


Perception of the Olympic values in the Portuguese coaches of individual and team sports

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study has been to analyse the perception of the Olympic values shown by coaches of different levels and categories in Portugal related to the type of sport they train (individual or collective). The study sample consisted of 1473 Portuguese coaches (214 female and 1259 male) from 34 different sports modalities (individual and collective). The data collection instrument was a three-dimensional questionnaire (perception of the Olympic Symbols, opinion about participation in the Olympic Games and values related to the Olympic Games). Descriptive analysis showed differences between the opinions of individual and team sports coaches in the three dimensions. The inferential analysis only showed significant differences in the dimension of opinion about participation in the Olympic games. These results reveal the difference in the perception of the Olympic values between coaches of individual sports and those of team sports.

Keywords: Values; Olympism; Coaches; Sports.

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INTRODUCTION

As Martinez-Gorroño (2019) states, modern Olympism emerged from the social unease of Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), who, concerned by the problems of society in that era, believed they could be addressed by educating society through sport in the context of the ideals of the Olympic Movement. Thus, writers, such as Bipona (2016) advocated for the inclusion of Olympism in the construction of the modern world, based on the educational means to implement programs for the acquisition of new social abilities.

In this way the Olympic phenomenon constitutes an extensive and invaluable field for social investigation which transcends mere sport (Molina 2011). In fact, the values of sport with a solid basis in Olympism is fundamental in order to study and comprehend social phenomena in today's world. The practice of sport is based on symbols, values and norms which enhance the personal, interpersonal and civilised participation of its participants. The symbolism of sport, both universal and penetrating has been steadily captivating the interest of a vast part of the world's population since its social establishment (Lagardera, 1992).

Luna (2012) considers sport to be a relevant, social phenomenon which constitutes one of the most influential elements of popular culture, and which may undoubtedly affect or compromise the personal development of those who engage in it. In fact, what is interesting about physical education and sport is the educational and intellectual benefits and the characterology in learning to live (Jaeger, 1971).

Pierre de Coubertin, a visionary and the creator of what is now regarded as the Olympic Movement, defended the humanist view of healthy, fair and balanced competition, in which the individual is far more than the mere expression of sporting ability, but rather a combination of mental and physical attributes as well as effort and achievement which is involved in the challenge when facing a contest where there is always a winner and a loser. This duality is also the ultimate exponent of the ethical values that must always encompass the true spirit of sport. This perspective would become a fundamental basis in the Olympic Charter, published in 1908. Coubertin had no doubt whatsoever of the role which sport would play in the safeguarding of definitive peace and understanding between nations.

In fact, for the United Nations (UN, after the Second World War, the notion of peace became an aspiration and a common objective for all nations. It is from the viewpoint of military conflict that sport appears strengthened, with nations regarding it as a pacific symbol which no regime, ideological or political could or should exploit (Riordan, & Arnaud, 1998), but rather an arena dedicated to the service of humanity, irrespective of race, creed, ethnicity or gender.

However, it was not until 1978 that it was definitively consolidated in the international agenda with the approval of UNESCO's International Charter of Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport, revised in 2015. It was in the year 2017, when sport began to receive the institutional recognition it deserved upon being considered a driving force for social change by means of the "*rediscovery*" of the Olympic spirit.

No doubt, the ultimate expression of what sport represents at a global level is observed at the Olympic Games, which constitute the most important global event and where the communion between sportsmen and women from over 200 countries exceeds mere sport. For the duration of three weeks, the world is as we would wish it to be, generating coexistence, friendship, and reciprocity, all within a context of simplicity and harmony (Laforge, 2012).

Olympism offers, in its essence, a pedagogic objective to construct and strengthen the values which allow the formation of mankind for a more just society, which according to the Olympic Charter marks the building of a better world, through values associated with the search for excellence, the celebration of friendship and the demonstration of respect.

Sports practice emerges as an educational tool of high interest. In this sense, coaches, integrated and designated as agents of the Olympic Movement and described in the fundamental principle 3 of the Olympic Charter, form crucial elements in the process of developing the values we wish to see displayed in such practice, promoting by example, the essential norms of the spirit of sport (Tourais, 2019).

As Nelson Mandela once said (2000), sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, the power to unite people in a way very few other things can. It speaks to young people in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where previously there was only desperation. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers.

Sport in our current society has for decades had an economic, political, and social importance. Every day marks the involvement of more people in the world of sport, not only as participants, but also as consumers of sport, with the knowledge that on a global level, and in all means of communication, the phenomenon of sport has strategic interest at its core, pitting countries against one another. The enormous financial resources destined towards sporting mega events worldwide, among which are the Olympic Games and the Winter Olympics are an example of this, be it in the form of sponsorship, the acquisition of viewing rights or the profitability of companies which invest heavily in advertising. As a result, Olympic sport has attained a unique and privileged place in today's society and a position of leadership in the decision-making which affects different countries in the way they envision sport in the 21st century.

Olympism was possibly the most significant sociological force of the 20th century and it wants to remain in its position of leadership in the current century. Its greatest emblem is the Olympic Games which have been restored from the 19th century by Pierre de Coubertin to the present day, with the aim of developing international pedagogy in the service to young people (Coubertin, 1973). In the foundational Congress of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, the organisation of the modern Olympic Games was established with the aim of revitalising the educational spirit and the classical legacy of Greece (Durántez, 2001).

According to the Olympic Charter, in the first chapter of the Olympic Movement, line 7, point 4, The Olympic symbol, the flag, the motto, the hymn and other identifiers, such as the emblems, the flames and the torch are ceremonial tools which in most cases are unknown to sports competitors and their coaches. These are included in the Olympic Charter, the foundational document which contains the Foundational Principles of Olympism, the rules and texts adopted by the International Olympic Committee, through which organisations and the whole Olympic Movement are governed, and conditions are established which enable the Olympic Games to be held.

The Olympic Charter defines the rights and obligations to the principal organisations who uphold the Olympic Movement: The International Olympic Committee, International Federations and National Olympic Committees. All of these are obliged to comply with and as Molina (2011) indicates, must ensure that the ideals and essence of the Olympic Games are adhered to, preferably in harmony with these three power structures.

With regard to the aforementioned points, according to Mestre (2008), the IOC is responsible for promoting and supporting ethics within sport, as well as educating young people to ensure that the spirit of fair play prevails, and that violence is prohibited in sport.

One of the main objectives of the Olympic Charter is to remember the essential principles and values that Olympism pursues (IOC, 2011b) which originate from the educational concepts of Coubertin (Binder, 2007; Maass, 2007; Muller, 2004; Solar, 2003). This concept and creation, which generated and continues to generate numerous contributions in different fields such as sports, science, and culture (Muller, 1986; Muller & Schantz, 1986; Rioux, 1986) are indispensable in order to understand the educational aspect of the Olympic Movement (Molina, 2000).

Gillet (1971) highlights the legacy of his work, whose objective was to create a new method of education (Molina, 2011). Therefore, the Olympic Movement itself, which encompasses all organisations, sportsmen and women and other members of the Olympic Family submit to what is stipulated in the Olympic charter and has, as its fundamental goal in today's society, the contribution to the construction of a better and more peaceful world through the education of young people and the practice of sports according to the values promoted by Olympism in its entirety.

Within the Olympic program and following the Olympic Charter, the programme for all the competitions of the Olympic Games is established by the IOC for each edition, this being composed of the categories, disciplines and events governed by International Federations, with the programme including both individual and team sports. The main difference between them resides in the number of participants, with an individual sport being judged as the motor skill development by a single sportsperson who finds himself or herself alone and must battle to better a time, distance, points total or him or herself (Ruiz, 2012). However, team sports are adjudged to be *“those which are performed as part of a collective, which is understood to be the union of several players in search of a common goal, performing a series of regulated actions in collaboration, co-operation and participation with one another, with the intention of defeating the opposition of its adversaries who are equally organised as a team with the same goal”* (Parlebás, 1989).

In spite of the great differences which exist between individual sports and team sports, sport is an excellent means to transmit values (Beregüi, & Garcés de los Favos, 2007). As a result of this, regardless of whether one participates in an individual or a team sport, a sportsperson acquires different values through the practice of sport, among which are the values promoted by Olympism. But will these values be the same for individual sports and team sports?

With this in mind, the aim of this investigation is to analyse the perception of the Olympic values of coaches of different levels and categories in Portugal in relation to the kind of sport in which they operate (individual or team sports).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Design

A transverse, descriptive and inference study was conducted using a nonstatistical sample of volunteers.

Participants

The study sample was composed of 1,473 Portuguese coaches, of which 214 were female and 1,259 were male. The average age was 45.3 years. The majority of these belonged to Level 2 training of coaches in Portugal.

The study sample consisted of coaches of 34 sports modalities (individual and team sports), some of which are not part of the Olympic program. The modalities which did not form part of the Olympic program were, namely, sports orientation, indoor football and roller hockey.

Measures

The instrument used was an ad hoc questionnaire. In order to obtain valid evidence of the content items an assessment was carried out by experts, which enabled those items which did meet the necessary requirements to be eliminated. The questionnaire contained several elements presented in the form of categories, so that a series of established alternatives could be chosen from.

The items in the questionnaire were grouped in three dimensions: the perception of the Olympic Symbols, the importance of participation in the Olympic Games and the values associated with the Olympic Games.

Among the limitations presented by the questionnaire, it is important to bear in mind that the answers may be conditioned by the factor of social desire which, in some cases could alter the accuracy of the answers, since subjective judgements may be conditioned by cultural characteristics and/or a lack of understanding of the Olympic ideals.

Statistical analysis

For the analysis of the results obtained from the Portuguese coaches who completed the questionnaire, a descriptive frequency analysis of the answers was conducted, thus calculating the proportion of the answers for each of the questions asked.

In order to establish the association between the qualitative variables, as well as the comparison of the proportions of the type of sport which is coached by the study sample (individual or team), the chi-squared test was applied. This analysis is presented by means of contingency tables including chi-squared and Cramer's V values. The level of statistical significance which was considered was $p < .05$.

The statistical analysis was conducted with the use of STATA v.15.1 (StataCorp, Texas, USA).

RESULTS

The descriptive results are displayed below, according to the type of sport and the perception of coaches regarding Olympic values.

As regards individual team sport coaches, in relation to the principles associated with the Olympic Games (Table 1), the most frequent selections were several of the items which refer to ethical factors (57.89%). However, with team sport coaches, the majority of these selected an item which made reference to professional factors (50.09%).

As for their opinion on participation in the Olympic Games (Table 1) 55.34% of individual sport coaches chose some of the items associated with Olympic Values. With team sport coaches, the material benefits were those which obtained the highest percentage (55%).

Lastly, in relation to the values associated with the Olympic Games (Table 1), in the most cases, individual sport coaches selected items referring to general values (56.22%). On the contrary, team sport coaches chose several of the items related to competition (50.68%)

Table 1. Descriptive results in relation to the type of sport and the perception of coaches of the Olympic Values.

Factors	N		%	
	Individual	Team	Individual	Team
Principles associated with the Olympic Games				
Professional	548	550	49.91	50.09
Ethical	22	16	57.89	42.11
Olympic values	136	124	52.31	47.11
Did not respond	40	37	51.94	48.06
Opinion on participation in the Olympic Games				
Olympic values	138	116	55.34	45.67
Material benefits	288	352	45	55
Social values	307	251	44.02	44.98
Did not respond	11	10	52.38	47.62
Values associated with the Olympic Games				
Personal-Sporting	341	329	50.09	49.1
Competition	289	297	49.32	50.68
General Values	104	81	56.22	43.78
Did not respond	10	22	31.25	68.75

Inferential results

Statistical analysis could not verify the associated significance between coaches of individual sports and those of team sports ($\chi = 1.365$, Cramer's $V = .714$; $p = .714$) in relation to the principles associated with the Olympic Games (Table 2).

Statistical analysis allowed us to verify the associated significance between coaches of individual sports and those of team sports ($\chi = 13.822$, Cramer's $V = .097$; $p = .003$) in relation to the opinion on participation in the Olympic Games. (Table 3).

Lastly, statistical analysis could not verify the associated significance between coaches of individual sports and those of team sports ($\chi = 7.532$; Cramer's $V = .072$; $p = .57$) in relation to the values associated with the Olympic Games.

Table 2. Contingency table individual sport coaches – team sport coaches in relation to the Principles associated with the Olympic Games.

		Sports Modality			
		Individual coaches	Team coaches	Total	
Principles associated with the Olympic Games.	Professional factors	Count	548	550	1098
		Expected frequencies	49.9	50.1	1098.0
		Corrected residuals	.8	-.8	
	Ethical factors	Count	22	16	38
		Expected frequencies	57.9	42.1	38.0
		Corrected residuals	.9	.9	
	Associated to values	Count	136	124	260
		Expected frequencies	52.3	47.7	260.0
		Corrected residuals	.6	-.6	
	Did not respond	Count	38	39	77
		Expected frequencies	49.9	50.6	77.0
		Corrected residuals	-.2	.2	
Total	Count	744	729	1473	
	Expected frequency	744.0	729.0	1473.0	

0 cell (.0%) had an expected frequency lower than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 18.81.

Table 3. Contingency table individual sport coaches – team sport coaches in relation to participation in the Olympic Games.

		Sports Modality			
		Individual coaches	Team coaches	Total	
Opinion on participation in the Olympic Games	Olympic values	Count	138	116	254
		Expected frequencies	54.3	45.7	254.0
		Corrected residuals	1.3	-1.3	
	Material benefits	Count	288	352	640
		Expected frequencies	45	55	640.0
		Corrected residuals	-3.7	3.7	
	Social Values	Count	307	251	558
		Expected frequencies	55	45	558.0
		Corrected residuals	2.7	-2.7	
	Did not respond	Count	11	10	21
		Expected frequencies	52.4	47.6	21.0
		Corrected residuals	.4	-.4	
Total	Count	744	729	1473	
	Expected frequency	744.0	729.0	1473.0	

0 cell (.0%) had an expected frequency lower than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 10.39.

Table 4. Contingency table individual sport coaches – team sport coaches in the question related to values associated with the Olympic Games.

			Sport Modality		
			Individual Coaches	Team Coaches	Total
Values associated with the Olympic Games	Personal and sporting	Count	341	329	670
		Expected frequencies	50.9	49.1	670.0
		Corrected residuals	.3	-.3	
	Competition	Count	289	297	586
		Expected frequencies	49.3	50.7	586.0
		Corrected residuals	-.7	.7	
	Social	Count	104	81	185
		Expected frequencies	56.2	43.8	185.0
		Corrected residuals	1.7	-1.7	
	Did not respond	Count	10	22	32
		Expected frequencies	31.3	68.8	32.0
		Corrected residuals	-2.2	2.2	
Total	Count	744	729	1473	
	Expected frequency	744.0	729.0	1473.0	

0 cell (.0%) had an expected frequency lower than 5. The minimum expected frequency is 15.84.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the investigation was to analyse the perception of Olympic values held by coaches from different levels and categories in Portugal in the relation to the type of sport in which they operate (individual or team sports).

The descriptive results showed that, in relation to the principles associated with the Olympic Games, individual sport coaches associated said principles with ethical factors whereas team sport coaches associated these with professional factors.

In this way, we found that the particular characteristics in the training of coaches, their diversity in models and study programmes, as well as the knowledge and experience of these coaches may influence their relationship with sportspeople and consequently their results. In this sense Rabelo et al (2016) mentions the following factors as related issues in the importance of training: overcoming adversity, temperament, resilience, and determination. All of the above are directly related to the spirit of achievement and excellence, present in the Olympic motto *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, thus being used in the phrase, in search of excellence. Therefore, in order to achieve the best results, competition continues to consolidate its position as an area for the practice and confirmation of personal and social habits.

Furthermore, achievement is perceived as an inherent characteristic of sport, which is expressed in the form of records (Rubio, 2009) which may be directly related to how individual sport coaches are geared towards their goals, in addition to performance, whereas team sport coaches focus more on ethical issues, since these are more predominant in a team in search of a result.

Based on these results, we can coincide with Todt (2009) in that the proposals for Olympic education, based on the values recommended by Olympic philosophy, may be shaped as an important pedagogic alternative for questions regarding social inclusion and the education of values through sport, provided that the approach respects the characteristics of the collective.

With regard to the opinion on participation in the Olympic Games, individual team coaches believe that said participation is linked to Olympic values, while team sport coaches consider that participation in the Olympic Games is associated with material benefits. In this sense, one possible hypothesis is that, according to Rodrigues (1997), the particular characteristics in the process of the training of coaches, their diversity in models and study programmes, and the knowledge and experience of these coaches may influence their relationship with other coaches. According to writer, the values that society transmits to sport, such as honesty, loyalty, sincerity, fair play, correct attitudes, mutual respect between those participating in a sporting competition and the unequivocal respect for the rules of civilised and sporting conduct on behalf of those responsible for sports orientation, tend to be increasingly irrelevant and is on the verge of extinction (Fernandes et al., 2003).

More recently, other studies were conducted to identify current Olympic values. Consequently, it was observed that, in recent times, much has been written about the change in Olympic values. It has been questioned whether they are relatively stable or in motion, if they need a new ideological base or whether they are simply another utopia, as the study carried out with Portuguese coaches shows.

Finally, individual sport coaches believe that general values are associated with the Olympic Games, whereas competition is the value associated with the Olympic Games, according to team sport coaches.

In a study by Preuss et al. (2016) on Olympic values in the Olympic Games, it is claimed that the general perception in relation to the Olympic Games and its participants, one must bear in mind all aspects of the Olympic Movement. Only 61.6% had a positive view of the Games, 23.1% were neutral and 15.1% viewed them very negatively.

Chatziefstathiou (2005) conducted another study on Olympic values. The writer assessed the fluctuating nature of the ideology of Olympism within historical, socio-political and contemporary economic contexts. His study proved that the values associated with the ideology of Olympism have changed in the previous century. He highlighted the cultural diversity of values and meanings associated with Olympic sport in the modern world. One important consideration of this investigation is that Olympism cannot be based on a set of immutable values, but rather on a process of construction of consensus in terms of values in the world of global sport.

Finally, it must be said that team sports, which promote the development of motor skills and other abilities, constitute a privileged means of training, while at the same time promoting social relationships, the basis for awareness in society (Mesquita, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

The perception of Olympic values, between coaches of individual sports and team sports differs in the principles associated with the Olympic Games, in the opinion regarding participation in the Olympic Games and in the values associated with the Olympic Games.

Individual team coaches relate the principles associated with the Olympic Games to ethical factors. They believe participation in the Olympics is due to Olympic values, and that the values associated with the Olympic games are general. On the contrary, team sport coaches consider that the principles associated with the Olympic Games are professional factors, and that participation in the Olympics is to a large degree for material benefits and that, finally, competition is the value which is associated with the Olympic Games.

We believe that the difference between coaches of individual sports and team sports is mainly due to their training, especially in courses for coaches, participation in projects and Olympic participation. Individual coaches have extensive experience in their participation, to the detriment of participation in team modalities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Teresa Cristina Rocha: data collection, data analysis and interpretation, drafting the article and/or its critical revision and final approval of the version to be publishes. Covadonga Mateos-Padorno: direction, conception and design of the study, drafting the article and/or its critical revision and final approval of the version to be publishes. Juan Pedro Fuentes-García: data analysis and interpretation, drafting the article and/or its critical revision and final approval of the version to be publishes. Jara González-Silva: data analysis and interpretation, drafting the article and/or its critical revision and final approval of the version to be publishes. María José Martínez-Patiño: direction, conception and design of the study, data analysis and interpretation, drafting the article and/or its critical revision and final approval of the version to be publishes.

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