

Experience and Legacy of Gambian Athletes at the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires 2018, A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper explores the experiences and legacy of Gambian athletes that participated at the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) Buenos Aires 2018. Through this event, the International Olympic Committee intends to bring young people from the world over together to learn and share the Olympic ideals and further replicate this in their communities. Data was collected through telephone interviews with the athletes and analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis. Among the aspects covered are the information gained by the athletes before the games, their experiences during the games and the impact of the event in their athletic and personal lives. The findings reveal that the athletes lacked prior knowledge of the YOG and that limited their level of interaction and depth of experiences. In addition, the conditions of the sport structures in the Gambia limited them from replicating the experience gained. In conclusion, supporting social engagements of young athletes that participated in the YOG will enhance the intentions of the Olympic Movement.

Keywords

Youth Olympic Games, Athletes Experience, The Gambia.

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Introduction

The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) are the ultimate multi-sporting event that brings together world's best young athletes between the ages of 15 and 18 to compete, learn and share the Olympic ideals (IOC, 2019a; IOC, 2019b). Since the Stockholm 1912 summer Olympics, the IOC has focused aligning the Olympic Movement with the youth through camps organised during games that serve as the permanent source of the Olympic ideals (Naul, et.al., 2017). Though there were previous continental initiatives in Europe and Australia of youth-specific events such as the youth sport festivals, it was the former IOC President Jacques Rogge (2001-2013) who institutionalised the approach as an IOC flagship event. The YOG were officially initiated at the 119th IOC Session in Guatemala City in July 2007 (Krieger, 2012a; Naul, et.al, 2017; Krieger & Kristiansen, 2016; IOC, 2019a). By the 13th IOC Congress in Copenhagen 2009, the IOC was on the path of addressing global concerns such as physical inactivity and obesity in young people through the Olympic Movement (Naul, et.al., 2017; Krieger, 2012b). These developments would form the core of the YOG concept to strike the balance between sport, competition and education.

Taking cure from considerations of the founder of the Olympic Movement Pierre de Coubertin that educating the youth would support better transnational understanding and less nationalistic

thinking, the YOG athletes are to serve as role models transmitting the educational values of the Olympic Movement in their respective communities (Krieger & Kristiansen, 2016; Krieger, 2012b; Krieger, 2012a; Lawrence et.al., 2013). The first three editions of the summer YOG were held in Singapore, Singapore (2010), Nanjing, China (2014) and Buenos Aires, Argentina (2018). The YOG is the first Olympic tournament planned to be hosted in Africa in Dakar, Senegal (2026). The winter editions have also been organised for a combined three times in Innsbruck, Austria (2012), Lillehammer, Norway (2016) and Lausanne, Switzerland (2020), with next edition planned for Gangwon, South Korea (2024). The three-fold objective of the YOG is first, to bring together the best young athletes for high level global multi-sport competition in a festive environment; secondly, to introduce and engage them to the Olympic Movement and its value system and finally, to serve as a catalyst to innovation and an incubator for new concepts with other key stakeholders (IOC, 2019a; Krieger, 2012b). Though the conventional media plays a peripheral role in this event, reaching out to young people through digital initiatives and social media is at the core of the engagements.

The last summer edition in Argentina had the participation of 206 National Olympic Committees (NOC), competed in 32 sports (36 disciplines) for a period of 13 days (6-8 October, 2018). As the incubator for new

concepts, it also saw the inclusion of new sports such as BMX freestyle, kitesurfing, cross-country running, beach handball, futsal, sport climbing, karate, breakdancing and roller speed skating (IOC, 2019a; IOC, 2012). As the catalyst for innovation, strict gender equality requirements were introduced under the slogan “feel the future” (IOC, 2019a). Key among the features of the YOG are the compulsory stay at the Youth Olympic Village (YOY), the introduction of mixed gender and mixed nations events and universality slots which facilitates wider participation. The International Federations (IF) decide the qualification system and format of event for each sport, most of which do vary from the conventional Olympic formats (Krieger, 2016; Nordhagen & Krieger, 2019; IOC, 2018b; IOC, 2019a).

The IOC covers the travel costs of officials and athletes and the previous Culture and Education Programme (CEP) now Learn & Share is formed around themes that varies between the winter and summer editions (Krieger, 2016). Technological gadgets such as “Yogger” in Singapore and “Hi Five” in Buenos Aires form a central component of facilitating interaction among the participants. The Games feature the participation of other young non-athletes such as the Young Reporters, Young Ambassadors and now Young Change-Makers that encapsulates youth engagement. Other stakeholders like the Olympic Champions, international organizations such as UN agencies,

Red Cross, among others, forms a key complementary aspect that enhances the goals of the YOG (Krieger, 2012b; Lawrence, et.al., 2011; Pardo Gila & Calle Molina, 2016; Schnitzer, et.al., 2018; Parent, et.al., 2014; Parent, et.al., 2013).

The mode the athletes would remember the Olympic values is both individual and social. Through their interactions, they transmit, retain and strengthen the memories. They gradually individualize the community memory and what they recall and how they recall it (Perez & Rubio, 2014). They therefore keep only what is meaningful. As the young people and athletes that took part in the YOG are tasked to become leaders in implementing the Olympic values, this highlight that they have become key stakeholders in the Olympic Movement. It is therefore of continuous significance to interrogate the influence of the event and the circumstances under which they are operating in their respective communities (Perez & Rubio, 2014).

The possibility of the athletes to share their experiences of the YOG should be extended to local sport organizations and NOCs. It is therefore imperative to understand how far athletes that have participated in the YOG being able to share their experiences in their communities, schools and sports clubs and the structural challenges they are faced with in carrying out this responsibility. There is a significant gap of published literature on country-specific cases and

a deeper interrogation of the structural challenges through the experiences of the athletes that participated in the YOG from developing countries (Lopes de Souza & Tavares, 2020; Raimundi, et.al., 2019). Research that explores the experiences of Gambian athletes from the YOG is therefore relevant to close this research gap. Furthermore, researchers have emphasised on the need to maximise the educational outcomes of the athletes that participated in the YOG by providing follow-up educational activities at home by NOCs, schools and clubs (Nordhagen & Krieger, 2019). As Gambian athletes participated in the last edition of the games, it is therefore important to understand the context-specific circumstances under which they can replicate their experiences from the YOG.

This research therefore intends to understand first, the experience of Gambian athletes that participated at the YOG in Buenos Aires 2018; secondly, to assess the legacy of the YOG on the athletes' lives and how it has shaped their future aspirations. Athletes voices in their affairs are not fully integrated into the structure of sport organizations and therefore pertinent to accommodate the opinions of these important stakeholders (Seltmann, 2021). Additionally, it is important to investigate the motivations and socio-cultural contexts that facilitate effective talent development of young athletes (Adeboye, et.al., 2016). This research also aims to expound on the

structural challenges of some developing countries like the Gambia in spreading the Olympic ideals through athletes that participated in the YOG. Furthermore, the article explores context-specific challenges young athletes are faced with in sharing the knowledge acquired from the YOG and advancing their professional careers.

Methodology

Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper examines how Gambian athletes that participated in the YOG in Buenos Aires 2018, give meaning to the event through their experiences. The athletes, as key stakeholders in the Foucauldian sense, are actively involved when it comes to realizing power relations in practice and researchers should facilitate exchange of ideas with other actors to enable changes of positions based on sound judgements (Jäger & Maaier, 2015). The actors or stakeholders involved in implementation of the YOG (athletes, NSFs, NOCs, IOC, coaches, etc.) are involved in relational power within the network where they constantly produce discourses that affects each other. Speaking, therefore, gives meaning to their experiences and discourse from a particular perspective in a particular event and social field (Markula & Silk, 2011; Jäger & Maaier, 2015).

Using semi-structured interviews with open ended questions, all five athletes that represented the Gambia in three sports were interviewed by the researcher. The

Telephone interviews lasted between twenty to thirty minutes each with probes for further information and questions during the interview used to allow for an in-depth conversations and understanding of the topic (Markula & Silk, 2011). Two interviews were conducted in English and the others in local languages (two in Wollof and one in Mandinka) to facilitate for easy flow of the conversation with the interviewees. Initial contacts were established with some of the athletes through their respective sports federations and the others through their colleagues with whom they still maintained contacts. All interviewees were sent consent forms which they all signed and returned to the researcher. The focus of the interview was on three main themes: the experiences before, during the games and after the Games. The interviews were randomly assigned numbers from one to five without specifying sport and gender to maintain their anonymity.

Using the Foucauldian approach of CDA and the specific method of the Duisburger Institute für Sprach- und Sozialforschung (DISS) which approved this research, the interviews were transcribed and those in the local languages translated into English by the researcher. For the deductive analysis, notes were made from the interviews into Microsoft Excel. Specific statements were identified to find out what is said and which knowledge is reproduced. Furthermore topics were analysed to find out, what is talked about and in which context. All

five interviews were then collated together through the Notes, Statements and Topics for analysis and contrasted with available literature and organizational discourses of the IOC on participants of the YOG (Jäger & Maaier, 2015).

The focus of this paper was therefore on “what is said” by the athletes through the identified “statements” two years after their participation in the YOG (Jäger & Maaier, 2015). Statements reproduced by the athletes after this period from the Games depicts a deeper effect of the Games on their personal and athletic lives. Contrary to the approach used by Krieger (2012), practical observation and on-site experience of the researcher to ascertain distortion or misrepresentation of certain facts is a limitation. The sample and results of this study therefore are none generalizable on all participants of the games or the entirety of Gambian athletes. That notwithstanding, this study does add to the literature on country-specific experiences of athletes that participated in the YOG (Young & Atkinson, 2012).

Discussions of Statements

Lack of preparation

Lack of information or the limited flow of it played a significant role in how the athletes prepared for and engaged in the YOG. In effect, they had no information on the Games, country or weather nor sport-specific information. Other than being the first time some heard about the name

of the YOG, it was initially understood as just another competition they were to attend. Though it is not clear if there is lack of fluid communication between the sports associations and the NOCs or IFs, there is an evident lack of it between the athletes and their associations or coaches.

With the exception of the Universality rule awarded to one of the sports, athletes from the other two sports are not aware of how they qualified to the tournament but were just informed by the officials two weeks to the games that they were to go to Argentina, though they remember that they were in Algeria for the African Youth Games 2018. The athletes also remembered significant differences in the weather, food and infrastructure. The acknowledgment of these cultural and geographical differences by the participants emphasizes the impact of the cultural exchange the IOC hoped for through these games. The athletes, who had strong identity with their Gambian rice, opened up to other experiences “For us we were just eating rice but we saw others eating [...] other things” (Interview no. 2). The lack of the coaches’ understanding of the focus of the YOG also played out in the activities the athletes were exposed to or allowed to participate. Before their respective competitions in their events, all athletes were provided with strict training and rest schedules by their coaches. The orientation from the coaches that “it is the Olympics” confirms previous research on the lack of a clearer understanding of

the YOG by a larger pool of stakeholders (Krieger & Kristiansen, 2016; Krieger, 2012b).

As the IFs develop the formats for the competition, some sports adjusted the conventional formats used in other tournaments (Krieger, 2012a). The lack of prior information on the format created misunderstanding and negative impression:

Medals were awarded to those that competed in Final A. I won the Final B and many people were saying back home that: Oh! 2 won a gold medal. I was not given a medal because I ran in Final B”. (Interview no. 2).

What stood out for all the athletes is the unequal playing field they emotionally had to manage throughout their stay at the YOV, though they were of the same age group and all fellow athletes. The athletes able to discern that their modes of training, training facilities, knowledge of their coaches and even their uniforms for the Games were of inferior quality and played on their previously held ambitions of winning medals. This the athletes did by juxtaposing their preparatory trainings to their experiences in the YOG. The inequalities felt played a role into why some of the athletes preferred to stay in their rooms or closer Gambian and African circles.

Games as unique experience

Participation in the YOG is described

as a unique experience as they have not experienced it in any other previous and later tournaments. Though most of them qualified through the IFs and qualification tournaments, participation is still considered as a privilege. Carrying the national flag and assuming leadership roles within the team during the Games serve best to enhance their interpersonal skills. Concurrently, the event also inserted a lot of pressure as they felt “representing over 2 million people” (Interview no. 4) and the need to win a medal for the country. All the Gambian athletes went to Buenos Aires with the intention of winning to further raise their athletic profiles. Participation in the games provided that perfect platform for them, though they did not win any medal:

It is the first time I was registered into the FIVB platform. If you go to google now and type my name you will see all my information. I have my FIVB number, yes. That’s proof that I am part of volleyball (Interview no. 1).

At the local front, participation has further cemented their positions as national athletes and regularly feature for the respective national teams. Upon their return home, participation in the “Olympics” served as source of motivation for other younger athletes and their colleagues and therefore were seen as role models: “When I meet the younger athletes they always meet me with a lot of respect. They think that I have something now” (Interview no. 4).

As highlighted earlier, the athletes recognised their lack of preparation for the Games and differences in sporting skills. The platform proved as a source of motivation and an opportunity to perfect their athletic skills on the sport field especially from their superior European counterparts. Though it was limited, they also acknowledge acquiring important information on other topics such as doping in sport, rehabilitation and basic treatment of injuries among others. The later, especially, weights more value as it has been recognised as a basic skill each athlete needs to acquire as they are responsible for caring for their injuries back home. The sport-specific social events also serve best to the interest of the athletes as they were able to deepen their knowledge on their sport through those activities. Due to the lack of previous information on the YOG, the athletes expressed limited contact with the Olympic values or lack of understanding of it. The one value that was well understood was that of equality: “There was nothing like American, Gambian, all of us were equal there. The same bus that takes us to the ground is the same bus that takes the others to the ground” (Interview no. 1). Priority on representation which saw the participation of 206 NOCs had a positive effect on the athletes’ perception of the Games as “the whole world” was represented. The sport that qualified based on the Universality rule considers this as a unique opportunity without which they would not have participated.

Though the lack of previous information highlighted played into limiting their social interaction during the Games, the provision of space for interpersonal connections was qualified as unique. Experiences in previous and later international tournaments cemented this conviction. It was previously considered as an international tournament where they will only go and compete but the term “Olympics” further narrowed their focus to result orientation. The lack of sufficient social interaction, intercultural exchanges was one aspect most of them “regret” not experiencing enough: “The mistake I make is that I did not exchange contacts [...] I would advise them to participate because participation is the most important thing” (Interview no. 2).

Limited social interaction

Even though the athletes acknowledge seeing information on the presence of Olympic Athletes, the lack of information on their sport-specific “Chat with Champions” or knowledge thereof discouraged them from attending these events. Other than the strict schedule they were subjected to by their coaches, which exhausts them, an explicit lack of interest due to planned priorities was evident. Strict training schedule by coaches also demonstrates that there is a deeper lack of understanding of the aim of the YOG among a wider range of stakeholders. Consistent with previous findings, the unplanned activities and spaces like the

dining hall served as the main space for social interaction with athletes of other nationalities (Krieger, 2016). Recreational activities they were used to like playing football, were the most common while exploring the planned social activities available. Even though football, but rather futsal, was not part of the official program in Buenos Aires 2018 (IOC, 2019a).

Friendship with affinity was a defining feature of the limited social interactions of the athletes. Interactions were much more in a closed circle, within Gambians, and then fellow West Africans, Africans, Western, and the local guides. Language played a significant role in determining these interactions as most of the interactions were limited to English speaking countries like Sierra Leone, South Africa and Canada. This though, with the exception of Senegalese, with whom they already had acquaintances or could communicate in the same local languages. As envisaged by the IOC, exploiting the potentials of the new technologies serve best to integrate Olympism into modern trends and lifestyles of the young people. An electronic device “Hi Five” that the athletes were given to make friends and gain points remained a key highlight for them. Some of them however expressed being “shy” to just meet people and start talking to them. Even though they considered some of the side events and games as “small”, they however acknowledge their significance on their emotional health as they “free-up” their minds. Social media platforms

like Instagram serves best to maintain post-games interactions with friends made during the YOG.

The compulsory stay at the YOY from the beginning to the end provided the opportunity to balance the limited interaction of the athletes. Consistent with previous findings, all the athletes confirmed that they interacted, watched other sports and participated in the side events after their competitions: “Because when we arrived, after training, we all go in straight to our rooms. Our coach was not giving us much time” (Interview no. 5). That notwithstanding, all interviewees vividly remember informal interactions they had with other coaches in their sport and the performance enhancing advice they were given. The possibility to enhance their sport specific knowledge remained a highlight of their experiences, even with the quiz questions that had to do with their sports.

Neglected athletes' welfare

The interaction with athletes from other nations during the YOG serves as the perfect space to delve into further comparison on athletes' welfare. Perceived inequalities with athletes from other countries raised questions of differences on treatments by the Gambian sport officials and society at large. Though the YOG does not currently have the privilege of the Olympic Games with cooperate media rights, national media could notwithstanding, play a crucial

role in spreading the desired outcomes of the YOG. Giving the athletes platforms to share their experiences could play a vital role. Sharing experiences through local media was also highlighted as a key motivating factor in their athletic careers. The local media was on the contrary seen as being interested in trivial issues such as athletes that absconded, medals won and not the plight of the athletes or to share unique experiences.

Though it is acknowledged that coaches play perhaps the most important role in their athletic careers, the level of motivation they receive from these overall was low. Sports like athletics do not have clubs in the Gambia and national team call-ups by the national coach plays a vital role in their athletics career. Athletes that have decided to explore training with other coaches were threatened to be dropped from the national team. This form of control proved the most effective by technicians over athletes. The officials of the different sports and those of the Gambia National Olympic Committee (GNOC) present contradictory aims with the athletes: “These people will only use you just to say that you travelled. They think that's the only thing we want because we are kids” (Interview no. 5). Furthermore, the athletes express their views being ignore against those of the coaches even if theirs are more informed and reflect their personal experiences. This to a large extend affects their level of motivation and trust in the sport structure.

The Government has long been accused of providing limited support to sport and most especially the athletes. Though the current support being given directly to national athletes is acknowledged, some of the interviewees believe that this support should be extended to national athletes at junior levels. Furthermore, the support rendered by government is seen to be contrary to the athletic desires and interests of the athletes: “Indoor is not much funded by the government because it has 12 players or more so is kind of expensive for them but the kids do not like beach volleyball” (Interview no. 1). From their interactions with other athletes during and after the Games, athletes were able to determine that other athletes that got injured during the competition and on national duties were supported by the national sports federations to treat their injuries. This however, is the contrary in the Gambia as they have to treat their injuries on their own. The athletes consider that the officials hide vital information from them on athletes’ rights.

“I learnt a lot of things that I didn’t know before. Things like the rights of the athletes. Other countries get somethings that we do not get. We wanted to ask further as to why but we were told not to. [...] they hide a lot of things from us. Even our allowances are very small” (Interview no. 4).

The opportunity for lack of consideration was also attribute to the lack of structures or a pyramid that classifies and differentiates

national athletes by the different sports. Athletes cannot determine if they could be considered “national” athletes only due to their athletics competences and when this does happen.

Economic challenges

Other than the challenges of the national economy which the athletes are aware of, structural, cultural and social conditions that prevail in the Gambia and the sports associations further hampers the replication of their experiences from Buenos Aires 2018. All sports in the Gambia are amateur and does not therefore have any professional structure and remuneration of athletes. The experiences from the YOG has only provided them an opportunity to maintain their national team call-ups but their economic conditions have remained the same. It is only national team athletes that do get allowances before or after taking part in a tournament. Threatening sports authorities with withdrawal or boycott from national team just before the event has resulted into one of the most effective tools the athletes have succumbed to get their allowances paid.

The lack of care from the sports authorities highlighted previously, resulted in athletes nursing their own injuries and funding further alternative trainings needs or requirements. The feeling that the authorities “only use you and dump you” shifted their attention to get value for efforts. To alleviate their economic

challenges, most of the athletes confirmed relying on their parents, coaches and friends to fulfil their immediate financial needs. As all athletes still holds dare to their respective sports, economic reward for skills determines level of motivation to further their athletics careers. Most of the athletes are currently unemployed and rely on sporadic national duty allowances for survival. Important to highlight that two of the five athletes do not finish secondary education as they abandoned school to concentrate on their athletics careers or because their parents could not afford to pay for their secondary education. Completion of secondary education is the highest qualification attained among all interviewees. "It is embarrassing to wake up in the morning as a grown up and come to your Dad and say I need this, while you have the strength" (Interview no. 5). One of the athletes have since migrated to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea. Being "over stay" is the term one of the interviewees used to describe the plight of those athletes that could not find other alternatives of leaving the country.

As there is no stable and standard income from sport, taking up a job alongside their athletics path is another available option. Assuming key family responsibilities as bread winners has further widen their economic challenges to sustain their sporting careers. The athletes' experiences at the YOG have exposed them to the realities of other athletes they still maintain contacts with. Furthermore,

they have realised that their skills could only reward them economically if they ply their trade outside the Gambia. The explicit admiration of their talents by other athletes who were living of the sport in their countries during the games, further strengthened this conviction: "She said she was the champion in her country and she said: if you were in my country, you will win a lot of gold medals" (Interview no. 2). Interesting to note that the athletes did not attribute their lack of economic reward for their skills to the national economy but narrow it to exploitation by the local sports authorities and describe their plight as: "We suffer and they enjoy" (Interview no. 4).

Career ambitions

Emigration is seen as the most viable mean to achieve their desired professional goals. Some of them have had other experiences and interests from other clubs outside the country which serve to demonstrate their talents. Other than during the YOG, most of the athletes have had recognition of their athletic feats from other technicians in their sport. This plays an important role in further motivating their quests to further their careers. Other athletes that have left the country and now representing other countries (Ahmed Tijan featured for Qatar in the 2020 Olympic Games) serve as a perfect mirror to validate that their skills are good enough and will be rewarded if they leave the country. Furthermore, their experiences in the YOG and

other international engagements have demonstrated to them the availability of better coaching expertise, training facilities and professional training programmes outside the country, opportunities which they are convinced will propel their athletic careers.

Though this may not be unique to the YOG, the interviewees still vividly remember and solely attribute to the YOG interactions they had with other coaches from other countries and the advises given on personal lives:

One of the coaches advised me that even if I will have a boyfriend, he should understand that I have an athletic career ahead of me. I said yes, and that's what am doing. I was doing it before but now am more convinced (Interview no. 2).

Another positive effect solely attributed to experience from the YOG is the influence it has had on their professional path. All athletes reported a change of habits as their previous habits, such as staying up late with friends, was incompatible with their professional athletics aims. Other changes such as avoid eating late, sleeping enough, drinking a lot of water, among others, were spontaneous habits copied from other athletes or heard during conversations at the Games. Contrary to the IOC intentions to promote healthy lifestyle, physical activity and fight obesity through the YOG, the experience of some of the participants highlights a platform for enhancing consumerism: "They gave us some juice. So now I buy these juice as

well and drink it before going for training" (Interview no. 2).

With limited formal education, making a career as a professional athlete seems to be the main goal of all the interviewees in the short and medium term. In the long term however, they all wish to venture into technical areas like coaching. This is also due to the perceived lack of sufficient knowledge on their sport by their coaches which they intend to complement. They however, also acknowledged the limitations to the realization of this ambition as the opportunities for coaching training are also limited in the country. Dual career seems to be a far-fetch reality for the athletes as the combination of athletics prospects, quest for survival and studies seems to be an impossible venture. Parents of Gambian Youth Olympians have limited role and therefore provides limited direct support to the system. The officials of the GNOC maintain direct contact with the athletes themselves and provide the required information whenever the athletes are needed. Most of the athletes revealed personally reflecting on their participation at the YOG and came to accept that negotiating with unfavourable conditions, as in the Gambia, is part of the stepping stone in their athletic careers. Their experiences of having to navigate challenges highlighted above in their socio-cultural context is contrary to the IOC's exposition of the successes of other athletes who also participated in the Games (IOC, 2021).

Conclusions

Using CDA, this paper demonstrated limited prior knowledge and social interaction during the games by the Gambian athletes that participated in the YOG Buenos Aires 2018. This therefore implies limited Olympic values learnt and intercultural exchanges. The local sport-specific context challenges faced by the athletes further hindered their efforts to engage in sharing their experiences contrary to the expectations of the IOC. It is evident that lack of understanding of the coaches on the role of the games resulted in inserting their authority and limit social interaction of athletes. Therefore, there is an evident need for coaches' orientation before their arrival on the aims of the YOG as key stakeholders in delivering the intended outcomes. The inability of the GNOC and national sports federations to communicate clear information to their delegations results in the attendees prioritising what is considered important to them and not the expected learning outcomes for the athletes and other stakeholders.

Local media collaborations with NOCs and national sports organizations could play a crucial role in widening knowledge on the Olympic Movement to the wider society by engaging athletes that participated in the YOG. Other than motivate the athletes as highlighted, a good media and athlete relationship will avail local sports the opportunity to tailor context-specific solutions to athletes'

challenges. It is evident in this paper that Gambian athletes that participated in the YOG Buenos Aires 2018 are limited by the prevailing circumstances to live and promote their experiences. Further this research country-specific research could highlight key challenges of the YOG and the Olympic Movement in developing countries and Africa in particular. Support for social engagement to athletes that participated in the YOG through their respective NOCs will enhance sharing their experiences.

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