

CONTRIBUTION OF RUNNING ACTIVITIES TO QUALITY OF LIFE: THE ROLE OF EVENT PARTICIPATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL INVOLVEMENT, AND BEHAVIORAL INVOLVEMENT

Mikihiro Sato, Jeremy Jordan, Daniel Funk
Temple University
mikihiro.sato@temple.edu

Keywords

physically active leisure, quality of life, involvement, sport events, running

Aim

Participation in mass participant sport events (MPSE) has increased over the last decade. In Europe, the number of marathon finishers has increased steadily since 2000, with nearly 20 million European runners completing a marathon during this time (Counsell, 2010; Van Bottenburg, 2009). MPSEs represent a population-based intervention that has the capacity to increase physical activity, which plays an integral role in enhancing quality of life (QOL). Accordingly, MPSEs may serve as a catalyst to improve QOL for the growing event participants. The purpose of this study was to examine whether event participation, psychological involvement, and behavioral involvement could be associated with increased QOL.

Theoretical Background

QOL refers to individuals' perception of their position in life, and has been operationalized by assessing their satisfaction with various life domains. Positive psychology researchers suggest that three pathways of pleasure, engagement, and meaning could promote people's QOL (Peterson et al., 2005). MPSEs facilitate goal-directed purposeful behavior by allowing various motives to be satiated through event participation (Funk et al., 2011). A positive event experience may also promote participants' perceptions toward their lives. MPSEs could influence participants' behaviors and attitudes during event preparation, event participation, and postevent reflection (Funk et al., 2011). Hence, if MPSEs provide participants with more pleasant, engaged, and meaningful experiences, these experiences would spill over into daily life and promote QOL.

Given that the assessment of QOL is multidimensional, individuals may assess contributions of running activities (e.g., event participation, organized and unstructured physically active leisure) to various life domains differently. Therefore, this study first explored the relationship between running activities and QOL, which is labeled *Running QOL*. Next, the influence of event participation, psychological involvement, and behavioral involvement on Running QOL was examined.

Methodology

Participants were recruited through a survey panel from a 10-mile running event held in the U.S. The panel consisted of 4,175 members who participated in the 2011 event and indicated a willingness to be part of future research on running. A total of 1,162 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 28%. Demographic analysis revealed that participants were affluent, well-educated, and predominantly Caucasian. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were female, and 71% indicated participation in the 2012 event. The questionnaire included eight items of life domain satisfaction (e.g., social life, health: 11-point scale) and three items of psychological involvement (7-point scale). Behavioral involvement was assessed by the average miles for running per week. Latent class analysis was employed to identify the number of groups of participants who have similar Running QOL based on eight life domain satisfaction items. Multinomial logistic regression was then used to investigate whether event participation, psychological involvement, and behavioral involvement were associated with Running QOL.

Results/Discussion

Latent class analysis revealed that three groups of Running QOL emerged: Low ($n = 235$), Moderate ($n = 592$), and High ($n = 335$). Regression results showed that event participation was not associated with Running QOL ($p > .05$). Individuals with higher psychological involvement were more likely to be classified into the High Running QOL group than Moderate and Low Running QOL groups ($p < .01$). Behavioral involvement was negative and significant for the High Running QOL group ($\beta = -.34, p < .01$) and the Moderate Running QOL group ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$) compared with the Low Running QOL group. These results suggested that when an individual increased running by 10 miles per week, the probability of being in the High Running QOL group decreased by 29% relative to the Low Running QOL group, and the probability of being in the Moderate Running QOL group decreased by 23% relative to the Low Running QOL group.

Results suggest that event participation itself may have limited influence on Running QOL. Although psychological involvement was positively associated with Running QOL, behavioral involvement was negatively associated with Running QOL. This finding suggests that individuals with higher behavioral involvement may experience constraints associated with various life domains in order to pursue their goals of event participation (Lamont et al., 2012), which may lower their Running QOL. MPSEs have the capacity to influence participants' behaviors and attitudes toward physical activities. These results indicated that the influence of event participation and behavioral involvement on Running QOL can increase if participants form psychological involvement. Event organizations and host communities should consider how they can leverage

MPSEs to promote participants' active lifestyles by forming their psychological involvement through event preparation and subsequent activity.

References

- Counsell, S. (2010). 2,500 years of the marathon; 20 million European marathon runners. Retrieved from <http://multivu.prnewswire.com/mnr/prne/asics/46288/>
- Funk, D., Jordan, J., Ridinger, L., & Kaplanidou, K. (2011). Capacity of mass participant sport events for the development of activity commitment and future exercise intention. *Leisure Sciences*, 33, 250–268.
- Lamont, M., Kennelly, M., & Wilson, E. (2012). Competing priorities as constraints in event travel careers. *Tourism Management*, 33, 1068–1079.
- Peterson, C., Park, N., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005). Orientations to happiness and life satisfaction: The full life versus the empty life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 6(1), 25–41.
- Van Bottenburg, M. (2009). *The European athletics and the mass participation event market*.
- Presented at the Mass Participation and Events Conference, Frankfurt, Germany. Retrieved from http://www.fidal.it/upload/files/GGG/Formazione/GGG_FRA_maarten_van_bottenburg.pdf