

Fear of failure predicts doping likelihood in competitive athletes

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Fear of failure is the motive to avoid failure in achievement contexts (Conroy et al., 2002). It has been proposed that athletes who are motivated to avoid failure are more likely to report antisocial behaviors (i.e. aggression and cheating; Sagar et al., 2011). Such behaviours can have negative consequences on achievement, mental health and morality (Kavussanu 2019). The latter has been suggested as a key variable that influences an athlete's decision to use performance enhancing substances (i.e. doping; Backhouse et al., 2016). However, no study has investigated the relationship between fear of failure and an athlete's decision to dope. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between fear of failure and doping likelihood. Competitive athletes ($N = 201$; age = 20.4 ± 3.8 years, 73% male) completed measures of fear of failure and doping likelihood. Fear of failure was significantly related to doping likelihood ($r = .287, p < .001$). These findings provide novel evidence to suggest that athletes who are motivated to avoid failure are more likely to dope. Organizations aiming to prevent doping should aim to challenge athletes' fear of failure motivations and teach them strategies to deal effectively with their fears of failure. Further research is needed that investigates the relationship between fear of failure and other antisocial behaviors (e.g. aggression and cheating) to provide a better understanding of factors influencing morality in sport.