

Students' perception about the Olympic Values experience in Rio 2016 Olympic Games and the future of the Olympics

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ABSTRACT

When proposing the creation of the Olympic Games (OG) of the Modern Era, Pierre de Coubertin has highlighted the importance of the integral formation of the human being through sports practices. In order to keep the directions of the Olympic Movement close to Coubertin's ideas and looking for the continuous progress of the OG, the Agenda 2020 has pointed out some adjustments necessary to bring more attention to the actual challenges of our time, including encourage of ethical attitudes and education based in values. As a response of the OG in Rio, some research initiatives were taken, however, there is a lack of studies in the educational legacy of the Games. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the Rio 2016 Olympic Games spectators' (students) perception about the Olympic Values experience during the event and their opinion about the future of the Olympic Games. The methodology of this study is quantitative with cross-sectional analysis, descriptive and exploratory. The sample of 13 students, which were engaged with research duties during the Games, has answered a questionnaire with 16 items. When analysing the results it is noticed the importance of the cultural events, along with other non-competition rituals and ceremonies, to promote Olympism and its values. Also, the data collected sustains some of the recommendations of the Agenda 2020 in the scope of education, social responsibility, gender equality and fight against doping. Gathering data from other universities/research groups would be interesting to have a bigger scope about



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the research objectives. **Keywords:** Olympic Values; Olympism; Olympic Games; Education; Olympic Agenda 2020.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rio 2016 Olympic Games was the first edition of this international multi-sport event held in South America. The Games took place in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from 5 to 21 August 2016. From this point Brazil is properly introduced as an Olympic country, however, the route to be host of the Olympics started to be driven years ago. The Games mark the end of the decade of sport in Brazil, after the country being host of the 2007 Pan-American Games, 2011 World Military Games, 2013 FIFA Confederation Cup and the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

It is well known that being the host city/country of the Olympic Games involves severe adaptations to welcome the biggest sports mega event of the world. The infra structure of the city must change (or adapt) in order to shelter the high number of spectators. Stadiums, arenas, pools, tracks and other sportive fields are built to receive unique spectacles. Apart from these tangible points, the Games are capable to bring some intangible changes to its host place.

In 1894 Pierre de Coubertin proposes the first edition of the Olympic Games of the Modern Era aiming at the integral formation of the human being through sports practices. In this sense, stimulating the formation based on the common good, endowed with ethical and moral values and guided by the good coexistence in society of athletes, coaches, referees, political bodies and spectators becomes one of the priorities within the beliefs of the creator of the Modern Olympics (Müller & Todt, 2015).

For Coubertin, the Games represented the consolidation of the concept of sports practice that transformed the physical demonstration into an educational, cultural and social enterprise, producing reflexes in individual, regional, national and international levels. What guides this intangible background of the Olympic Games is called by Coubertin as Olympism or Olympic Philosophy (Müller & Todt, 2015).

The Fundamental Principles of Olympism in the Olympic Charter (IOC, 2017) provide the following information:

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. (Fundamental Principle 1; p. 11)

The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. (Fundamental Principle 2; p. 11)

This philosophy is the key element that guides the Olympic Movement's actions. Being based on that philosophy is what makes the Olympic Games unique.

Since the reborn of the Olympic Games by Pierre de Coubertin in the end of the 19th century, the idea of an Olympic Movement changed. Nowadays, we can understand that the Olympic Movement consists of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Organising Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs), the National Olympic Committees, the International Federations, the national associations, clubs and, of course, the athletes. The IOC is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement (IOC, 2018). The main objective of the Olympic Movement is to help to build a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport in accordance with Olympism and its values (IOC, 2017).

Although the IOC is configured as a closed system, indeed the massive rhythm of changes that occur in the scope of the Olympic Movement request decisions in a broader character. The entity calls must result from a product of the sum of internal interests of the IOC and the pressure of external interests. Sponsors, stakeholders, media and communication agencies, environmental protection bodies and, finally, but not less important, students, researchers and academics in general, represent these external interests that are influencing the directions that the Olympic Movement is taking.

These external demands gained more space and relevance with the creation of the Agenda 2020, document including 40 detailed recommendations that aims to guide the future of the Olympic Movement and to protect the uniqueness of the Games and strengthen Olympic Values in society (IOC, 2014). Considering the recommendations of the Agenda 2020, some adjustments of the Olympic Movement are necessary to bring more attention to the actual challenges of our time, including encourage of ethical attitudes, dissemination of education based in values and the promotion of Olympism (IOC, 2014). The need of changes in management is not a recent challenge for the IOC, as Lucas (1992) wrote in "The future of the Olympic Games":

Balance is everything, and the Olympic leadership around the world is learning how to amend its rules, regulations, and charters in order to effectively meet modern exigencies without jettisoning the very best that was given to them by Coubertin. (p. 127)

Considering the understanding of Olympism and the actual challenges of the Olympic Movement, it is possible to figure out that the education through values is one of the key points that connect both. First, it is important to know the concept of values. This concept, according to Schwartz & Cieciuch (2016) is explained as modes of conduct or states of preference that lead to an action. In this sense, 'value' is necessary for taking an attitude face to something.

There are three universal values that lead the Olympic Movement and are the basis for Olympism, according to the IOC (2018): Excellence, Friendship and Respect. It is important to emphasise that these values were chosen for being able to represent and simplify other important values.

"Excellence" stands for the aim of trying to get one's best on the field of play. It is not only about winning, but also seeking for personal goals, striving to be better than yourself each day. It can be fully achieved by the combination of a strong body, mind and will (IOC, 2018).

"Friendship" is seen by a way of considering sport as a tool for mutual understanding among people from different cultures, religions, beliefs, races and gender. It is the joy of playing overcoming these differences and bringing people together (IOC, 2018).

"Respect" is about following the rules not only because it is illegal to break them. It includes the respect for the fairness among competitors, for yours and your opponent's health and for the environment (IOC, 2018).

According to Todt (2014), these three traditional values of Olympism were interpreted as 'Nuclear Values' proclaimed by the International Olympic Committee, considering its universal meaning. However, there also different interpretations about the values of Olympism. Analysing the literature in Olympism (Grupe, 1991; Lenk, 1976; Parry, 1997; Segrave, 1988), is possible to identify other important values (such as Fair Play, honour, mutual understanding, chivalry, peace and discipline) and objectives (such as physical, intellectual, educational and cultural development, sports promotion, internationalism, universal truce) that compound the Olympic Philosophy.

Although several research initiatives involving the 'Olympic' subject began to proliferate as a response of the Olympic Games in Rio, there is still a lack of studies that are focusing in the educational power of the Games from the student's point of view of this mega event. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the Rio 2016 Olympic Games spectators' (students) perception about the Olympic Values experience during the event and their opinion about the future of the Olympic Games.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

Design

The research methodology of this study is quantitative with cross-sectional analysis, descriptive and exploratory. The quantitative approach is based on more concrete measurements of the variables that this study aims to investigate, leading to close results and interpretations (Neuman, 2013). The study is transversal to identify, verify and analyse the characteristics of a fact or phenomena (Levin, 2006). Within the same perspective, the descriptive and exploratory method is going to be used to describe, correlate and analyse facts and phenomena without manipulating them (Kane, 1983; Stebbins, 2001). The facts and phenomena of the study are linked to the knowledge and interpretation of the Olympic Values considering the universe of the Olympic Games, from the perspective of students who attended the Rio 2016 edition.

Sample

The sample was composed by students of the Olympic Studies Research Group of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (GPEO-PUCRS), Brazil, that were engaged with research duties during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The sample consisted of 13 respondents from different ages who were students of under graduation (9 – 69,2%), master's degree (3 – 23,1%) or doctoral candidates (1 – 7,7%). Regarding sex, 61,5% (8) of the sample were male and 38,5% (5) female.

Evaluation Tool

For the data collection, a questionnaire (ANNEX A) with 16 items of simple choice, multiple choice and closed-ended questions was used as instrument. This questionnaire was designed according to the principles of questionnaire construction (Johnson & Turner, 2003) and has a set of articulated and systematized questions to gather written information and to know the opinion of the participants.

For the construction of this instrument, the Olympic Values (Friendship, Excellence and Respect) proposed by the IOC (2018), the recommendations of the Agenda 2020 (IOC, 2014), and the values, objectives and fundamental principles of Olympism according to the specialised literature (IOC, 2017; Grupe, 1991; Lenk, 1976; Parry, 1997; Segrave, 1988) were taken as a starting point.

Procedure

First, the sample was approached and informed about the research objectives, so, invited to participate. When accepted, the questionnaire was applied. The researcher was accompanying this process to clarify any doubts that might arise during filling. It has preserved the identity and the right to abandon the research at any time.

Data Analysis

From the data collection was performed analytical descriptive statistics. The categorical data is presented in relative frequency and the quantitative data by averages and percentages. To do this, a database was designed in the program Microsoft Excel version 12.0 for Windows that provide different ways of organisation and data presentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When asked about which Olympic Values did the participant identify the most during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games (Table 1), the answers that have been highlighted were culture (9 / 69,2%), internationalism (8 / 61,5%), human relations (8 / 61,5%), friendship (8 / 61,5%), solidarity (8 / 61,5%), mutual respect (7 / 53,8%) and excellence (7 / 53,8%). It is interesting to point out that some of these values are directly related to the three traditional values of Olympism (Todt, 2014). This sustains the idea of universality of the words Friendship, Respect and Excellence, suggesting that these expressions are being successfully comprehended during the Games.

Table 1. Which Olympic Values did you identify the most during the Rio 2016 OG?

Description	n (13)	%
Internationalism (International relations)	8	61.50%
Mutual respect	7	53.80%
Mutual understanding	6	46.20%
Honour	1	7.70%
Excellence	7	53.80%
Chivalry	0	0.00%
Physical and Intellectual	1	7.70%
Education	4	30.80%
Human Relations	8	61.50%
Body, will and mind	2	15.40%
Joy of Effort	5	38.50%
Peace Promotion	4	30.80%
Self-Discipline	5	38.50%
Fair Play	6	46.20%
Nationalism	5	38.50%
Political Advantages	1	7.70%
Human Development	2	15.40%
Gender Equality	3	23.10%
Culture	9	69.20%
Social Responsibility	6	46.20%
Preservation of human dignity	3	23.10%
Friendship	8	61.50%
Solidarity	8	61.50%
Discrimination	0	0.00%
Environment protection	3	23.10%

Note. Emphasis added.

When analysing the items internationalism, human relations and solidarity it is possible to group them as humanistic values that are very important for a peaceful development of the society. This idea is strongly related to the main goal of Olympism (IOC, 2017).

To analyse the most marked answer, it is important to make relations with the high score of the value culture and the idea of Pierre de Coubertin when idealising the Modern Olympic Games. For the Baron, since the beginning, the Games intended to be a big spectacle that blends physical exhibitions, educational purposes and the sharing of different cultural representations (Müller & Todt, 2015; IOC, 2017).

Prospecting the future of the Olympic Games and considering the intention of the IOC to make the improvements and strengthen the Olympic Movement, the sample was asked about which Olympic Values should be more present at the Olympic Games within the next 20 years (Table 2). The most marked items were education (11 / 84,6%), solidarity (11 / 84,6%), social responsibility (10 / 76,9%) and gender equality (9 / 69,2%). Before making relations that refers to the next Games, it is interesting to look back to the first Fundamental Principle of Olympism where is possible to note clear that education, social responsibility and the respect for ethical principles are part of the basis for the Olympic philosophy (IOC, 2017). According to the Agenda 2020 (IOC, 2014), if the IOC wants that the Olympism values remain relevant for the society, it is necessary a changing process in the Olympic Movement.

Table 2. In your opinion, what Olympic Values should be more present at the OG within the next 20 years?

Description	n (13)	%
Internationalism (International relations)	4	30.80%
Mutual respect	7	53.80%
Mutual understanding	4	30.80%
Honour	2	15.40%
Excellence	3	23.10%
Chivalry	1	7.70%
Physical and Intellectual	2	15.40%
Education	11	84.60%
Human Relations	5	38.50%
Body, will and mind	2	15.40%
Joy of Effort	4	30.80%
Peace Promotion	4	30.80%
Self-Discipline	1	7.70%
Fair Play	7	53.80%
Nationalism	1	7.70%
Political Advantages	2	15.40%
Human Development	5	38.50%
Gender Equality	9	69.20%
Culture	7	53.80%
Social Responsibility	10	76.90%
Preservation of human dignity	6	46.20%
Friendship	7	53.80%
Solidarity	11	84.60%
Discrimination	1	7.70%
Environment protection	6	46.20%

Note. Emphasis added.

To sustain some of the recommendations of the Agenda 2020 (IOC, 2014), each of the highlighted items of this question will be connecting to one (or more) recommendation (Rec). The value education can relate to the following: Launch an Olympic Channel (Rec 19) – this way educational initiatives can be forecasted worldwide, inspiring new actions -, Spread Olympic values-based education (Rec 22) – strengthening the relationship between the IOC, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), schools and other organisations to include sport and its values in its schedule/curricula -, Further blend sport and culture (Rec 26) – divided in two periods (at the Games and between two editions), creating an award called Olympic Laurel for Olympism contributions and studying the development of initiatives that connect

closely the Olympic Movement and the general public – and Further involve sponsors in “Olympism in Action” programmes (Rec 33) – enhance the advantages and recognition of partners that support initiatives for building a better world through sport (IOC, 2014).

The values solidarity and social responsibility can be connected with the following: Include sustainability in all aspects of the Olympic Games (Rec 4) - to include in the planning and staging of the Games in economic, social and environmental spheres and to ensure post-Games legacy monitoring - Include sustainability within the Olympic Movement's daily operations (Rec 5) - by seeking for the best possible sustainability standards for the IOC actions and by recommending stakeholders to integrate sustainability within their own operations - and Foster dialogue with society and within the Olympic Movement (Rec 39) - the creation of an “Olympism in Action” Congress to bring together representatives of the Olympic Movement, its stakeholders and representatives of civil society (IOC, 2014).

The value gender equality can relate to the following: Foster gender equality (Rec 11) - try to make a balance of 50% women participation by creating more opportunities at the Games and to encourage the inclusion of mixed-gender team events -, Strengthen the 6th Fundamental Principle of Olympism (Rec 14) - the already included “non-discrimination on sexual orientation” in the 6th Fundamental Principle of Olympism at the Olympic Charter (IOC, 2017) - and Implement a targeted recruitment process (Rec 38) – including, but not only, the seeking for a gender balance in the IOC membership (IOC, 2014).

When questioned about in which of the occasions of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games did they identify some kind of initiative that promotes Education (Table 3), the majority answered Cultural Olympiad Events (11 / 84,6%) followed by the Torch Relay and the Closing Ceremony, both with 7 marks (53,8%). The relation shown between Education and the Cultural Olympiad events can be analysed as a good indicator that the initial idea of Coubertin when creating the Olympic Games of the Modern Era is still present today. The mix of sport, culture and education is what differs the Games from other major sporting events (Müller & Todt, 2015). The arts are such an essential element that the Olympic Charter itself (IOC, 2017) makes clear its importance describing the Cultural Olympiad as indispensable in the programme of the Olympic Games. Also, when analysing the results of this question about the Cultural Olympiad, the Closing Ceremony and the Torch Relay, is possible to identify that the non-sportive events are easier associate with educational matters when comparing with the competitions (3 / 23,1%) itself.

Table 3. Did you identify some kind of initiative that promotes Education during these occasions of the Rio 2016 OG?

Description	n (13)	%
Opening Ceremony	6	46.20%
Closing Ceremony	7	53.80%
Torch Relay	7	53.80%
Bidding Process	2	15.40%
Olympic Medal Ceremony	4	30.80%
Cultural Olympiad Events	11	84.60%
Competitions	3	23.10%
Advertisements	1	7.70%

Note. Emphasis added.

To find out their opinion regarding to the athletes' use of illegal substances, the sample was questioned about what the best way for the IOC is to fight against doping in the Olympic Games (Table 4). The answer that

received most of the marks was “more severe punishments for the athlete who dopes” (10 / 76,9%), but, the options for “More investments in Research and Anti-Doping” and “More investments in Education Programmes” also received a high number of marks (8 / 61,5%). Any use of illegal substance is totally against the fundamental principles of Olympism (IOC, 2017) and Coubertin’s ideology (Müller & Todt, 2015), since it goes the other way of the idea of Fair Play, chivalry and mutual respect.

Table 4. What is the best way for the IOC to fight against doping in the Olympic Games?

Description	n (13)	%
The use increasing performance substances should be allowed for all athletes. This way doping would no longer exist.	0	0.00%
More severe punishments to the athlete who dopes.	10	76.90%
More severe punishments to the country of the athlete who dopes.	5	38.50%
More investments in advertisement against doping.	4	30.80%
Use role model athletes as good examples.	4	30.80%
More investment in research and Anti-Doping agencies.	8	61.50%
More investments in Education Programmes.	8	61.50%

Note. Emphasis added.

One option that could be raised was related to the answer “The use increasing performance substances should be allowed for all athletes. This way doping would no longer exist”, however, it has not received a single mark from the sample (0 / 0,0%). This may show that the problem with the use of these substances is not only related to the fairness among competitors, but also the influence of the athletes’ actions, since they are role models for the society.

The fight against doping is a big and very actual challenge for the Olympic Movement, having some of the recommendations of the Agenda 2020 direct associated with it (IOC, 2017). The doping subject can relate to the following recommendations: Change the philosophy to protecting clean athletes (Rec 15) – making it the ultimate goal for the IOC -, Leverage the IOC USD 20 million fund to protect clean athletes (Rec 16) – amount divided equally to develop robust education and awareness programmes that fight corruption into sport and to support projects offering a new scientific approach to anti-doping - and Honour clean athletes (Rec 17) – organising formal ceremonies for medal-winners who receive their Olympic medal following the disqualification of a competitor (IOC, 2014).

As the sample was composed by students, a question that emerged was about the influence of this Olympic experience in their academic life. To answer it, a simple sentence was given to them: “do you think that your participation in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games as a member of an Olympic Studies Research Group was a highlight of your studies in your University?”. The majority answered positively (12 / 92,3%), indicating that the experience in Rio has changed in a good way their studies, however, for 1 (7,7%) of the participants of this research it has not interfered in his/her studies. To make a relation between the matters that are studied in the university/academy and a person’s life experiences is not an easy task and may require a long period of experience. For this student that did not feel a change in his/her academic life, the short period of the Games may not have been enough for it.

The sample was asked about which behaviours have changed/improved in their life after the experience at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games (Table 5). Within the items that had the most marks, all of them were directly related to the Olympic Values of Respect, Friendship and Excellence (IOC, 2018). The items that express behaviours that involve the value Respect have received more marks than the items related to the other

values, per example: “To try to understand the others’ point of view” (8 / 61,5%), “To respect the differences/individualities” (8 / 61,5%) and “To be more respectful” (6 / 46,2%). However, there was also one high-marked item that involved a behaviour related with Friendship, “To be part of a group” (6 / 46,2%), and one with Excellence, “To do the best of me” (7 / 53,8%).

Table 5. Considering the Olympic Values, check the behaviours that you have changed/improved in your life after your experience at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games?

Description	n (13)	%
To do the best of me	7	53.80%
To study more.	5	38.50%
To do not miss classes.	0	0.00%
To try to push myself harder when training.	2	15.40%
To be honest.	2	15.40%
To try to win at any costs.	0	0.00%
To be more respectful.	6	46.20%
To be part of a group.	6	46.20%
To keep the learning environment clean.	2	15.40%
To know the importance of planning.	6	46.20%
To teach the youth about the importance of the good example.	3	23.10%
To think about the common good.	4	30.80%
Self-Discipline.	4	30.80%
To respect the differences/individualities.	8	61.50%
To respect the environment.	4	30.80%
To enjoy practicing sports.	3	23.10%
To be gentle.	3	23.10%
To try to understand the others’ point of view.	8	61.50%

Note. Emphasis added.

Once again, this sustains the idea of universality of the three traditional values of Olympism, suggesting that these expressions are not only being successfully comprehended, as discussed before, but are also being incorporated in the behaviours of some of the students who participated in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. It may support the idea of Coubertin that the Games are a way of inspiring people to live their lives based on fundamental ethical principles that are the base for the philosophy of Olympism (IOC, 2017; Müller & Todt, 2015; Todt, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

From this research it is possible to reach important information that can help to guide the future of the Olympic Games in several intangible aspects through the analysis of the students’ point of view of the Rio de Janeiro edition of this mega event and their opinion concerning the Agenda 2020 interests.

When analysing the results obtained about the experience during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, it is possible to evaluate the Olympic Values dissemination mechanisms used by the IOC to promote the Olympic Philosophy through sportive and non-sportive events during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. According to the answers, it is clear the importance of the cultural events, along with other non-competition rituals and ceremonies, to promote Olympism and its values. In this direction it is important to point that Pierre de Coubertin dedicated his life to make the sport meet education and culture (Müller & Todt, 2015; IOC, 2017).

The data of this research can be used to sustain some of the recommendations of the Agenda 2020 (IOC, 2014) in the scope of education, social responsibility, gender equality and fight against doping. These, apart from being key-points for the future of the Games, are part of the basis for the Olympic philosophy (IOC, 2017).

The experience of the students has changed/improved some of their actions, some of them directly related to the Olympic Values of Respect, Friendship and Excellence. This may suggest that the values of Olympism are not only being identified during the activities of the Games, but also making a difference in the behaviour of the students who were at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Due to the design of our research, our data comes from a very specific and reduced group of students. From a qualitative approach this empirical information is useful to understand these students' perception, however, gathering data from other universities/research groups would be interesting to have a bigger scope about the research objectives.

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