

MOTIVATION AND SPORT: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Motivation is nowadays a key factor for success in both professional and social contexts. Trust, effectiveness and creativity can support individual and organizational performance if based on regularly practiced sport and physical education. The present paper explores the role of motivation for humans and organizations engaged in diverse sport settings, considering that they represent entities facing numerous challenges. In what way can we then think of internal and external motivation as contributing to the role of sport and physical education? Are recent studies bringing new evidence in this direction when compared to well-established theories? Or do we note significant changes in the last couple of years? This paper mainly looks at examples extracted from European practice, while presenting a few differences specific to other cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: *motivation, sport, physical education, relationships, development, practice.*

Introduction

Education and physical education stand as a key area of change, best practice across various age levels. Moreover, numerous professional organisations and NGOs value the role of sport and physical education as contributing to the benefit of workers, no matter the area they operate in. During adolescence and early adulthood, lots of physical, social,

psychological and structural variations take place in the life of most individuals, the outcome being considerable challenges followed by adaptation and sometimes abrupt or slow changes. Sports can be found in everyday life of persons of all ages, and, besides being a recreational activity that individuals can participate actively or passively, sports may influence individuals' life given the changes in food and leisure habits. Regular physical activity in childhood and adolescence supports strength and endurance, sustains healthy bones and muscles, control of body weight, decreases anxiety and stress, increases self-esteem, and may improve blood circulation and cholesterol levels.

Motivation, simply defined, is the ability to initiate and continue performing a given task. Even among motivation researchers, motivation is defined broadly by some, and narrowly by others, so that the term is useless as an organizing construct. When discussing motivation in relation with sport or physical activity, both beginners as well as experienced athletes are fully aware that they need to maintain their efforts until the full accomplishments of set goals. As a result, motivation in sport plays a role since it can:

- a) Overcome fatigue, boredom, pain and the willingness to give up/engage in other activities;
- b) Impact all human activities, including sport performance such as: physical conditioning, technical and tactical training, mental preparation, and general lifestyle including sleep, diet, school or work, and personal relationships.

Specific literature reviews have been selected to help demonstrate the need for expanded research on this topic. Motivation clearly influences an individual's performance in situations where a person is physically capable of performing the task but is uncertain about his/her skills, which in many cases turns into a difficulty driving people away from a chosen sports activity. Benefits of sport participation include self-believe, promoting virtues, excitation management and control in sport, better behaviour in school, reduction of health problems, lower rate of school abandoning and addiction. In general terms, motivation refers to the intensity and direction of behaviour. Ultimately, it always

essentially means whether or not someone expects they will be successful when they attempt a particular skill. For many researchers, the concept of “motivation” is essentially linked to that of other terms such as: “effort”, “desire”, “interest”, “wish”, “expectation”, “success” or “goal” (Anders, Mrazek Norden, Weiss 2004, p. 70). Researchers have thus suggested that motivation covers a wide range of reasons when analysing the reasons of practicing a particular sport, be it either a personality-derived factor or a situational one, such as the circumstances or social elements acting as catalysts for the subject to decide that sport is ultimately a beneficial activity in his/her life. In what regards the role of motivation, it has raised as a prime factor of leading success in the last couple of years, ensuring long term activity for those engaged in physical education, be them instructors, coaches or students. The objective of this investigation is to analyse the state of art of the factors which influence the engagement in physical activities and sport practice.

According to Rheinberg (2000), motivation can be looked at as both a narrow, as well as a wider-defined concept. In his opinion, the narrow understanding of motivations relates to the ability of the individual to perform certain activities. When individuals feel that their performance is valuable, therefore good if not outstanding, their motivation to continue grows. On the contrary, if the performance is poor or not so well regarded, by themselves as well as outsiders, the motivation of the performer to continue will dramatically decrease. If this dissatisfaction continues, the performer may either suspend the activity on a given interval, or completely give it up. In this case, motivation relies on the variation between “action” and “outcome” where expectancy plays a major role. The second understanding of the concept relates a broader perspective, where motivation represents the ability of an individual, coupled by willingness, to participate in various activities. Rheinberg therefore advanced the concept of “self-regulated learning” (SRL) as intentional learning activities assumed by a person, where motivation and volition are regarded as independent or mediating variables. Ustun (2018) adds supplementary theoretical contributions in the literature review, along the familiar intrinsic and extrinsic coordinates. When referring to intrinsic factors, Ustun lists variables such as fun, personal challenge and

personal affiliation. Extrinsic motivation relates, in his view, to factors including weight loss, improving physical appearance, or even pleasing others.

The motivation to participate in a sport is one of the topics of interest to researchers in the field of sport psychology. In his article dedicated to the analysis of behaviour as well as motivation seen as voiced in a motivational climate, Van Puyenbroeck, Stouten and Vande Broek (2018, p. 820) explicitly mention: "Individuals' conceptualization and criteria to assess competence, and their beliefs and values regarding the appropriate behaviours to reach success (i.e., their goal orientation) determine their actions in achievement related settings." The following sections detail connections between motivation, sport and student participation, observations coming out from Romanian practice and other recent studies in the field. This examination of motivation aims to stimulate information and academic debate about sport motivation from a variety of levels and perspectives. Considering these outlines, the purpose of this paper starts from the following series of questions: In what way can we then think of internal and external motivation as contributing to the role of sport and physical education? Are recent studies bringing new evidence in this direction when compared to well-established theories? Or do we note significant changes in the last couple of years? This article aims to examine motivation when linked to student participation, listing some of the key elements impacting it. Moreover, recent studies complement the theoretical considerations, while the conclusion outlines areas for further debate.

Motivation, sport and student participation

Enjoying high self-esteem and being socially accepted represent key factors playing a positive role in one's perception upon school, including better academic performance. These behaviours might change through time due to the fact that both internal and external factors might affect the personal interests or desires for carrying out a determined task. While the benefits from sports participation are noteworthy, the academic benefits

can also address efforts to address the gap between education and physical education. Academic achievement and its predictors have been an essential and recurrent topic for educational researchers and policymakers for many decades, including European countries among other nations as well. Participation in sports also has other benefits that may increase academic achievement. Sport psychologists have studied various types of motivation with specific terms such as internal, external, success and competitive motivations. Although motivation is mainly connected to theories and factors predominantly being discussed in social sciences, its emergence in behaviour and activity patterns relates to both quantitative and qualitative research. Cucui and Cucui (2014) address the topic of motivation particularly in terms of sport performance.

There are many reasons why individuals are motivated to participate in sports. For athletes to participate in and keep up exercise, investigating the participation motivation of athletes is necessary. Therefore, studies carried in the last couple of years put forward substantially-valuable information in what concerns opportunities, perceptions, expectations and participation and life balance. Lots of studies have been conducted to identify reasons for participating in physical activity and potential barriers to being physically active in adolescence and young adulthood. The study of motivation and its effect on achievement behaviour is the investigation of the energization, direction, and regulation of behaviour. The motives behind people willing to join recreational sports could go into one of the four categories listed below:

- a) Physical health;
- b) Mental health;
- c) Aesthetic factors;
- d) Social-psychological factors;
- e) A combination of factors from those listed above;
- f) Absence of all factors listed above, implying a-motivation.

Individuals may differ in their motivational orientations, outside influences, and interpersonal perceptions. Physical activity has many benefits for health, social and physical reasons. Research on physical education and sport has included interventions that

focus on encouraging individuals to establish habits for regular exercise practice. Evidences show that parents, teachers of physical education, coaches, peers, cultural, economic differences and social inclinations also affect goal-orientation and sport participation motivation of athletes/students. Dumitrescu and Aducovschi (2014) have identified relevant data for Romanian students: the authors have specifically investigated the amount of time spent by students in the University of Bucharest to sporting activities for a total of 220 students. University students represent a specific group in this higher education institution as they are particularly affected by changing (structural) life circumstances at the beginning of their studies. Many students show a sedentary behaviour (being satisfied with attending university classes only), while physical activities are theoretically considered to play an important role because they know that their future life will depend on their present habits and activities.

Achievement motivation is understood as a concept that helps to explain the differences in the individual behaviour and actions of people in various areas of life. In their research, Dumitrescu and Aducovschi followed the observation that generally speaking, Romanian students do not manifest a constant wish to engage in sport, although the higher educational curricula provides opportunities in various disciplines. The level of achievement motivation is positively affected by the frequency and level of sports activity. However, most students indicate that their amount of free time oscillate between 3 and 4 hours per day. In what regards the question "Do you practice sports activities in your free time?," students have showed their preference for physical exercise, since 67.28% answered positively and only 32.71% rejected this option. Respondents expressed a strong preference for activities such as jogging, followed by aerobics/fitness and skateboard/cycling, many of them thoroughly enjoying a team option. When the respondents less or not interested in sport were asked what their reasons are for this option, the motivational factors appears as holding a meaningful role: time appears as an objective factor (27.10%), but in fact it suggests a low internal motivation. Proximity is ranked next, raising at 21.49%, while companionship reaches 14.95%, and pure lack of interest 3.73%. For many students, sports team participation is the major channel by

which they are physically active, and several studies suggest that participation in sports teams is also associated with better academic outcomes.

In the recent study carried out by Puyenbroeck, Stouten and Vande Broek (2018, p. 824-5), the practical implications of destructive feedback have emerged in a minutely carried out study involving 32 basketball players and 104 volleyball players whose average age was in between 22-23, while the experience in sport raised to over 14 years. For the authors, feedback, more precisely negative feedback appears as a factor which requires for the constant attention of coaches or trainers: "In order to manage the amount of players' destructive voice about the coach, coaches should limit the continuing presence of a focus on outperforming others, winning and demonstrating superiority. Although such a focus might be – at least to some extent – characteristic for competitive sports, coaches should create a stable climate in which cooperation is encouraged and that measures success by controllable processes such as self-referenced and measurable goals in combination with effort. This approach is a sustainable manner to manage negative voice." One of the conclusions drawn from their research indicates that coaches should prevent feedback focusing on players who demonstrate their superiority during the game and that, in order to enhance motivation and results, they need to create a stable climate, and finding ways for all players to improve and develop their sport skills. The study thus points out that while topical feedback may alert the players to a particular situation, a stable and favourable emotional climate supports them on the long-term as a group.

Such findings indicate considerable change in the ratio of physical activity and sport participation during the transition from high school to university. In the case of 280 students from Turkey, Ustun pointed out to differences notable between those who practise football, basketball and volleyball (2018, p. 13-17). For the students included in this study, motivation depends on success, physical fitness, skills development, and level of activity. However, in terms of linking motivation to team spirit, the differences were rather insignificant.

Factors impacting personal motivation

These findings show that there is a direct correlation between participation in sports and academic success. Cucui and Cucui (2014, p.70) expand on the structure of motivation, revealing its diverse and dynamic nature, as follows:

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

Sports motivation covers affirmation and competition, both contributing to extrinsic motivation and sociability and playing to the limit, which are factors contributing to intrinsic motivation. It is therefore important to identify the factors that motivate the students to improve their academic performance and also determine the reasons for athletic motivation. Where does motivation stand in Romania, when looking at data coming out from recent surveys? An interesting case comes from a study carried out by Ivox for CEZ Romania. This study has been carried out as an online-based research during 19-23 April 2018, and has included a representative number of 1.123 respondents. The results are the following: generally speaking, less than 50% of Romanians do not practise any sport but those who engage in such activities do it regularly, about once or twice a week.

Most respondents have started doing it when aged 16 (41%), which is also the age when they start participating in sports events or competitions.

The factors contributing to their constant engagement in sport are the following:

1. Events popularity and proximity. Once such example comes from Maratonul Olteniei, a sport event organised by CEZ Romania. Participants have expressed their willingness to travel outside their residence area, as follows: 4 out of 10 participants would go to an event at 50 km distance, while only 3 out of 10 would join one at 300 km away from their home.

2. Personal motivation: according to the study, the prime aspect playing a motivational role is that of testing their limits (70%).

3. Social and community support: a significant number of Romanians consider that sport needs to contribute to social causes: 67%. In the opinion of participants, the type of social causes which raise their attention are: purchasing medical equipment for those in need, supporting treatment for patients with severe illnesses, as well as providing scholarship to children coming from rural or deprived areas, and whose families are unable to support their education.

4. Event results: an overwhelming number of respondents have affirmed their need of success: 79% declare that they feel satisfied if they have completed the whole race,

participating thus to the whole event. Optimum level of motivation is essential for performance enhancement.

5. Companionship: a high proportion of respondents indicate that the presence of friends while they have joined this marathon has equally motivated them (77%)

6. Perseverance and resilience: the study also mentions that participants self-monitor their performance: most of the active Romanians spend about 3 to 5 hours per week in a sport activity, and 3 out of 10 Romanians declare that they spend over 6 hours in sport weekly. Half of the respondents regularly monitor their results and declare that they have no problem in practising the same time of routine over and over.

Thus learning motivation was conceived strictly result-based: learning and practising in an event context happens to trigger highly evaluated things after the successful completion of this activity. This is an important, but not the only component of learning motivation. The results of this survey are validated in a recent contribution focusing on the perception of the young generation when they are asked about the role of physical education in their life. Engagement represents the willingness to give performance, the extent of effort and amount of work done. Confidence in success leads to achieving new goals in the case of new or difficult tasks, self-confidence, optimism, certainty of victory. Flexibility regards the manner of coping with new tasks and situations; flexible individuals are open, willing to accept change, are approachable and can overcome obstacles easier than those following a single type of physical routine. Though it is not explicitly mentioned as such, it comes out that discipline plays a key role in sustaining motivation and positive performance.

This recent contribution comes from Vaida (2019), who also brings forward a series of statistical data upon which he discusses the opinions of 100 undergraduate students in Ploiesti: in terms of importance, only 48% think physical education matters in one's life, while almost half (19%) think it has not a key role. Despite this, numerous respondents estimate that sport or physical education can overcome social difficulties or barriers (67%,

comparing to 12% rejecting this). Along the same line, over half of participants (52%) indicate that sport plays a major role in conflict resolution (yet 23% disagree). In contrast, in what regards the team spirit, a lower proportion raising to 12% confirm that they were part of a team when the study was conducted, while 45% indicate that this had happened some time before that. When asked about the reasons to join physical education or sport, the respondents have listed the following aspects: health (30%), physical beauty (22%), relaxation (21%), lifestyle (14%), competition (10%) and material gains (3%). A secondary question relates motivation in physical education and sport with the need of personal development, where respondents seem to reiterate a ranking closed to that of importance in their life. Their opinion about sport and personal development show only 18% think it is “very important”, followed by 52% as “important” and 16% considering it “unimportant”. In the qualitative component, further information about the reasons behind the answers regarding motivations for physical activity have been addressed. Regardless of their differences in perception, sports are seen as an intrinsic part of student life, suggesting they are increasingly aware of the benefits it brings in their life. Students therefore manage to cope with inconveniences such as time, physical discomfort, occasional injuries or even lack of interest. The willingness to participate in physical activity, and readiness to overcome the obstacles there can be induced through different motivational techniques.

Conclusion

Motivation serves to energize, select and direct performance. It sometimes helps in setting tough goals and directing the energy and effort to achieve those goals. Motivation is a complex process that influences individuals to begin, pursue, and persevere in a certain activity. However, no matter what area of sport or physical activity, both students as well as mature participants in the studies mentioned earlier declare that there are certain activities of a low interest, or even of no interest at all. Recent studies suggest, that involvement in physical activity depends on motivation and perceived sports competence. As a significant number of youngsters/young generations tend to pay more attention to their lifestyle, aiming at exercising at least once a week, the studies suggest that

occasionally participants to sports activities and physical education may understand that these activities play a positive role in their life even if when practising proves difficult. In this case, the motivation relies more on the volition factor than on expectations as such. Understanding the factors that contribute to physical activity changes upon entering a university is important for identifying effective tools for health motivation for both males and females. Evidence coming out from recent research carried out recently indicates that the more intrinsically motivated a person is, the more frequently this individual will join physical education/activity. The studies we have mentioned on this topic have been completed over the past few years and they provide convincing evidence of the important motivational changes that occur during and following physical education practice. Romanian students both show similarities as well as differences in what regards their motivation in sport and physical education in comparison with students from other countries: similarities refer to limited free time, sufficient diverse options in universities, or the motivational reasons to exercise. Differences highlight aspects about proximity, conflict resolution or opportunities of companionship.

Further area of debate in the Romanian universities could focus on differentiations emerging from female versus male students, or change of perceptions between early enrolled students versus those in terminal years. Also, the experience of students joining other European study programmes via the Erasmus opportunities could show if their preferences or opinions change over time. In addition, future studies could target main corporate employers, either in the governmental or non-governmental sector, across several industries and top performing economic activities. Data collected at five or ten year distance from the graduation moment would then show in what way the physical activity remains a priority in the life of employees. Interestingly, the panoply of factors related to motivation could also change if correlated with other changes, such as lifestyle or preferences in terms of leisure and entertainment. A third option targets the domicile and residential area of students/young people practising sport or physical activities. Current evidence indicates that the proportion of students coming from small- to medium-sized

towns or rural areas has increased in the number of students enrolled in various study programmes. The question whether they present differentiations in the way they have physical exercise may depend on their residence, possibly correlated with social factors. Do their pattern change if and when they settle into large communities? To what extent do they play a role, or not, on their hometowns in shaping the motivation of following generations to practise sport?

Finally, to enhance the benefits of a university sports programme, the institution responsible, be it state- or private-funded, needs to target the programme to the needs of the students. While quantitative results may help to identify how many students participate in university sports, a qualitative analysis is useful in exploring participants' needs and providing concrete suggestions for future curricula improvement. Thus more evidence is needed to investigate the results within different populations of students.

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