



COMPETITIVE SPORT AND MOTIVATION

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Abstract

Human actions activities and behavior are determined by certain motives. Motives are psychological structures that trigger, sustain and direct an activity or behavior.

A person is never under the influence of a single motive or reason but he / she is under the influence of a motivational structure. The assembly of these motives which drive actions and behavior forms motivation.

In competitive sport, motivation has a definitive role because it is the base of continuous training and practice as close to the optimum as possible. Motivation in competitive sport must be viewed from an athlete perspective and his / her professional entourage (coaches, medics, psychologists, managers, etc.), as well as his / her social entourage (family, friends, etc.).

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Introduction

Motivation is a concept explained in various manners. The origin of the word is “movere”, from Latin which means something that rolls into motion. In literature this notion is focusing either on the individual or on the relationship between the individual and his / her environment.

Individual approach claims that a motivational force is inside the individual and depends on personal characteristics like needs, instincts, and personality traits. In the situational approach (individual + environment), a behavior is also dependent on external factors such as his / her working environments, the nature of his / her work, the leadership style, etc.

Authors that support the first approach (Maslow, Alderfer, McClelland, Freud, etc.) define motivation like:

- The force that makes a human body to go from a dormant state into motion;
- Something that pushes an individual to act according to their needs;
- A state of tension which urges the body to act until tension is reduced or removed; (Epuran, 1990, p 121)

From this perspective, to motivate means:

- For psychoanalysts: fundamental pulsing strain;

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- For classical psychologists: getting in touch with fundamental needs;
- For medical psychologists: to reach certain impulses with which the individual as a child was impregnated in his / her family, at school and socially;
- For behavioral psychologists: biological stimulus which set off reflexes and instincts. (Golu, 2000, p. 198)

One can observe that motives just like motivation – creating action triggering conditions are considered outside the group and context of the individual and that motives only have individual causes. In conclusion, keeping in mind that motives are “aspects that urge to action”, and the behavior reflects all actions undertaken for achieving a purpose, we can say that motives determine an individual behavior.

Motivation functions:

- The energetic function (although not able to directly trigger a reaction, motivation has the role of general or specific activation, generating or reducing tensions and energies);
- The directional function, a condition of selectiveness by relation to the environment. Pieron defines a motive as an internal factor which chooses from all traits that a person has the one which needs to be updated;
- Human activity tuning and optimization (an internal condition of filtering between stimuli and reaction).

The structure of motivation:

A motive is an internal factor that triggers, sustains and directs an activity and has 2 functions: activation and behavior directing.

Motivation (as an internal factor) is conditioned on its purpose; the external factor only acts as a triggering mechanism in relation cu certain needs, desires and goals.

The range of human motivation can be described by the following notions: need, impulse, desire, intention, purpose, tendency, valence, expectation, wish and ideal.

A need influences specific internal states and often signals a lack or deficiency. A need can be primal or secondary. The primal ones are biological and cannot be altered: food, sleep, hygiene or psychological: security, affection and belonging. Secondary needs are shaped under the influence of socio-cultural factors: communication, success / performance, self-achievement, self-esteem, social recognition, etc.

An impulse resides in a hyper-activation of nerve centers (physically speaking) and a state of tension (psychologically speaking). An impulse is the dynamic and processed form of needs. For example, a certain level of sexual hormones in the blood stream leads to an increase in sexual urge.



A **desire** is a conscious need orientated towards its particular domain. For example: the desire to win a competition.

An **intention** marks the crossing from motives to purposes, projects and it signals the directed characteristic of motive.

A **purpose** is the mental prediction of a result. If a purpose is not reached, the mental tension will be maintained as an impulse to continue pursuit.

A **tendency** is the motivational factor which helps guide action in a certain way.

A **valence** is the property of an object, event or person to respond to a need or to fulfill a request. Valences are where subject and object meet. They can be positive (acting for fulfilling a purpose) or negative (barriers in achieving goals).

An **expectation** defines the result which an individual estimates he / she will get, starting from a realistic presumption. It is usually based on odds calculus.

A **wish** is a result desired by an individual, a hope, a standard which he / she aims to reach in a domain.

An **ideal** originates in a person or group system of values; it is a value option of long-term perspective which takes shape in an individual life.

To complete the picture which shows motivation, we must bring to light interests, which are very important in sports. Interests represent the tendency of giving attention to objects and to focus after a series of activities. What drives the interest for one or other sport? Interests! They are the motivational component of personality which manifest through positive, active and constant thinking towards activities, phenomena and it connects needs, motives, tendencies and purposes.

Cognitively speaking, the base point for motivation is the following equation:

Valence x Expectance = Motivation

If any of the factors equals 0, then the whole result, the motivation is 0 as well. Research shows that a typical success reaction is rising the expectance level, while in the case of a failure, this level drops.

Motivation can be divided in:

1. Under-motivation;
2. Over-motivation;
3. Optimal motivation.

Under-motivation must be avoided because methodology functions differently and it determines a decrease in performance. Another reason for which this must be avoided is that it creates a false expectation resulting in a superficial consideration of the problem.



Over-motivation functions in accordance to Yerkes's law which states it must also be avoided. According to this rule, there is an opposite relationship between levels of motivation and the characteristic for performance. Over-motivation is an anticipation, generated by overestimating the difficulty of the upcoming tasks.

Optimal motivation is a type of motivation considered to be superior to the other 2 described above because it fully allows task solving and it avoids falling to extremes. According to the science of neurophysiology, there is an optimum over-watch state, an optimum brain stimulation state, impulses and as a result the body will act to reach that equilibrium or to drop the levels of all 3 elements mentioned.

In everyday and social life and also in sports motivation is researched in two directions, reflected through the following questions:

- Why people choose to focus on one job and not another;
- Why people complete tasks with different degrees of intensity;
- Why certain individuals practice sport;
- What are the motives which make sportsman take part in competitions?

Mihai Epuran (1994, p 218) places all motives that make people practice sports in 3 big categories:

1. **The need for exercise**, to which completion ensures human mental and physical development. This need is more intense and diversified in childhood and teen periods. The dynamic impulse generated by this need gains in the teen period a certain organization and fuses itself in one's personality. From a toddler game to sport events there is a long distance but this dynamic impulse keeps intense. The need and wish to exercise are major factors present to all those who take part in high performance competitions;
2. **Emulation, the need for self-knowing** and risk taking are base motivational factors which direct a child or youngster to systematic sport practice. High performance sport success is also dependent on other factors: skills, attitudes, training and ambience;
3. **Gained motivational factors**, stereotypes formed by practicing sport – the habit of exercising, the tendency to a systematic and organized exercising session capable of motivating a person for practicing sport well over retiring from professional career.

Motivation in high competitive sport

In high competitive sport, motivation has been less connected to the directional functions and more tied to triggering ones. By studying the dynamics of athlete motivation, M. Vanek presents the following 4 stages:

1. General state where a child, teen or youngster is motivated by the need to exercise;
2. The differentiation stage in which choosing the a sport branch takes place;



3. The specialized preference stage where a sportsman has already obtained notable results in his / her chosen field by travelling on various motivational paths;
4. Motivational involution in which an athlete is recaptured by basic and secondary motivation (material gain, failure, injures, lack of cohesion, etc.)

Competitive sport needs effort and sacrifice that most of the time seem strange (repeated stress, ignoring states of mind, etc.). A question is born: what does performance sport offer in return for such endeavor?

The diversity of reasons for which young people practice sports has been noted by M. Bouet (1971, p. 137). The following table presents his conclusions:

Table 1

A. Movement needs	Need to spend energy Need for movement
B. Self-achievement	Self-achievement aspects Favorable self-achievement condition
C. Seeking compensation	Complementary and equilibrating Fatigue Replacements
D. Social tendencies	a) The need for status b) Belonging
E. Competition interest	a) Need for success b) The need to compare to others c) The need to oppose others d) Unforeseeable need e) The thrill of competing
F. The desire to win	a) Financial gain b) Self esteem c) Patriotism
G. The will to become a champion	a) Exigence b) Self-achievement c) Material gain d) Outside influence
H. Aggression and fighting spirit	a) Adversity b) Competitiveness
I. Love for nature	a) Fight against nature b) Admiring the nature
J. Risk	a) Life game b) The need to feel dangerous situations c) The need to show courage
K. Adventure drive	a) Unforeseeable wish b) The wish to solve close-call situations



As observed in table 1, the reasons for practicing different sports are complex and on multiple layers, being tightly connected to individual personality. Practicing competitive sport is due to a multitude of reasons and motivational structures.

We can classify reasons for practicing performance sport in the following way as well:

- Inner motivation – the pleasure given by the activity, the need for achievement, compensations, etc.
- Outer motivation – recognition, rewards, various satisfactions, curiosity.

We highlight the essential role of inner motivation for practicing competitive sport but also the gain of some outer motivational factors and their transformation into landmarks of inner motivation (being aware of own capacity of generating valuable actions).

When studying motivation in competitive sport we acknowledge the contribution of R.N. Singer in developing the concept of optimum motivation. There is a unique level of motivation for each person and for each motion task. In Singer's sport motivation analysis, 3 factors arise:

- The characteristics of the sport;
- The sportsman and his / her skills (for those with high anxiety and energy levels moderate motivational techniques are required and for those with low levels more intense measures are advised);
- The sport training program.

For completing the optimum motivation, Singer created "the impulse theory" and "reversed U theory".

The impulse theory signals a direct connection between motivation and performance. For simple movement tasks (swimming, running, cycling) the motivational intervention must be high and very high.

The "reversed U theory" is applied for all sports in which we encounter complex and very elaborate movement that requires smooth coordination and very high control over the body. In these case, high motivational actions can interrupt or disturb brain processes, lowering movement precision.

In conclusion, motivation is a base trait of practicing sports and also of obtaining sport performance, determined by both internal motivational factors and external. These factors depend on how basic needs are satisfied but also on external, social and learning factors act.

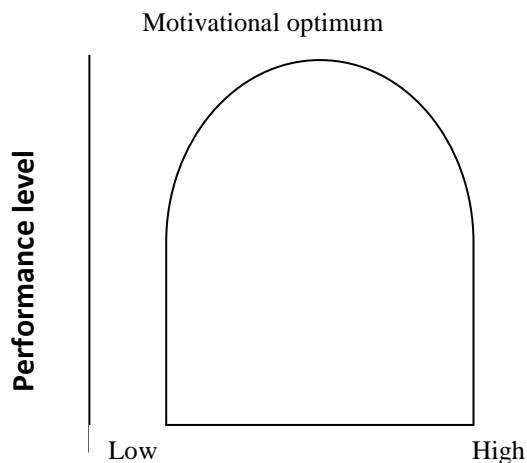


Figure 1 Motivational optimum - Singer

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