

# Beyond Biology and Morality: A Conceptual Analysis of Social Capital as a Structural Driver of Doping among Athletes in Kenya

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## Abstract

Sport-related doping is commonly understood with the help of individualistic worldviews based on individual morality, economic gains and law enforcement aberrations. Nevertheless, these explanations can mask a potent influence on social settings that determine the behavior of athletes. This paper offers a conceptual analysis of how social capital, which can be defined as resources that are incorporated into social networks, trust, and institutional relationships, affects the choice of doping among people in Kenya as athletes. It mentions three types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking. It critically examines how such types relate to creating vulnerability, access to knowledge, and making ethical decisions. We posit that strong-knit peer networks are able to normalize doping as a result of group pressure, whereas strong bridging ties and institutional isolation increase vulnerability to misinformation, exploitation, and mistrust. The report reveals the notion of post-career insecurity and weak athlete support systems as increasing the risks. This research emphasizes a need to reconsider an anti-doping policy in terms of mentorship, institutional trust, and the welfare of athletes, especially in the context of under-resourced settings, by no longer prioritizing individual responsibility.

## Keywords

Social Capital, Doping, Athlete Behavior

## 1. Introduction

Doping is a continuing issue in international athletics, and Kenya, a country re-

nowned for its performance in the field of long-distance running, has been affected by an alarming number of doping cases in the last two decades (Mwangi, 2018). Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK) and World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) reports reveal that the number of athletes who test positive for banned substances is on the rise (Cheruiyot & Musembi, 2025). The increase in the number of doping cases within the country indicates intense competition within the country as well as a mentality in which individuals are willing to win at all costs (Cheruiyot & Musembi, 2025). As a result, the integrity of sports, the nature of existing anti-doping measures, as well as the underlying motives towards doping in the Kenyan context are in question. Although most of the discussions have taken place in the public media and even some scholarly presentations have been dominated by the views depicting doping as a personal moral failure or financial need, this kind of presentation does not explain the complex and socially situated reality in which most sportspeople have to live (Jones, 2015; Posner, 2007). The paper provides a conceptual analysis drawing from existing literature to explore the structural role of social capital in doping behavior. A conceptual lens is particularly significant in the Kenyan context, where the majority of research studies consider individual motivations or economic deprivation without considering relational and institutional forces involved. With the constraints in formal information and the complicated social conditions in which sport, a conceptualized form of analysis, offers the opportunity of a more cohesive view of structural vulnerabilities.

Traditional accounts of doping in Kenya usually tend to follow two prevailing trends. The former is a moralistic framing, in which doping is discussed as a conscious ethical breach, *i.e.*, an intentional cheating to achieve personal profit (Veltmaat et al., 2023; Vorstenbosch, 2010). The second one is the structural-economic perspective, which portrays that doping is driven by poverty, a dearth of opportunity, or the temptation to perform to win financial awards that come with achievement in the athletic field (Lapouble, 2024). The two views are significant in that they provide a partial interpretation of the phenomenon in that individual volition, essentially, anchors the phenomenon at the expense of social settings, institutional ties, and interpersonal networks that influence personal decisions.

This article presents social capital as a much-neglected aspect of the doping debate. Social capital is defined as a collection of real and virtual resources that are inherent within social networks and incorporate the amount of trust, norms, associations, and frameworks that affect the conduct of an individual (Scrivens & Smith, 2013). To the athletes, particularly in resource-limited settings such as Kenya, the source of social capital may be a deciding factor as to who ends up with the support, knowledge, mentorship, and maneuvering through the institutions, all of which can make an athlete choose to dope or choose not to dope.

This paper seeks to present a conceptual review of the functioning of social capital as a structural determinant of doping among Kenyan athletes. There is a need to move the lens of analysis away from individual morality to relational organiza-

tion and this purpose will govern the ratio of the doping problem, determined rather by material deprivation but also by social isolation. This paper continues by briefly examining what social capital means in sports, proceeding to contextually examine the issue of doping in Kenya, after which the paper provides a theoretical connection between social capital and doping behavior. The conclusion states the implications of the research, policy, and interventions to support athletes.

## 2. Social Capital in Sports: A Conceptual Overview

### 2.1. Defining Social Capital

Social capital is the availability of social networks, shared norms and trust-based relations through which people avail the resources, which describes it as the set of available resources, potentially associated with durable networks and ties of power structures (Baliamoune-Lutz, 2011; Ihlen, 2005). Coleman considers it a functional set of relational assets of trust, obligations, and expectations that aid in coordinated action (Lindenberg, 2000). Putnam, who focuses on civic engagement, places a lot of emphasis on trust and reciprocity in communities and institutions (Stolle & Howard, 2008). A combination of these views highlights the understanding that social capital is an individual and a communal asset that is influenced by the social context. It exists within relationships with team members, coaches, and institutions in the field of athletics and can shape the choices in ethics and access to support systems (Allan et al., 2020). Applying social capital to doping, it provides a framework that allows for a deeper understanding in the manner in which group dynamics, mentorship and institutional trust can affect an athlete's behavior which suggests that choices around the use of performance enhancement is not usually an individual choice, instead it is highly relational and influenced by structure.

### 2.2. Typologies of Social Capital

Social capital is very dynamic in the sense that it is always differentiated between bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital (Claridge, 2018). Bonding social capital is a connection between people with a common identity or close associates, e.g., teammates or peer training groups (Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003). The relationships, although providing both emotional and material support, can be a source of insular norms, as well as silent acceptance of doping. Bridging social capital refers to relationships across boundaries of social groups-mentors, coaches or sponsors who also open the way to access more resources and viable knowledge (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010). Without such connections, athletes, in the case of sports, feel isolated and more prone to systematic manipulation through poor information. The third form of social capital describes the relationship between institutional actors, such as federations and regulatory bodies, on the one hand and a person on the other hand (Claridge, 2018). It is defined as linking social capital.

Anti-doping norms may diminish when there is little or no trust in these institutions or the accused lack easy access to them (Qvarfordt et al., 2021). The awareness of these quite distinct forms, yet their overlap is essential in the analysis of the context of their effect on the behavior of athletes in high-stakes sports such as competitions in athletics.

### **2.3. Implications for Athletes and Doping Behavior**

The structure and the quality of an athlete's social capital are decisive factors in the athlete's vulnerability to doping practices. Peer-based forms of bonding capital, which signify close ties between fellow trainees and associates on sports teams, can provide critical sources of emotional and material support, as well as normative conditions that implicitly condone deviance in a given milieu (Lenkens et al., 2019). The herd compulsion may prevail over personal ethical scruples in such environments, particularly when societal unity and belongingness are on the line (Kizilkaya, 2018). On the contrary, bridging capital connects athletes with wider networks because they can turn to coaches, mentors or doctors and receive reliable information and spread the idea of clean sport (Lefebvre et al., 2021). However, in inadequately endowed settings, these peripheral forms are often hard to attain or even chaotic, raising vulnerability to misinformation. Connection with capital, which encompasses the athlete's encounter with institutions, also influences the behavior through the measure of confidence and engagement with existing regulatory structures. Athletes can lose interest in these institutions in general when they feel they are harsh, secretive or corrupt. Therefore, the decisions to take doping are not exercised in a vacuum but are enmeshed with lines of relationships and institutions.

### **2.4. The Kenyan Athletic Context**

Social capital relations gain even greater importance in the context of cost-limited sporting conditions (e.g., Kenya), in which formal support mechanisms, athlete mentorship, and institutional responsibility have yet to be established in equal measure. Scholars have well-documented that in low-income environments, informal networks commonly offer an alternative to de facto under-funded institutions (Gómez-Cruz et al., 2024). In a Kenyan climate, where success in elite running may provide a considerable socioeconomic triangle, the athletes are often entrenched in closely knit training camps and local peer groups that, in effect, build into support systems and normative communities (Wekesa, 2010). These networks could provide solidarity and common aspiration, but risky behaviors can spread, too, where there is little or poor external supervision or such supervision is resented. According to Funahashi and Zheng (2023), weak institutional relationships mean that athletes are even more dependent on interpersonal trust that does not necessarily coincide with the ethical standard of sports. The perspective needed to understand doping in this light is then a relational understanding that moves beyond agency to structural limitations.

### 3. The Doping Landscape in Kenya: What's Known and What's Missing

#### 3.1. Overview of Doping in Kenya

Doping in Kenyan athletics has become an issue of national concern with regard to public health and ethics in recent years (Chebet, 2014). Once a place of near-universal renown in having provided several world-class distance runners, Kenya is currently struggling with the emergence of a problematic number of doping-related instances, making more people think not only of the wholesomeness of its sporting tradition but also of the feasibility of its international reputation (Wekesa, 2010). Kenya set up the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK) in 2016 under pressure from international monitoring agencies, including the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Association of Athletics Federations, after they recorded an increase in violations (Kwaw, 2025). According to WADA, between 2004 and 2018, a total of 138 Kenyan athletes were caught doping. Out of the 138 individuals caught doping, 131 of the athletes were caught while in competition (WADA, 2022). These are not solely high-performance athletes but young talents and occasional amateur runners, which implies that the issue is not isolated and is not limited to famous sports figures (WADA, 2022).

Athletics Kenya, the governing body that oversees sports in Kenya, acknowledges the doping crisis within the country, but it struggles with effective oversight and enforcement (Imray, 2018). Although there has been a heightening of the use of biological passports and random testing, the testing regime still has loopholes, especially at the grassroots, where the majority of the athletes train in informal and, in most cases, unmonitored training centers (Wekesa, 2010). Kenya has been listed under the so-called Category A by WADA, and this category comprises the countries that have the most considerable risk of doping (Koske, 2020). This class is a stark reminder that there is an extreme necessity for both structural changes and sociocultural insight behind the causes of the doping practice within the nation. In spite of institutional efforts, the continuation and even medicalization of the use of performance-enhancing substances in some trainings indicate that the given phenomenon is deeply rooted, as compared with the current data can depict.

With increasing incidents, there is a concern not just about competitive fairness but also about health, exploitation and security of the rule of trust in Kenyan sporting institutions (Koske, 2020). The discussion of the topic in the mass media is primarily aimed at pointing out personal responsibility or personal error as the root cause of a problem, and it follows the frames used by most of the worldwide anti-doping discourse (Guglielmetti, 2023). However, this individual-level perspective tends to lose sight of the multiplicity of factors that jointly contribute to the economic, institutional, cultural, and relational (Holtzer, 2007). Although national organizations have been able to progress with regard to policy formulation, testing regimes, and awareness initiatives, the efficiency of the interventions has been minimal, especially in the underserved and far-flung areas where enforce-

ment is less aggressive and the exposure of athletes is high (Wekesa, 2010). Consequently, it is time to have both a more extended and context-sensitive explanation of the doping landscape, where not only the structural limitations but the very real living conditions and social life that accompany athletic development within Kenya ought to be considered.

### 3.2. Dominant Explanations in Existing Literature

A large part of the existing literature examining the problem of doping in Kenya or, more generally, in the Global South tends to shift towards individualistic or economically deterministic accounts (Boardley et al., 2015). These media come up with accounts that highlight mostly financial benefits as the major driving force in using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) (Whitman, 2008). To young aspiring athletes, especially those whose socioeconomic status is not well off, the stakes are high, to say the least, the latter being in a space where sports performance is the proverbial silver bullet in terms of a chance to get to ride up that mobility ladder (Christiansen, 2010). A victory in a local or international race may promote the availability of sponsorships and stipends and social status, and a loss can be retrogressive to poverty traps (Shelley et al., 2023). Under this system of zero, doping is considered to be a risk, which some researchers take to be a rational turn of events to structural deprivation (Dilger et al., 2007). Although such economic interpretation is indispensable to comprehend the pressures that some athletes perceive as material, it tends to reduce athletes to taking risks as agents, hence ignoring their social and emotional contexts for their decisions.

Regulatory incompetencies have also been cited as key enabling factors besides financial factors. According to Ayodi (2024) from Nation Media Group, operations at ADAK were halted due to the lack of adequate funding. The chairman of the group noted that they were not able to conduct wholesome testing after the start of the new financial year as a result of the budget issues. Also, a high proportion of the growth of athletics in Kenya takes place beyond club structures, with regulation only loosely introduced after the athletes have already created a reputation so that doping may flourish with impunity (Wekesa, 2010). Additionally, a 2024 WADA/Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), through their investigation, found a need for better control when it comes to the medical practitioners as well as quasi-medical practitioners who play a huge role when it comes to the doping menace (Imray, 2018). Such a structural vacuum undermines the capacity of deterrence and top-down interventions.

Proper anti-doping education is absent (Imray, 2018). Numerous athletes, particularly juniors and amateurs, suggest that they received minimal or no formal education on prohibited substances, good supplementation practice, or therapeutic use exemption (Wekesa, 2010). Educational outreach continues to be very much focused on training centers on an urban or elite level, so rural athletes can only rely on rumors or ad hoc knowledge networks (Wekesa, 2010). Under these circumstances, any misinformation may spread, even with tragic results (Imray,

2018). This so-called knowledge gap, combined with the aspirational pressures, makes the athletes especially prone to being manipulated by those who provide unregulated performance enhancement as a get-out-of-jail-free card.

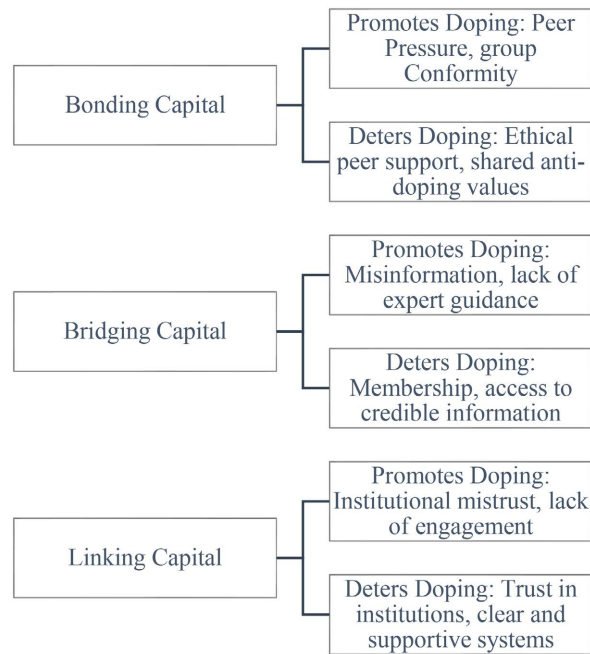
Although these economic, regulatory, and informational explanations are definitely significant, they all boil down to one thing in common: they tend to alienate the athlete from their social world. The main mode of abusing doping is considered to be a question of constrained choice or institutional failure rather than the subject of relational forces that influence such decisions. Consequently, the existing frameworks neglect the effect of trust, peer pressure, mentorship, and institutional legitimacy in influencing ethical limits. Such a conceptual gap opens up the opportunity to explore a more sociological approach to doping behavior, one that takes into consideration social capital as the protective factor as well as the risk factor within the environment of the athlete.

## 4. Conceptual Link: How Social Capital Shapes Doping Behavior

### 4.1. Embedded Peer Networks and the Power of Group Norms

Bonding social capital in athletic settings (particularly among cohesive training groups) is critical for determining the norms of behavior and how such individuals form their identity (Côté, 2005). According to Sheridan et al. (2014), athletes tend to depend on their peers not only for emotional and logistic support but also for social validation and direction. It is this dynamism that makes close-knit networks extremely robust centers of normalizing behavior among members, whereby group thinking will prevail over individual ethics (Strahilevitz, 2003). It has been found that in resource-scarce, high-pressure environments (a typical situation in many Kenyan training camps), performance-enhancing drug (PED) use can be normalized by the peer effects (Kumar, 2024; Veltmaat et al., 2023). In these types of communities, doping can be non-deviant depending on the status where the collective feels that it needs doping to achieve collective success, particularly in times where there might be stiff competition to win a particular type of attention, *i.e.*, to be recognized or to get a sponsorship (see Figure 1).

Besides, the presence of the moral dilemma of individual honesty and loyalty to the group adds complexity to the process of making the decision. (Juvonen & Galvan, 2008) Research indicates that in peer groups, individuals who do not conform tend to face exclusion or bullying (Strahilevitz, 2003). Hence, workers in these webs of relations may face coercive conformity: the refusal to take performance-enhancement doping may result in being left outside, losing training opportunities, or breaking social ties. These are the risks that render personal opposition expensive and, therefore, enforcement of the existing norms, including illicit conduct (Widmalm, 2005). In such a way, bonding capital, which usually is a safety net, may become a paradox in terms of a rise in susceptibility to doping when group cultures evolve to be tolerant. This duality, however, is recognized as the key to designing socially sensitive anti-doping interventions.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework showing how forms of social capital relate to mechanisms that promote or deter doping among athletes.

#### 4.2. Structural Isolation and the Absence of Professional Guidance

It is very important that athletes can build bridging social capital relationships, which enable athletes to be members of networks that have diverse and resource-rich structures for career growth. In Kenya, however, access is constrained by structural imbalances in training, in particular between rural and urban contexts, that inhibit access to certified coaches, medical experts, and institutional advice (Bakibinga et al., 2022). In the peripheral areas, athletes tend to train in an informal environment whereby performance techniques are communicated horizontally among their peers in lieu of being conveyed through a proven expert source (Wekesa, 2010). Such a lack of bridging capital renders them susceptible to falling prey to misinformation, especially when nutrition, injury management, and performance improvement are concerned.

Also, the problem is compounded by the fact that informal doping advisors (who are not pharmacists) and pseudo-scientists have begun to populate the industry by utilizing the ambition and naivety of athletes (Green, 2009). Many athletes who have no credible people to take them through the education at the expense of anti-doping do this with impunity, using the excuse that it is legal (Moston & Engelberg, 2019). Urban-based athletes who can afford to use sports academies, organized clubs or other structures such as universities have more formalized and regulated advice (Lepidi, 2024). This imbalance in bridging capital contributes to further inequality and supports structural isolation as a hazard of doping. The cycle may continue undisturbed unless there is a deliberate investment in the available, community-based systems of support, which will weigh heavily on the athletes who are not within the secured elite channels.

### 4.3. Institutional Disconnection and the Erosion of Trust

The interconnection of social capital as an interrelation between people and the institutions of power is of utmost importance in terms of compliance and ethical behavior in sports. In Kenya, however, an inverse relationship is reported by numerous athletes to exist with various governing bodies, including Athletics Kenya, the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK), and other international regulatory agencies (Korir, 2024). All these weak ties are largely based on the feeling of favors and partial enforcement, as well as obscured bureaucratic practices. In cases where institutional structures are considered inconsistent, out of reach, or politically driven, trust in the official systems wears out among the hired athletes.

This erosion of trust will result in disengagement from formal mechanisms of regulation such as testing, reporting, and education. Athletes can develop the belief that anti-doping systems are not forms of protection but rather negative instruments that are indifferently enforced. This means that in these settings, informal networks, although shaky, play a stronger role in directing behavior, including doping activities (Wekesa, 2010). Moreover, the disconnection is worsened by a lack of institutional concern for athlete welfare, especially after their career (Koech et al., 2024). The lack of clear, credible, and supportive institutional relationships reduces the desire of athletes to seek guidance, abuse reporting, or implementation of recommended practices (Juma et al., 2022). Doping, therefore, is not only a rationalized risk but, to some, an attempt that has become a survival mechanism in a system that they do not perceive as being able to see them (or support them) (Juma et al., 2022). Institutional trust rebuilding is thus imperative to a sustainability anti-doping intervention.

### 4.4. Post-Career Insecurity and the Temporal Horizon of Risk

The future of the athlete may be uncertain in a world in which those in the field are both vulnerable in terms of career and have few institutional options to fall back on, especially in a nation such as Kenya. The failure to provide effective post-career planning systems like transition programs, pension schemes or vocational training indicates an even more serious erosion of associations and continuity of social capital (Rintaugu & Mwisukha, 2011). Because of this, athletes exist in reduced time frames, the demand to succeed at the moment and the economic reward having greater importance than long-term health, image or fitness to perform (Rintaugu & Mwisukha, 2011). In these circumstances, performance-enhancing drugs are not simply competitive weapons; they are survival weapons in an environment in which no one can have much confidence concerning its future stability level (Boardley et al., 2015). The motivation to win by any means possible increases when the athletes realize that the top of their athletic performance is also the top of their earning potential (Cheruiyot & Musembi, 2025). In addition to such desperation is the existence of predatory middlemen, such as the duty-free agencies, informal coaches and the local drug men, who capitalize on these insecurities by promising easy pharmacological solutions that are sold as professional

assistance (Juma et al., 2022). Each lack of believable long-term institutional association denies athletes not only direction but protection, which in turn perpetuates an environment in which doping is not only an incomprehensibly extenuated danger but also an apparently obligatory reaction to institutional carelessness. To break this pattern, punitive anti-doping is not enough, but what is needed is structural investment in athlete welfare beyond the track so that the end of the sporting career cannot be rephrased as social and economic abandonment.

#### **4.5. Integrating Broader Contexts: Structural Pressures and Cultural Considerations**

Although this paper is mainly concerned with the theme of social capital, it still exists in an environment without economic and biological pressures. Rather, these dimensions intersect with each other to sway the choices of the athlete in a complicated setup. As an example, financial insecurity can intensify the use of peer networks (bonding capital) by an athlete, which can enforce or undermine the norm of doping, depending on group (or collective) values. Likewise, human capabilities, an injury or age-related loss can motivate the pursuit of performance enhancement, especially where performers do not have access to mediating capital, *i.e.*, access to professional medical advice or career planning. These tendencies can be aggravated by the weak linking capital (institutional trust) that does not provide athletes with long-term and plausible alternatives. In that way, social capital influences the experience of the athletes and their reaction to both economic and biological pressures, increasing or diminishing their effects on the doping behavior.

The general idea (though guided by the developed theory of social capital) has a certain limitation that needs to be addressed when evaluating its cross-cultural transferability. The Kenyan case will, at least, concentrate such bonding capital in even more communal terms, with the allegiance to extended-family or ethnic coalitions carrying greater social necessitation than even most Western conceptions of peer-based groups. In the same way, the perceived mistrust between capital and historical/postcolonial views of state institutions might influence the connection linking capital by making the lack of trust not only effective but cultural as well. The dynamics imply that, as much as the types of social capital will always be relevant, their meaning and effects will have to be redefined in terms of local cultural logics. In the future, research should examine the distinct ways these forms of capital are used in varied sociocultural settings.

### **5. Implications for Policy, Research, and Intervention**

#### **5.1. Policy Implications**

The findings of this theoretical exploration justify the need to change the paradigm of anti-doping policy, especially in under-resourced settings, such as Kenya, where the choices athletes make are significantly influenced by relationships and structural factors (Wekesa, 2010). Conventional anti-doping strategy (which is

based on surveillance, deterrence and penalties) has paid little attention to the formative influence of social networks, mentorship and institutional trust (Backhouse et al., 2016). By bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital being referred to as structural determinants of a doping vulnerability, it is not only possible but also necessary to have a model which will be more context-sensitive and prevention-based. The focus of bodies like the National Federation and the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK) ideally has to change from episodic to long-term, reciprocally fruitful ties with the athletes (Cheruiyot & Musembi, 2025).

Two practical steps could assist in putting this change into practice. The first initiative is the institutionalization of rural mentorship hubs that are operated by retired elite athletes as anti-doping education facilities and as places where a career is possible. Such hubs would reinforce the bridging capital by linking the young, remote or sole sport stars with mentors, qualified health professionals and trusted sources of training information. Such models have been tested in Ethiopia and Uganda, in which former Olympians participate in grassroots mentoring, and have demonstrated potential in the development of trust and the decrease in the vulnerability to the misinformation of their peers (Kebede, 2020; Wagstaff & Parker, 2020). Second, ADAK may adopt suggested athlete liaison offices in its hierarchy as adopted by WADA and the International Olympic Committee in the form of Athlete Commissions. The offices would be confidential areas where the athletes could easily report their worries, enquire about banned substances and also seek advice without being afraid to be punished. A similar program at the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport (SAIDS) showed more effective interaction with athletes and fewer unintentional breaches (Ruwuya et al., 2025).

## 5.2. Research Implications

In this paper, one might note that social capital is a dimension that is not thoroughly tapped, but one that is considered to be important in the research of doping behavior among Kenyan athletes. Although economic incentives, regulatory failures and moral reasoning have been regarded as some of the contributing factors to past research, this conceptual analysis points out the importance of interrogating the relational context within which athletes are operating (Moston & Engelberg, 2019). Research in the future ought to be organized to test bonding, bridging, and connecting aspects of social capital intersection with the choices of athletes to be involved or oppose using performance-enhancing drugs. Specifically, empirical research should be conducted to learn how the elements of peer networks, mentorship patterns, and trust in an institution impact ethical decision-making in sports at various levels.

Sociology, psychology, and public health have to be used as interdisciplinary methods to propose a more descriptive and practical approach to doping. Social capital ought to be examined not on its own but within the greater ecological systems of which it is a part, family, education, religion, and media, which affect the perceptions of risk, legitimacy, and belonging by athletes. Focusing on the social

aspect of anti-doping studies will enable researchers to contribute to changing the debate on individual accountability to structural responsibility and social resilience.

### 5.3. Intervention Strategies

The anti-doping strategies in Kenya should be relational since they recognize the social systems that influence the decisions of the athletes. Fostering the bonding capital will depend on peer-based programs that will promote common ethical norms among training groups. The informal justification of doping can be reversed by programs that provide clean sports role models for respected athletes as well as group responsibility (Stolle & Howard, 2008). Connecting capital needs to be increased with the input of athletes in rural and marginal areas, achieving access to professional coaches and sports scientists, as well as competent medical experts, chartered to offer both appropriate and ethical advice to the athletes (Lefebvre et al., 2021). To avoid isolation and misinformation, institutional investments in mentorship pipelines and clean sport advocacy networks are crucial (Imray, 2018). The connection between the capital has to be supported with the enhancement of transparency, responsiveness, and fairness in the athletic federations and anti-doping bodies. When regulatory institutions are regarded as credible and fair, there is also an increased likelihood that athletes will take part in them. Post-career insecurity should also be addressed through a policy effort, which is to establish a network of organized support through career transition, education, and psychosocial care programs (Rintaugu & Mwisukha, 2011). This is because one would have long-term security, which deters short-term risks and builds long-term commitment to fair competition. A policy framework based on social capital goes further than personal responsibility and focuses on system support and system embeddedness as important mechanisms of restraining doping. The interventions that engage and integrate all three types of capital provide a more comprehensive, sustainable route to participation in ethical sports.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have put forward the contention that it is best to think of doping as a social pattern that is located not only within individual morals or financial pressure but, more importantly, within the quality and pattern of social capital. The bonding, bridging, and linking capital contribute to the susceptibility or invulnerability of sports stars to performance-enhancing substances. Whether it is the straining of peer norms, a lack of trustworthy mentorship, or the breakdown of institutional trust, athletes have to exist under structural pressure that conditions their decision-making long before the decision itself is made. Focusing on social capital, doping highlights some major flaws in the existing anti-doping structures that tend to focus on the interpersonal and systemic character of the issue. This can be handled through an investment in ethical peer systems, professional guidance infrastructure and inclusive systems of governance. It is possible

to suggest that by considering the social circumstances within which the athletes perform their training and competitions, the policymakers may take an informal step to implement an anti-doping policy that is relevant and sustainable to both athletic performance and human development.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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