

## Career change-event: athletes` and coaches` perceptions of Rio 2016 Olympic Games

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### **Abstract:**

This study used the Scheme of Change for Sport Psychology Practice (SCSPP; Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011a) to examine athletes' and coaches' personal characteristics, perceptions of, coping with, and perceived outcome of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games (OGs). We also contrasted several subgroups (e.g., Olympic and Paralympic athletes) in certain variables, and examined the decision-making and support systems involved in the OGs change process. (SCSPP; Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011a). A cross-sectional and retrospective design was used. Israeli Olympic and Paralympic athletes and coaches (N=61) completed measures of change-event experiences (Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011b) and athletic/coaching identity (AI/CI; Brewer & Cornelius, 2001).

**Keywords:** athletes, coaches, Israeli Olympic athletes

### **Topicality.**

This paper seeks to address the Olympic experience as a career change-event for athletes and coaches through their perceptions of Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games. The research focuses on Israeli athletes and coaches.

The scheme of change for sport psychology practice (SCSPP) is a conceptual framework in which typical characteristics of change situations that challenge athletes to respond with matching personal adaptations or reactive change are described. It involves a three-stage process of change including the appearance of certain change-events, the athlete's perception and appraisal of these events, and his or her reaction to and coping with the events. The conceptual framework underlying the SCSPP focuses on two dimensions: (a) the situational stages that unfold as athletes encounter and cope with changes in their athletic status quo, and (b) the therapeutic process that might facilitate an effective personal change. It is suggested that certain personal characteristics (e.g., athletic identity, competitive level, capacity for change), as well as particular aspects of the change process, might affect athletes' ability to effectively cope with change-events, and resolve them in a satisfying manner. In this context, it is assumed that when athletes turn to consult with others and are motivated to make the necessary adjustments involved in initiating a matching personal change in response to a change-event, they will also be more likely to cope effectively with the event and resolve it successfully, given that the necessary environmental conditions exist (Samuel, 2009).

Many athletes and coaches may not realize that they experience changes prior to the OGs (Wylleman et al., 2012), which may require guidance and support (Schinke et al., 2015). Therefore, based on Samuel's (2013) framework, consultants should first identify athletes' and coaches' perceptions of OG experience, and then recognize existing coping efforts/strategies and support resources in the athlete's/ coach's environment.

**The purpose** of this study is twofold. To test whether a difference in motivation exists between Olympic and Paralympic participants. To explore if there is connection between

Olympic participation experience based on gaming experience, coping efficiency, satisfaction with the results and motivation.

### **Materials and methods of research.**

The material and methods instruments include a semi-structured interview and an open-ended questionnaire during the qualitative phase, and a closed-ended questionnaire during the quantitative phase.

The set of questions developed for the semi-structured qualitative interview in this study correspond to variables underlying the qualitative analysis of the variables and include questions concerning participants' experiences, feeling, and outcomes during and following the negotiation. The semi-structured qualitative interviews took place in the interviewee's offices. It was conducted after the interviewees were addressed and gave their consent to the interview. The interviews lasted 30-60 minutes and were recorded and later transcribed and qualitatively analyzed by the researcher using Shkedi (2011) methodology.

Change-event Inventory (CEI; Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011). The CEI measures change-event experiences in a four-section format: (a) demographic information, (b) experience of change-events, (c) perception of and reaction to a single change-event, and (d) decision-making and availability of support resources. Previous research on a heterogeneous sample of competitive athletes indicated adequate psychometric properties, including temporal stability, internal consistency (i.e., all Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranged between .68-.89), and internal factorial structure (Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011b). In this study I will use an adapted version of the Hebrew CEI, focused on a single change-event, namely the OGs participation experience. Refereeing / Coaching Identity (Athletic Identity Measurement Scale, AIMS; Brewer & Cornelius, 2001). The Hebrew version of the 7-item AIMS will be utilized to evaluate participants' identification with the referee's role (Samuel & Tenenbaum, 2011a). The original inventory measured three aspects of athletic identity in a concurrent format; social identity, exclusivity, and negative affectivity. Brewer and Cornelius (2001) reported test-retest reliability ( $r = .89$ ), internal consistency ( $\alpha = .81-.93$ ), construct validity, and norms for male and female athletes and non-athletes. In order to measure coaching identity, the phrasing of the seven items will be modified to reflect identification with the coach's role (e.g., "I consider myself a coach," "I have many goals related to coaching"). Internal consistency coefficients in the present study ranged from .58 to .88.

### **Sample**

61 Israeli participants in Rio 2016 took part in the research. Out of the 23 Olympic Athletes that participated in the survey, 12 are men (52.2%) and 11 are women (47.8%). The average age of these participants is 26.87 years old ( $SD= 1.25$ ). The youngest participant amongst the Olympic Athletes is 25 years old and the oldest participant is 29 years old.

The 17 Paralympic Athletes participants in the study include 11 men (64.7%) and 6 women (35.3%). Their average age is 37.59 years old ( $SD=1.28$ ). The youngest Paralympic Athlete participant is 35 years old and the oldest is 40 years old.

Fourteen Olympic Coaches participated in the survey, all of whom are men (100%). Their average age is 49.43 years old ( $SD=2.21$ ). The youngest Olympic Coach participant is 45 years old, and the oldest Olympic Coach participant is 55 years old.

Seven Paralympic Coaches participated in the survey, of whom 5 are men (71.4%) and 2 are women (28.6%). The average age of the participants is 49.86 years old ( $SD=1.34$ ). The youngest Paralympic Coach participant is 48 years old and the oldest is 52 years old.

## Procedure

Preliminary analyses were performed, including review of the data, statistical hypothesis testing, internal consistency assessment, descriptive data and matrix analyses. Missing data was checked to detect special patterns and then, in terms of the lists, it was not included in the relevant analysis. To test whether a difference in motivation exists between Olympic and Paralympic participants a t test was conducted for independent samples. The dependent variable is motivation, and the independent variable is the Olympic participants versus the Paralympic participants. To be able to predict the Olympic participation experience based on gaming experience, coping efficiency, satisfaction with the results and motivation, a multiple regression analysis was performed.

## Results

The responses of the participants to the statements assessing the study variables, which included the gaming experience, the Olympic participation experience, coping efficiency, satisfaction with the results and motivation, showed that the participants indicated above average agreement, but that for the gaming experience and the Olympic participation experience there was a larger extent of agreement to the statements. Thus, the Olympic participation experience and the gaming experience could be considered of greater importance when relating to the Olympic and Paralympic games' experiences.

Analysis of the results of the *t test* that was conducted to examine differences in motivation between the participants, further showed that the Olympic participants displayed higher motivation than the Paralympic participants.

The two additional variables examined in the multiple regression, coping efficiency and satisfaction with the results, on predicting the Olympic participation experience, were not shown to contribute to Olympic participation experience. When weighing up the factors on which the coaches and athletes focus their efforts to attain the most positive Olympic participation experience, coping efficiency and satisfaction with the results, may take on lesser importance.

Variable	Average ( $\pm$ SD)	Minimum	Maximum
The gaming experience	4.134 ( $\pm$ 0.580)	2.00	5.00
Olympic participation experience	4.003 ( $\pm$ 0.582)	2.17	5.00
Coping efficiency	3.733 ( $\pm$ 0.578)	2.29	5.00
Satisfaction with the results	3.761 ( $\pm$ 0.626)	2.00	5.00
Motivation	3.861 ( $\pm$ 0.578)	2.25	5.00

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the study variables

As shown in Table 1, the first variable, the gaming experience, has an average ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 0.580$ ). The average of the variable of the gaming experience is above the midpoint of the measuring scale (3, on a scale ranging between 1 to 5). The participants tend to agree to a large degree with the statements. For the next variable, the Olympic participation experience,

the average (M=4.003) with a standard deviation (SD= 0.582) indicates that the participants tend to agree to a large degree with the statements. For the variable, coping efficiency, the average (M=3.733) with a standard deviation (SD = 0.578) indicates that the participants tend to agree with the statements. For the variable, satisfaction with the results, the average (M=3.761) with a standard deviation (SD = 0.626) indicates that the participants tend to agree with the statements. For the last variable, motivation, the average (M=3.861) with a standard deviation (SD = 0.578) indicates that the participants tend to agree with the statements.

### Motivation for participation

To test whether a difference in motivation exists between Olympic and Paralympic participants, a t test was conducted for independent samples. The dependent variable is motivation, and the independent variable is the Olympic participants versus the Paralympic participants.

	Olympics N = 37	Paralympics N = 24	t (55.563)
Average	4.182	3.365	<b>7.774 **</b>
SD	0.447	0.368	

**\*\* p <.01**

Table 2: *t test* on two independent samples for motivation (on a scale of 1-5) according to Olympic participation

As shown in Table 2, a significant difference in motivation is found between Olympic participants and Paralympic participants [ $t(55.563) = 7.774, p <.01$ ]. That is to say that the average motivation of the Olympic participants (M= 4.182, S.D.= 0.447) is significantly higher than the average motivation for the Paralympic participants (M= 3.365, SD= 0.368).

### Effect of the variables on OG experience.

To be able to predict the Olympic participation experience based on the variables, the gaming experience, coping efficiency, satisfaction with the results and motivation, a multiple regression analysis was performed. The regression analysis shows that the Olympic participation experience can be explained based on these variables ( $F(4,56) = 78.265, p <0.01$ ). The predictor variables explain 84.8% of the variability of the Olympic participation experience. Table 3 shows the results of the regression analysis.

Predictor variable	B	$\beta$	t	Cumulative R2
The gaming experience	0.363	0.362	5.112 **	0.585
Coping efficiency	0.129	0.128	1.215	0.730
Satisfaction with the results	0.044	0.048	0.504	0.753
Motivation	0.516	0.513	5.916 **	0.848

**\*\* p <.01**

Table 3: Multiple regression for prediction of the variable, Olympic participation experience

The findings in Table 3 indicate that the variables, the gaming experience, and motivation significantly explain the Olympic participation experience variable. Motivation has a greater impact on Olympic participation experience ( $|\beta = 0.513|$ ) as compared to the gaming experience ( $|\beta = 0.362|$ ). The variables, coping efficiency and satisfaction with the results were found to be insignificant and without any actual contribution.

## Discussion

An examination of the impact of the study variables on the Olympic participation experience using multiple regression analysis for predicting the Olympic participation experience showed that motivation had the greatest impact. The impact of the gaming experience on Olympic participation experience was lower than that of motivation. Nevertheless, both these variables, motivation and gaming experience were able to predict the Olympic participation experience providing an indication that these aspects may most strongly influence the Olympic participation experience.

The differences in motivation can originate in the differences in lifestyle and the different reasons driving the participation of the Olympic and Paralympic athletes in the Olympic Games. The Olympic athletes are usually committed full-time to their sport, having begun training at a young age. Furthermore, the Olympic athletes were younger, with ages of the Olympic athletes participating in the Olympic games ranging from 25 to 29 years old. By comparison, the Paralympic athlete participants ranged in age from 35 to 40 years old. The older ages of the Paralympic athletes may have been dependent on the Paralympic athletes beginning their path to the Paralympic Games at a later stage, following their unexpected disability or on their involvement in other professional engagements which may affect their full-time commitment.

## Conclusion

Analyses of the findings of the study contribute and add to the existing body of knowledge by examining many of the factors influencing Olympic and Paralympic participation. Seeking ways to increase motivation for all participants was found to be of importance, since the level of motivation of the participants impacts the Olympic participation experience and to a lesser degree, the gaming experience. Further research should be done on the copying strategies with the OG experience as a carrier change event.

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