

Original Article

Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotics Use among Kabaddi Players in Maharashtra

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Manuscript ID: **Abstract**

JRD -2026-180165

ISSN: 2230-9578

Volume 18

Issue 1(VII)

Pp. 256-259

January 2026

Submitted: 16 Dec. 2025

Revised: 26 Dec. 2025

Accepted: 16 Jan. 2026

Published: 31 Jan. 2026

Some studies conducted across the globe have highlighted the use of performance-enhancing drugs among athletes. However, within the Indian context, especially in Maharashtra, there is a lack of sufficient information concerning elite athletes' awareness, knowledge, and use of prohibited narcotic substances. Therefore, the primary objective of the present study was to examine the physical and Mental Effects of narcotic drugs (i.e., performance-enhancing drugs) and their utilisation among elite athletes in Maharashtra state.

A descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for this study. A structured questionnaire titled "Assessing the physical and mental effects of narcotic drugs" was administered to kabaddi players (n = 200), aged between 18 and 26 years, who had represented athletic competitions at the state, national, and inter-university levels.

The findings revealed that more than 50% of the kabaddi players were unaware of the adverse health effects of narcotic drugs and were consuming these substances to enhance their athletic performance. The remaining players, although possessing adequate knowledge about narcotic drugs, were knowingly using these substances.

These results indicate that a majority of kabaddi players in Maharashtra are involved in substance abuse, which is a matter of serious concern and requires immediate preventive and control measures. However, since the findings are based on self-reported responses, the possibility of response bias cannot be ruled out. Therefore, future research should incorporate biochemical and physiological testing methods to obtain more objective evidence regarding the use of narcotic substances among athletes.

Keywords: Narcotics, kabaddi players, knowledge

Introduction

Kabaddi players participate in a high-intensity contact sport that demands exceptional levels of speed, strength, agility, endurance, and mental toughness. To enhance physical performance and achieve success at competitive levels, some kabaddi players resort to the use of narcotic drugs and other performance-enhancing substances. Narcotics are defined as substances or drugs capable of altering the psychophysiological and physical performance of the human body, with effects ranging from sedation and reduced mobility to heightened excitation, euphoria, and aggression.

Previous studies have indicated that the primary motivation for athletes to use such substances is the desire to achieve success, recognition, and financial rewards. The abuse of narcotic drugs by athletes is commonly referred to as doping. Although doping may result in short-term improvements in sports performance, it ultimately damages athletes' health and jeopardises their long-term sporting careers (Knotts, 2000; Yusuf, 2010).

In recent years, the use of doping substances among kabaddi players has shown a gradual increase, which may be attributed to the growing pressure exerted by family members, coaches, teammates, spectators, and the media. The constant expectation to win competitions and achieve personal best performances has contributed to an increased reliance on performance-enhancing drugs among athletes across different competitive levels.



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How to cite this article:

Mayur Mohanrao Shinde (2026) Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotics Use among Kabaddi Players in Maharashtra. Journal of Research & Development, 18(1), 256-259.

Considering the ill effects of doping, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and more recently, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) have been leading the way in the battle against Drug abuse in sport. A review of the literature reveals that several doping agents or banned narcotic drugs such as buprenorphine, dextromoramide, diamorphine, fentanyl and its derivatives, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, oxymorphone, pentazocine, and pethidine—have been misused by approximately 1% of the population in countries like the United States and Sweden (Tokish et al., 2004; Sjöqvist, Garle, & Rane, 2008). Moreover, numerous studies have reported the use of performance-enhancing drugs among young sportspersons, primarily for improving body appearance rather than for enhancing performance in competitive sports (Kindlundh et al., 1998; Kartakoullis et al., 2008; Mallia et al., 2013; Striegel et al., 2006). It has also been estimated that around 5% of high school students in the United States had already used doping agents to enhance their physical growth (Saugy et al., 2006). Although several studies worldwide have documented the use of performance-enhancing drugs by sportspersons, limited information is available regarding the awareness, knowledge, and utilisation of banned narcotic drugs among elite athletes in India, particularly in the state of Maharashtra. Therefore, the objective of the present study was to assess the physical and mental effects of narcotics use among elite kabaddi players in the state of Maharashtra.

Materials And Methods

Research Design

A descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the present study, in which a structured questionnaire titled “*Assessment of the Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotic Drugs*” was administered to a large sample of kabaddi players.

Subjects

The study sample consisted of 200 male kabaddi players from Maharashtra, aged between 18 and 26 years, who had represented kabaddi at the state, national, and inter-university levels. All participants met the minimum age requirement of 19 years in accordance with inter-university competition regulations. The selected players had a maximum of five years of competitive playing experience at the state, national, or inter-university level.

Variable and Assessment

The primary variable of the study was the *assessment of the physical and mental effects of narcotic drug use*, which was evaluated among kabaddi players from Maharashtra using a standardized questionnaire (Shinde, 2025). The questionnaire comprised three major dimensions: Dimension A, which included demographic details of the sportspersons; Dimension B, which focused on the physical and mental health implications of drug abuse; and Dimension C, which addressed the narcotic drugs most commonly used by sportspersons. Each dimension consisted of twenty items, resulting in a total of sixty closed-ended questions administered to the selected kabaddi players.

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was found to be 0.73, while the validity coefficients ranged from 0.68 to 0.71, indicating acceptable reliability and validity for the purpose of the study.

Data collection

The data were collected during the Maharashtra State Inter- University Sports Meet, Krida Mahotsav (Ashwamedh), held at Nanded. Prior permission from the organisers and authorities for data collection was taken. Further, consent from all the participants was taken before data collection. The subjects were requested to fill out the questionnaires in the presence of the investigators in a classroom situation. The room atmosphere, where the questionnaire was administered, was favourable and conducive. All the subjects found it very peaceful to respond to each question in the questionnaires. The subjects were able to complete the questionnaire within thirty minutes. The survey of “*Assessment of the Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotic Drugs*” on the track and field athletes has been done by administering the questionnaire on two hundred (n=200) kabaddi players.

Results

The results of the dimension-wise analysis of “*Assessment of the Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotic Drugs*” are presented in Table 1. The findings indicate that the mean scores (\pm SD), expressed in points, for Dimension A (demographic details of the sportspersons), Dimension B (physical and mental health implications of drug abuse), and Dimension C (narcotic drugs most commonly used by kabaddi players) were 31.25 ± 4.25 , 30.15 ± 4.33 , and 28.83 ± 3.23 , respectively. Furthermore, the overall mean score for “*Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotic Drugs*” was found to be 90.24 ± 8.78 . According to the established norms, the overall mean score of 90.24 for the majority of the participating kabaddi players falls within the average status category.

The observed results indicate that kabaddi players possess poor knowledge regarding narcotic drugs and their adverse effects on physical and mental health. Additionally, the findings revealed that approximately 50% of the kabaddi players from Maharashtra experienced physical and mental health consequences associated with drug abuse, while the remaining 50% reported using some of these substances as doping agents.

Table 1: Status of (Mean and SD) Assessment of the Physical and Mental Effects of Narcotic Drugs on Kabaddi Players in Maharashtra

Variable	Mean	SD
Dimension A (demographic details of the sportspersons)	31.25	4.25
Dimension B (physical and mental health implications of drug abuse)	30.15	4.33
Dimension C (narcotic drugs most commonly used by kabaddi players)	28.83	3.23
Total Score	90.24	8.78

Discussion

The present study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to assess the physical and mental effects of narcotic drug use among kabaddi players residing in the state of Maharashtra. Data were collected using a standardized inventory designed to evaluate players' awareness, usage patterns, and health implications related to narcotic substances. The overall findings revealed that a majority of the participants lacked adequate awareness regarding the physical and mental consequences of narcotic drug use, even though many of them reported using such substances to enhance kabaddi performance.

The emergence of these findings indicates an alarming situation, as the use of banned narcotic drugs with only partial or incorrect knowledge may adversely affect both the health and performance of kabaddi players. Moreover, such patterns of use may contribute to dependency, making it increasingly difficult for athletes to control or discontinue substance use. These results are consistent with earlier research conducted by Nolte et al. (2014), who examined the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of talented young athletes in Gauteng regarding prohibited performance-enhancing drugs and anti-doping regulations. The similarity between the findings of the present investigation and those of previous studies supports the logical validity of the observed results.

Furthermore, interactions with the players during data collection revealed that drug addiction appears to be spreading rapidly among kabaddi players in Maharashtra. In light of these findings, the study emphasizes the critical role of coaches and sports administrators in safeguarding athletes. Special attention should be given to players who are not using narcotic substances, while comprehensive education must be provided to all players regarding the harmful effects of narcotic drugs, including the serious consequences of using banned substances.

These recommendations are supported by previous research. Adegboyega (2012) emphasized the need for governments to implement comprehensive and effective preventive drug education programs for athletes and their support personnel. Similarly, Morente-Sánchez and Zabala (2013) highlighted the importance of educating elite athletes about doping laws and regulations. Several international studies have also reported the prevalence of illegal performance-enhancing substance use among male adolescents (Hill, 2002; Gradidge, Coopoo, & Constantinou, 2011; Molobe, 2012; Takahashi, Tatsugi, & Tosihiko, 2013). The findings of the present investigation align closely with these earlier studies, further confirming the widespread nature of the problem.

Conclusion

The present investigation concludes that a majority of kabaddi players are unaware of the adverse health effects associated with the use of narcotic drugs and continue to consume these substances to enhance athletic performance. This reflects an alarming level of abuse of banned narcotic drugs among players and indicates the potential difficulty athletes may face in controlling or overcoming such addiction. Although the findings of the study are based on the honest self-reported responses of the participants, the possibility of response bias cannot be ruled out. Therefore, future research should incorporate biochemical and physiological testing methods to obtain more objective and reliable evidence regarding the use of narcotic substances among kabaddi players.

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