

**Participant Motivation Towards an Elite, Multinational, Sport-for-Development Event**

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**Management/leadership**

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**20-minute oral presentation  
(including questions)**

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Introduction

Limited research has been conducted on the motivations of individuals to take part in large, multinational, sport-for-development (SFD) events (Xu & Pegg, 2007; Dickson, 2010). The importance of examining such motivations is highlighted by SFD's frequent struggle with attracting individuals to the programs, despite well-meaning intentions and agendas (Lyras & Welty Peachey, 2011). Hence, we undertook this research to examine participant motivations for attending the 2011 World Scholar-Athlete Games (WSAG), an elite, multinational SFD event for gifted high school student-athletes. The mission of this event was to bring together future leaders of the world to break down stereotypes, foster peace and understanding, and effect personal development and social change. We conducted two studies—one quantitatively focused and the other through personal interviews and focus groups.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

In recent years, there has been an increasing body of research investigating motivation within various diverse settings, including education (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, & Ryan, 1981), politics (Koestner, Losier, Vallerand, & Carducci, 1996), sports and leisure (Pelletier et al., 1995), and attendance at large-scale events (Crompton & McKay, 2007; Xu & Pegg, 2007). Much of this research has focused on extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 2007). Extrinsic motivation is when individuals partake in behaviors due to the value they place on potential results and is associated with external pressures or rewards. In contrast, intrinsic motivation encompasses one's internal incentive to participate in an activity, such as feelings of achievement or satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 2007).

According to Chelladurai (1992), motivation to participate in sport or physical activity can be grouped into four dimensions: a) pursuit of pleasure (i.e., people play sport because they enjoy it); b) pursuit of skill (i.e., the desire to feel competence or improvement); c) pursuit of excellence (i.e., the effort to win in a contest versus oneself or opponent); and d) pursuit of health/fitness (i.e., the desire to gain health-related benefits through physical activity). While investigating participant motivations to take part in large-scale sport events has not been a prominent line of research, it is a topic that is beginning to emerge in the literature (Xu & Pegg, 2007). By mapping sport event participant motivations onto Chelladurai's (1992) framework, we can gain insight into the motivation of these participants. In an elite SFD event organized around multiple layers (excellence, pleasure, skill development), as is the case with the WSAG, there may be multiple drivers of motivation, instead of only one such as excellence or pleasure.

Methodology

Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to quantitatively examine athletes' motives for participating in the WSAG. Participants included 223 young people, ages 15-19, taking part in the event. Participants completed a questionnaire, based on Chelladurai's (1992) framework, that assessed their motivation to participate in the event. Data were analyzed using a principal components analysis with varimax rotation to explore the underlying factor structure of participant motivations. Consistent with Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), we included factors with eigen values greater than 1.0, and we retained items with factor loadings greater than .50. We also examined the total variance explained to assess model adequacy, with models explaining greater than 60% of the variance deemed satisfactory (Hair et al., 2006). To examine motive strength, we computed paired sample t-tests to examine mean differences in the motivation scores.

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### **Study 2**

The purpose of Study 2 was to qualitatively examine athletes' motivations for participating in the SFD event in greater depth. We conducted semi-structured focus groups and personal interviews with 34 current and former WSAG participants. Seventeen men and 17 women, 15-34 years old, were purposively sampled. We selected event participants (and former participants) from countries and activities that represented the diversity of the event. Interviews and focus groups were conducted until data saturation was achieved. The data analysis process utilized open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

### **Results**

In study 1, the strongest motivational factor contained items related to the participants' motivation to learn more about other cultures, meet new people, develop friendships, and become better world citizens. We termed this factor World Learning, which is consistent with Chelladurai's (1992) pursuit of pleasure. The second strongest motivation, which we termed Skill Development, focused on the young persons' desires to participate in elite competition, better their skills, and participate with other, talented individuals. This factor is reflective of the pursuit of skill in Chelladurai's framework. The third strongest motivation focused on traveling in the U.S. and around the world, and we termed this Travel—a factor that is also reflective of the pursuit of pleasure (Chelladurai, 1992). These findings were supported by respondents in Study 2, who repeatedly stated that the most influential motivations were the desire to meet new people, develop friendships, learn about other cultures, and give back to the community, all factors which comprise World Learning.

Both studies also revealed that the second and third most influential motivational factors were Skill Development and Travel, respectively, where participants were motivated extrinsically and intrinsically to take part in elite competition, improve their athletic or artistic skills, or travel to or within the U.S. to explore and experience a new environment. Additionally, international participants were more attuned to the need for working at peace and conflict resolution strategies than U.S. youth, and fine arts participants were motivated by the opportunity to improve their skills to a lesser extent than the sport participants.

These findings aligned with literature that suggests a wide spectrum of motivation can occur within the field of sports (Vallerand, 1997; Vallerand & Losier, 1999). Further, the peace and social justice component of the WSAG was instrumental in attracting participants who have motivations different from individuals who participate in other large-scale, multinational sporting events without a SFD emphasis.

### **Discussion**

Theoretically, as one of the first studies to examine participant motivation in a large, multinational SFD event context focused on peace and cultural acceptance, we have identified three motivational factors that could be unique in their relative importance and strength from motivations to attend other elite, multinational sporting events, or even from other SFD events that have different foci (e.g., sport event interventions working with disadvantaged youth, or initiated to help combat obesity). From a practical standpoint, these findings imply that sport events with a peace and conflict resolution focus should highlight socialization opportunities and the mission of the organization, while still providing an environment of healthy competition and skill development. These factors of World Learning, Skill Development, and Travel can be incorporated into theories of motivation in the SFD context and serve to guide future researchers in their efforts.