequences and significantly impact their mental well-being as they navigate the aftermath of the incident. However, certain athletes opt to leverage their personal experiences to educate and increase awareness among others. They transform a negative situation into an opportunity for fostering positive change within the sporting community.’ (R3)

According to the fourth respondent, athletes should prioritize monitoring and being aware of their nutritional intake, considering it as crucial as their training. They should pay attention to portion sizes and ensure they meet their nutritional requirements. If athletes choose to use supplements, it is vital to have knowledge about each substance present in them. Regarding medication, it is always advisable to consult with a doctor affiliated with the Malaysian Sports Council (MSN) to determine its suitability for consumption.

‘Easy story for me, it would be beneficial for athletes to pursue further studies in fields related to their respective sports, such as sport management, physiotherapy, or pharmacy. This can enhance their understanding of their sports and prepare them for future endeavours. Parents also have a significant role to play by being aware of the nutrition, supplements, and vitamins that their children consume. It is advisable for parents to stay updated with the list of prohibited items. Moreover, it is crucial for parents to understand their children's abilities and avoid placing excessive pressure on them to achieve rapid improvements in their performance. Instead, parents should provide unwavering support to their children.’ (R4)

Respondent 5 stated that it is recommended that aspiring athletes take responsibility for being aware of everything they consume. While there may be certain cases where lenient penalties are given by organizations like WADA or ADAMAS if an athlete unknowingly consumes certain food items, especially when traveling abroad and unfamiliar with the cuisine, there are still instances where severe consequences will be faced. Ultimately, it depends on luck. The MSN itself provides supplements, such as protein, for athletes.

‘Please listen to my advice, any athlete wishing to take supplements should consult with the doctors at MSN for advice and guidance. Regarding parents, it is crucial for them to educate their children. Some parents are willing to prioritize their children's athletic pursuits over academics, recognizing the potential financial benefits that sports can bring, but only if their children succeed. In some cases, fathers become coaches, while mothers take on managerial roles to support their children's sporting endeavours.’ (R5)

4.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) among athletes in Malaysia is a complex issue influenced by various internal and external factors. While I provided potential internal factors that may encourage PED use, such as the desire for a competitive advantage or achievement-oriented mindset, it's important to note that these factors are not unique to Malaysia and can apply to athletes in other countries as well. The effects of PEDs on Malaysian athletes can be significant and wide-ranging. While they may enhance athletic performance in the short term, they also pose serious health risks and can lead to violations of anti-doping regulations, ethical concerns, and negative impacts on the athlete, the sport, and the country's image.

Promoting awareness among athletes, coaches, and parents regarding the use of PEDs is crucial for fostering a culture of clean and fair competition. This can be achieved through education, information dissemination, anti-doping policies and regulations, support from coaches and sports institutions, parental involvement and guidance, collaboration with healthcare professionals, and anti-doping testing and enforcement.

By prioritizing education, prevention, and support, Malaysia can work towards creating an environment where athletes are well-informed about the risks and consequences associated with PEDs use and are encouraged to pursue performance enhancement through legal and ethical means. This will not only contribute to the integrity and fairness of sports in Malaysia but also protect the health and well-being of athletes.