

Motivation and its implications in sports performance (Note I) Motivația și implicațiile acesteia în sportul de performanță (Nota I)

Ionela Alina Cucui, Gheorghe Gabriel Cucui
“Valahia” University of Târgoviște

Abstract

In addressing this theme, I started from the premise that motivation is a prerequisite to practicing sport and especially, for obtaining sport performance, driven by both internal motivational factors and external ones. These factors depend on the basic needs of human beings, but also external, social and educational factors.

In professional sports, motivation is a key factor in achieving athletic performance, without which athletes are unable to support the training effort to perfect their psychomotor abilities. Stimulating motivation remains an art that only the coach has the skill and ability to achieve.

Key words: motivation, training, performance.

Rezumat

În abordarea problematicii circumscrisei temei am plecat de la premisa că motivația reprezintă o condiție de bază a practicării sportului și mai ales, a obținerii de performanțe sportive, determinată atât de factorii motivaționali interni, cât și de cei externi. Acești factori depind de modul în care sunt trăite trebuințele de bază ale ființei umane, dar și de modul în care au acționat factorii externi, sociali și pedagogici.

În sportul de performanță motivația reprezintă un factor determinant în realizarea performanțelor sportive, fără de care sportivii nu ar reuși să facă față efortului din antrenamentul sportiv, în vederea perfecționării capacităților psihomotrice. Stimularea motivației rămâne o artă care ține de măiestria și harul antrenorului.

Cuvinte cheie: motivație, antrenament, performanță.

Introduction

The problem of the psychological preparation of athletes as part of training is of great interest, especially now when sports results are extremely high. Psychological preparation can acquire new meanings and perspectives and can be a challenge for the optimization of athletic performance. According to Epuran (2008), the psychological preparation of the athlete involves „all the strategies and techniques used in training and education to increase the mental ability and personality development of athletes, corresponding to the requirements of an event/sport, in order to achieve superior effects and results in training and competition” (Epuran 2008 cited by Mihăilescu & Cucui 2013).

In addressing this theme, we started from the premise that motivation is the process that governs the choices made by each individual athlete to achieve sports performance.

Motivation is expressed by a particular state of psychic tension based on the correlation between perception and thought. The foundation of motivation is represented by all needs and interests of athletic performance. Motivation determines focus and will, and energetically supports the efforts of training and participation in competitions (Mihăilescu et al., 2011).

Some authors say that motivation should be seen

as a „function of the relationship between effort and the perceived level of performance - on the one hand - and the expectation of reward (its size) - on the other hand” (Hellriegel et al., 1992).

Athletic performance is „motor performance achieved in an institutionalized social comparison context, which implies inequality in the distribution of rewards” (Teodorescu, 2006).

The studied literature considers that „human performance can be explained as a multiplicative factor of motivation and abilities/skills, $P = f(MXA)$ ” (Bologa & Gherghișan, 1994 cited by Haralambie & Mihăilescu, 2010).

Coaches and sports performance specialists seek various ways and means to increase the efficiency of athletes in competitions. Most of them have turned their attention to the development of exercise capacity. However, in the context of the current performance level, of the altitude and instability of performance, it is imperative to find other solutions. In this respect, we consider beneficial the intervention of specialists on the psyche of the athlete, who must be optimally motivated to cope with sports training and high level competitions.

Following documentation, we found that the

Received: 2014, February 10; Accepted for publication: 2014, March 15;

Address for correspondence: “Valahia” University of Târgoviște, Regele Carol I Blvd., No. 2, 130024, Târgoviște, Dâmbovița, Romania
E-mail: haralambicalina2008@yahoo.com

studied issues are still little addressed, although mental preparation in general and motivation in particular is a lever for achieving athletic performance. Studies have been developed regarding the screening of motivation of young athletes participating in competitions in relation to sex, age or the type of sport, the identification of the main reasons for sports practice depending on the athletes' performance level, the detection of the motivational task and its intensity, as well as negativity and self-confidence during the pre-competition period, the identification of the reason why some sports are practiced in universities, the motivation of physical exercise among the adolescent and elderly population (Amici et al., 2009; Campbell & Lioyd, 2006; Nepopalooov & Aleksandridi 2004; Coelho & Vasconcelos-Raposo, 2006; Rose et al., 2006; Pihu et al., 2006; Liang MY & Chun MC, 2004; Welde & Svebak, 2008 cited by Haralambie & Mihailescu, 2010).

The concept of motivation

The concept of motivation emerged only in the 20th century. The complexity of the concept of motivation as a psychological phenomenon prompted the interest of researchers in psychology (Mitchell, 1982; Hellriegel et al., 1992; Amici et al., 2009; Maslow, 2007).

According to Mitchell (1982), motivation is „all psychological processes that generate the initiation, direction and persistence of voluntary actions aiming to achieve objectives” (Mitchell, 1982 cited by Frățilă, 2004).

Motivation is defined in scientific psychology as „an internally exposed external causality” (Golu, 2005), „a system of impulses, incentives, internal pulsions, activations, tensions or motives of actions and behavior” (Popescu-Neveanu, 1978). Popescu (2009) considers that motivation is the subjective premise for the formation of an attitude, which is based on the needs that cause the individual to exhibit a certain behavior.

Motivation „is a state that energizes behavior and gives it direction” (Atkinson & Hilgard, 2005). Motivation „is self-directed; motivation actions have a purpose; motivated behavior is variable; there is an expectation of success in terms of motivated behaviors; there is a positive or negative incentive, a ”consuming” value of action” (Dempsey & Zimbardo cited by Pânișoară & Pânișoară, 2005).

Theories of motivation

Motivation should not be considered and interpreted only as an end in itself, but as a means for obtaining high performance. Performance is a higher level of goal achievement. In this context, the relationship between motivation and performance has not only a theoretical but also a practical importance.

The athlete conduct is explained based on psychological factors by means of motivation theories.

Motivation theories are advanced in scientific psychology in different forms, influenced by human behavior: *the theory of instinct, impulse, theories focused on physiological needs with a new socio-biological dimension, the theory focused on psychological needs, purpose focused theories, or process theories that explain rather the process following which motivation appears; theories that support the role of social factors in influencing*

behavior.

One of the most popular theories is *Maslow's theory* (1943), which is based on the idea that human needs act at multiple different levels, from lower levels to higher levels.

This model theory states that people tend to progressively meet their needs, first on a lower level, and subsequently on a higher level. There are authors (Guest, 1984, cited by Bogathy, 2004) who argue that Maslow's theory is not fully justified to be supported and that it would be disadvantaged by the rigidity of its conception.

Another theory is *Herzberg's bifactorial theory*, which is based on the premise that human life is conducted on two different levels: *physical and psychological*. According to this theory, motivation occurs under the influence of motivating factors and hygiene factors. The factors that determine satisfaction are *motivators* (motivating factors), while factors that cause dissatisfaction are called *hygiene factors*. Motivating factors refer to the essence of activity, and hygiene factors relate to the environment in which an individual performs (Duică, 2008).

During the course of time, a number of specialists have exposed their opinions on motivation theories, opinions that supported existing ones and were in turn completed. Of these, we mention the expectancy theory and the goal theory.

The *expectancy theory* developed by Vroom (1964) assumes that motivation is the process that governs individual choices among various possibilities. The main idea of the theory is that people's choices are influenced by the expected results of their choice.

The relevance of this theory in high performance sport comes from the fact that effort during sports training is rarely an end in itself; beyond the objectives of a training session, the effort is aimed at reaching other goals. The training of athletes would be a first level goal allowing to reach the second level goals that depend on the athlete's needs, for the achievement of the proposed objectives in the competitions to come.

The theory is based on three variables: *valence, expectancy and instrumentality*, considered to form the „infrastructural level of motivation” (Mamali, 1981). *Valence* is the strength of an individual's desire to achieve second level goals, and *expectancy* is defined as the perceived likelihood of what can be achieved in the future in terms of satisfaction of needs and desires. Choosing a first level goal depends on the supposed relationship with the results expected from the second level.

Instrumentality is the association of first level and second level goals and expresses the extent to which that need is really met (second level goal). Valence is a predominantly affective dimension, expectancy is predominantly cognitive, and instrumentality is predominantly actional; these dimensions may include these features themselves. According to them, it can be said that athletes adjust their own behavior depending on their expectations and to the probable link perceived between the goals.

The relevance of this theory at an organizational level is illustrated by House's theory (1971), according to which in order to induce a particular behavior, the manager/coach must act on one of the three variables (House, 1971, cited by Ciucurel, 2008).

Therefore, according to this theory adapted to sport, it can be said that the coach is the one who must come up with a strategy to support the athlete to correct his deficiencies in terms of valence, expectancy and instrumentality, as follows:

- if expectancy is deficient, the coach must encourage the athlete and help him think positively, stimulating him with material or spiritual rewards, even when the athlete's results are disappointing or less than expected. Of course, the approach of this strategy largely depends on the coach's view;

- if instrumentality is reduced, the coach needs to establish links between second level and first level goals. This type of strategy has an equal chance of being adopted by the majority of the coaches.

- in the case of a weak valence, the coach proposes second level goals that are desirable for the individual and acceptable for the sports club or FRA.

Locke's goal theory (1990) shows that goals also guide behavior and influence performance. People who set themselves a specific goal have better performance than those without a fixed goal or with a vague goal. Managerial implications show that this theory is seen more as a motivation strategy than as a formal theory of motivation. This strategy involves the identification of goals that ensure a high level of performance; the setting of goals at a competitive but realistic level; the need for feed-back, etc.

The relevance of this theory in sport performance is reflected by the development of the annual training plan; the coach together with the athlete plan the training and performance objectives, establishing the training strategy to obtain maximum performance in the major goal competition.

In terms of explaining the behavior of individuals on the basis of psychological factors, psychology proposes the *achievement motivation theory* developed by Murray (1938), which expresses a secondary psychogenic need that makes an individual execute something difficult, dominate, manipulate things, people, overcome obstacles, achieve a high level and excel (Murray, 1938 cited by Teodorescu, 2006).

According to theorists, achievement motivation is based on three theories (Weinberg & Gould, 1995):

- a) *the need for achievement theory*, which considers that achievement motivation is influenced by personality factors, situational factors, trends, emotional reactions, and achievement behavior as a result of the interaction of the four mentioned factors.

- b) *the attribution theory* refers to the cognitive process by which individuals perceive and explain their own behavior (self-attribution) or the behavior of others (hetero-attribution) in everyday life.

The relevance of this theory in high performance sport highlights the possibility of explaining success and the factors contributing to performance. The following may contribute to a certain performance of an athlete: internal factors (the athlete's talent or skills), external factors (chance, the coach's skill), internal causes (special effort or injury sequelae), external causes (convenient opponents or poor organizational conditions), factors that can be controlled (tactical plan or the athlete's disinterest), and

factors that cannot be controlled (training of opponents or absence of the need for optimal training).

c) *the goal attainment theory*

The prerequisite of this theory is the need to understand the meaning that success or failure has for an individual. The optimal way to find the answer to this question is to examine how the athlete achieves the proposed goal and how he is influenced by the perception of his own abilities or skills (Teodorescu, 2006).

Structure of motivation

The *structure of motivation* is composed of all the motives that stimulate human behavior. It is necessary to know that a person's motivation for an action does not lie in the presence of a certain motive, but in the hierarchization of all the motives, which results in the actual form and structure of motivation. The motivation area includes phenomena such as: needs, impulses, intentions, tendencies, interests, ideals, expectations, aspirations, values. These phenomena lead to the emergence of reason.

Motive "is the cause, the reason of an action, an impulse that drives action; it is mobile, a momentum, an impulse, a goal, an objective" (***, 2005). Actions are always based on a motive, it is the motive that launches action and triggers the performance of actions in direct relation to the motivated program. Motive "is force, a need, a specific desire that energizes and directs behavior towards a purpose" (Morris, 1990, quoted by Pânișoară & Pânișoară, 2005).

The motives of sports activity are extremely *varied*, being sometimes found in one and the same person, who has in this way a richer motivation for sports activity. Motives are *dynamic*, they change, so that the same activity acquires very different motivations over time.

Motive is an internal factor that triggers, supports and directs an activity and has two functions: activation or energy mobilization, and behavior channeling.

Motivation (an internal factor) is conditioned by its object; the external factor has a triggering effect only in relation to specific needs, desires, aspirations. It is considered that external factors are interwoven with internal factors causing the self-regulation, adaptation of individuals, so that they act spontaneously and on their own based on their motives (Mihăilescu et al., 2012).

High performance sport requires effort and sacrifices which often seem incomprehensible (activities at the limit of biological and psychological tolerance, repeated stressful situations, temporary deprivation of natural needs, etc.). All this leads to a simple question: What does high performance sport offer to compensate for so many shortcomings?

The motives underlying the determination of an athlete's activity are different (Bouet, 1969, cited by Epuran et al., 2000) (Table I).

Motivation for high performance sport can be triggered by various motives depending on the individual, on his/her aspirations, personality, level of development, training, and there can be various motives, but they cannot be reduced to any of the factors that determine and influence them.

Table I
Various motives for sports activity

Motor needs	Need to spend energy Need to exercise
Self-assertion	Aspects of self-assertion Favorable conditions for self-assertion
Seeking compensation	Complementary and balancing For overcoming For substitutions
Social trends	Need for affiliation Desire for integration
Interest in competition	Need for success Need to compare with others Need to oppose another Desire for the unexpected Pleasure of feeling the tension of competition
Desire to win	Desire of possession Desire for self-assertion Patriotism
Aspiration to become a champion	Exigency Self-assertion Material interests Influence of others
Aggression and combativeness	Adversity Combativeness
Taste of risk	Game of life Need to experience dangerous situations Desire to show courage
Attraction to adventure	Desire for the unexpected Desire to solve crisis situations
Love for nature	Fight against nature Contemplation of nature

Motivation and its importance in achieving athletic performance

Motivation for sport takes different aspects because sport itself is differentiated by levels of performance, but also because sport is practiced by people of different ages. The importance of motivation in obtaining athletic performance is largely determined by the stage of training of the athlete, the athlete's involvement in the activity, the importance of the competition, and the athlete's physical, technical and mental abilities.

Performance motivation underlies any effective activity and is the most important factor for the mobilization of human capacity, which is why it can be considered the most required adjustment factor in sport.

So, performance motivation and necessity are an effective component of praxis, of behavior directed towards performance. Achievement motivation is involved. Thus, performance motivation is recognized as a process, as a dynamic function regulating both sports activity and human behavior, plus environmental factors perceived as stimuli. To highlight the important role of performance motivation in relation to performance conduct, a correlation with positive attitudes towards work and effort, including the effort of sports training and competitions, should be established.

Any behavior is inextricably linked to motivation and any attitude expressed by a particular behavior has motivational support. Motivated behavior has a great power of expression, so that any obstacle or difficult problems arising in the way of sports performance are removed and resolved.

Sports performance can be influenced by the intensity of motivation, as it is known that optimally motivated athletes generally tend to achieve better performance. So,

motivation is one of the factors that contribute to individual athletic performance; along with motivation, performance is heavily influenced by the level of skills, abilities, biomotor qualities, by the understanding of objectives and the opportunity to achieve remarkable results.

Motivation determines focus and will, and energetically supports the efforts of training and participation in competitions. Motivation is based on the beliefs, ideals and pursuit of high performance.

As part of motivation, *beliefs* determine the steady and firm adherence to the requirements and sacrifices of high performance sport, they generate rational self-discipline and contribute to the *ideal of sporting excellence*. The sporting ideal determines the understanding of sports performance in relation to its social values. The performance ideal influences lifestyle based on increasingly higher internalized values. The performance ideal and the pursuit of maximum performance are cultivated in preadolescence and adolescence, and will dominate the personality of the mature athlete, thus ensuring a continuous and strong motivational source.

Motivation is the result, the consequence of the interaction between the individual, the task to be fulfilled, and the organizational environment. It is "the extent to which persistent effort is directed towards the achievement of a goal" (Johns, 1996, cited by Preda, 2006).

In high performance sport, motivation plays a decisive role because it underlies the continuity of sports training and its performance at a close to optimal level. This must be seen from the point of view of athletes, of their professional entourage (trainers, physician, psychologist, manager, etc.), as well as of their social entourage (family, friends, etc.).

The approach from the perspective of the individual claims that the motivating force is inherent to the individual and depends on personal characteristics such as needs, impulses, instincts, personality traits. In the situational perspective (individual + environment), behavior depends on factors exterior to the individual, i.e. the work environment, nature of work, leadership of superiors, etc.

Motivation refers to the fact that behavioral acts do not occur without a cause, at their origin there is always a number of internal causes that drive action and support it energetically; motivation explains why a behavioral act can have different meanings for different subjects.

Conclusions

1. Motivation is "what drives action" and behavior reflects the actions taken to achieve goals, so, motivations determine individual behavior.

2. Motivation is a prerequisite of sports practice and especially, of sports performance, determined both by internal and external motivational factors. These factors depend on how the basic needs of human beings are experienced, but also on the action of external, social and educational factors.

3. In high performance sport, motivation is a key factor for achieving athletic performance, without which athletes would not be determined to cope with the sports training effort in order to improve their psychomotor abilities. Stimulating motivation remains an art that depends on the

skill and gift of the coach.

4. Sports performance can be influenced by the intensity of motivation, as it is known that optimally motivated athletes generally tend to achieve better performance. So, motivation is one of the factors that contribute to individual athletic performance; along with motivation, performance is strongly influenced by the athlete's skills, abilities, biomotor qualities, by the understanding of objectives and the opportunity to achieve remarkable results.

Conflicts of interests

There is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

This article is theoretical grounding; an original article will be published in the future.

References

- Amici S, De Pero R, Piacentini M, Capranica L. Motivation for sport in young Italian competitive athletes. Oslo, Norway, 2009, 24-27, 209-210.
- Atkinson R, & Hilgard E. Introducere în psihologie, ediția a XIV. Ed. Tehnică, București, 2005, 507.
- Bogathy Z. Manual de psihologia muncii și organizațională. Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2004, 93.
- Bologa M, Gherghișan D. Posibilități de cuantificare a motivației în activitatea sportivă. Vol. Simpozionul Științific Național „Pregătirea sportivilor de înaltă performanță” București, Conferința Consiliului Științei Sportului, 1994, 119-125.
- Campbell R, Lloyd S. Factors underlying participation motivation of youth hockey players within a club setting. A comparative study, 11-th annual Congress of the European College OF Sport Science. Lausanne, 2006, 166.
- Ciucurel M. Psihologie organizațională aplicată. Suport de curs. Ed. Universității din Pitești, 2008, 68.
- Coelho E, Vasconcelos-Raposo J. Motivational orientations and intensity of negativity and self-confidence in elite Portuguese athletes of individual sports. 13-th Annual Congress of the European College of Sport Science. Estoril-Portugal, 2006, 428.
- Duică A. Management. Ed. Bibliotheca, Târgoviște, 2008, 147.
- Epuran M, Holdevici I, Tonița F. Psihologia sportului de performanță: Teorie și practică. Ed. FEST, București, 2008.
- Frățilă C. Comportament organizațional. Ed. Fundației pentru Studii Europene, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, 139.
- Golu M. Bazele psihologiei generale. Ed. Universitară, București, 2005, 572.
- Haralambie A. Posibilități de optimizare a nivelului motivațional al atleților de performanță. Teză de doctorat. Universitatea din Pitești, 2010.
- Haralambie A, Mihăilescu L. Research concerning the motivation's quantification for performance athletes. Citius Altius Fortius, J Phys Educ Sport, the University of Pitești, 2010; 27(2):79-85.
- Hellriegel D, Slocum JW, Woodman RW. Organizational Behaviour, 6th ed. West Publishing Company, New York, 1992.
- Locke EA, Latham GP. A Theory of Goal Setting & Task Performance, Prentice Hall, 1990.
- Liang MY, Chun MC. The differences of motivation and a attitude toward exercise among different levels of athletic participation. Pre-Olympic Congress. Sport science through the ages. Thessaloniki, Hellas, 2004.
- Maslow A. A theory of human motivation, Psychological Review, 1943;50(4):370-396.
- Maslow A. Motivație și personalitate. Ed. Trei, București, 2007.
- Mamali C. Balanță motivațională și coevoluție. Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1981, 161.
- Mihăilescu L, Haralambie A, Mihăilescu N, Mihăilescu L. Determining the motivations featurea formative stages athletics. Gymnasium. J Phys Educ & Sports, 2011; 12(1):142-147.
- Mihăilescu L, Haralambie A, Mihăilescu L, Mihăilescu N. The quantification of the motivational level of the performance athletes, “3rd World Conference on Psychology, Counseling and Guidance, WCPCG-2012”. 2012; 29-33, 84 of Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences on Science Direct.
- Mihăilescu L, Cucui A. Contributions to the identification of personality traits in athletes. The International Conference “Psychology and the realities of the contemporary world” third edition, 18-20 october 2013, Bucharest, Romania.
- Mitchell T. Motivation: New Direction for Theory. Research and Practice. Academy of Management Review, 1982;7(1):80-88.
- Murray HA. Explorations in Personality. New York: Oxford University Press, 1938.
- Nepopaloo V, Aleksandridi D. Motivational sphere of personality of athletes practicing. Pre-Olympic Congress. Sport science through the ages. Thessaloniki. Hellas. Aristotle University Campus, 2004, II, 8.
- Pânișoară I, Pânișoară A. Motivarea eficientă. Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2005, 23.
- Popescu G. Psihologia creativității. Ed. Fundației România de Măine, București, 2009, 37.
- Popescu-Neveanu P. Dicționar de psihologie. Ed. Albatros, București, 1978, 464.
- Preda M. Comportament organizațional. Teorii, exerciții și studii de caz. Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2006, 107.
- Pihu M, Hein V, Koka A. The processes by which perceived teacher behavior in physical education promotes leisure time physical activity behavior a trans-contextual model. 11-th annual Congress of the European College OF Sport Science, Lausanne, 2006, 160.
- Rose E, Stewart A, Cox K, Puddey I. The relationship between athletic self-perceptions, exercise motivation, autonomy, social connect-edness, and physical activity in older adults. 11-th annual Congress of the European College OF Sport Science, Lausanne, 2006, 30.
- Teodorescu S. Teoria antrenamentului și competiției. Ed. ANEFS, București, 2006, 7, 137-138, 142.
- Vroom V. Work and Motivation. New York, NY: Wiley, 1964.
- Welde B, Svebak S. The significance of motivational styles and resistance training in elite junior cross-country ski performance. 13-th Annual Congress of the European College of Sport Science. Estoril-Portugal, 2008, 664.
- Weinberg SR, Gould D. Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology. Champaign, Illinois, Human Kinetics, 1995.
- ***. Dex, Ed. Universul Enciclopedic, București, 2005, 571.