

THE MOTIVATION OF ULTRAMARATHON RUNNERS:  
A COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT AGE, GENDER AND  
RACE GROUPS

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Participating in ultramarathon footraces is a popular form of exercise for many South African long-distance runners, regardless of the competitive level of the athlete. The main purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the self-report reasons for participating in the sport. The secondary purpose of this study was to determine the effect of three demographic variables, namely gender, age, and race, on participative motives for ultramarathon running. The Motivations of Marathoners Scales (MOMS), which comprises of nine scales, was used as the principal psychometric instrument in determining reasons for running and assessing these variables. The sample consisted of 194 entrants of the 2003 City-to-City Heritage Day Ultramarathon. The results indicated that the three most important participative motives for ultramarathon running are health orientation, self-esteem, and personal goal achievement. Women are less concerned with competition, personal goal achievement, and recognition/approval than men are. With increasing age there is a decrease in importance of all the MOMS-scales, except for psychological coping, the importance of which increases over the years. The Black runners scored higher than the White runners did on eight of the nine MOMS-scales – psychological coping being the exception – with competition especially pronounced.

## OPSOMMING

Deelname aan ultramarathon padwedlope is 'n gewilde vorm van fisiese oefening vir talle Suid-Afrikaanse langafstand hardlopers, ongeag die vlak waarop die atleet kompeteer. Die hoofdoel van hierdie dissertasie was om die redes vir deelname aan die sport, soos verskaf deur die hardloper self, te ondersoek. Die sekondêre doel van hierdie studie was om die effek van drie demografiese veranderlikes, naamlik geslag, ouderdom, en ras, op die motiewe vir deelname aan ultramarathon padwedlope te bepaal. 'n Psigometriese instrument, die "Motivations of Marathoners Scales" (MOMS), bestaande uit nege skale, is aangewend om die redes vir deelname aan langafstand wedlope te identifiseer en om die invloed van die gemelde veranderlikes te beoordeel. Die steekproef het bestaan uit 194 deelnemers aan die 2003 City-to-City Erfenisdag Ultramarathon. Die resultate het aangedui dat die drie belangrikste redes vir deelname aan ultramarathon wedlope gesondheidsoorwegings, selfagting, en persoonlike doelwitverwesentliking is. Vir vroue is kompetisie, persoonlike doelwitverwesentliking, en erkenning/goedkeuring minder belangrik as vir mans. Met toename in ouderdom is daar 'n afname in die belangrikheid van al die MOMS-skale, behalwe vir sielkundige behartiging ("coping"), wat toeneem oor die jare heen. Swart hardlopers het agt van die nege MOMS-skale hoër aangeslaan as Wit hardlopers – sielkundige behartiging synde die uitsondering – met die beduidendste verskil op die kompetisieskaal.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
OPSOMMING	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1. Background	1
2. Goals	2
3. Overview	3
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Reasons for running in general	5
3. Reasons for long-distance running	8
4. Gender and reasons for running	15
5. Age and reasons for running	20
6. Race and reasons for running	23
7. Other studies on reasons for running	26
8. The Motivations of Marathoners Scales (MOMS)	31
9. Conclusion	41
CHAPTER 3: METHOD	43
1. Introduction	43
2. The participants	43
3. The instrument	44

3.1 Part I: Personal particulars	44
3.2 Part II: Training habits and running history	44
3.3 Part III: The Motivations of Marathoners Scales (MOMS)	44
4. Procedure	46
5. Relevant demographic particulars of the participants	46
6. Running histories and training habits of the participants	47
7. Statistical analysis	49
8. Conclusion	50
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS	51
1. Introduction	51
2. The MOMS-scores	51
3. Relations between the MOMS-scores	52
4. The relation between gender and MOMS-scores	54
5. The relation between age and MOMS-scores	55
6. The relation between race and MOMS-scores	56
7. Conclusion	57
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	58
1. Introduction	58
2. Alternative model for the MOMS	58
3. Participative motives	58
4. Gender and reasons for running an ultramarathon	60
5. Age and reasons for running an ultramarathon	61
6. Race and reasons for running an ultramarathon	63
7. Limitations and recommendations	64
8. Conclusion	65
REFERENCES	66
APPENDIX: COVERING LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE	

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
2.1 Percentage distribution of reasons for running a marathon according to gender and age	11
2.2 Percentage distribution of reasons for initial and continued involvement in running	14
2.3 Reasons for running and mean scores for men and women	18
2.4 Characteristics of marathoners aged 60 or older	21
2.5 Master runners' reasons for initial and current running	22
2.6 Frequency percentages of reasons for running marathons according to culture and gender	25
2.7 Characteristics of blue- and white-collar runners	27
2.8 Descriptive information of different sport and exercise groups	30
2.9 Means and standard deviations of MOMS-scores for marathon runners with different levels of experience	35
2.10 Mean MOMS-scores according to race distance and gender	36
2.11 Means and standard deviations of MOMS-scores for older and younger marathon runners	38
2.12 Mean MOMS-scores for marathon and ultramarathon runners according to age	39
2.13 Mean MOMS-scores according to cluster group membership	40
2.14 Characteristics of the different cluster groups	41
3.1 Summary of the MOMS	45
3.2 Number of items and alpha coefficients for the MOMS-scales obtained in the original and present studies	45
3.3 Frequency and percentage distribution according to age category	46
3.4 Frequency and percentage distribution according to marital status	47
3.5 Frequency and percentage distribution according to ethnic group	47

3.6	Frequency and percentage distribution according to period involved in races	47
3.7	Frequency and percentage distribution according to marathons completed	48
3.8	Frequency and percentage distribution according to best marathon times	48
3.9	Frequency and percentage distribution according to ultramarathons completed	48
3.10	Frequency and percentage distribution according to training distance per week	49
3.11	Frequency and percentage distribution according to running partners	49
4.1	Means and standard deviations of MOMS-scores	51
4.2	Correlation matrix of the MOMS-scales	52
4.3	Direct oblimin rotated factor pattern matrix	53
4.4	Factor correlation matrix	53
4.5	Means and standard deviations of MOMS-scores for men and women	54
4.6	Means and standard deviations of MOMS-scores for different age groups	55
4.7	Means and standard deviations of MOMS-scores for the Black and White groups	57