

Is motivation more important than ability in a successful Competitive performance?

Motivation:

Stallings (1966) has defined motivation as “an internal factor that arouses and directs behaviour.”

Kent (1994) said that “motivation is the internal state which tends to direct a person’s behaviour towards a goal.”

Motivation for a person can come from many different things and places. The thing about motivation is that it depends on the personality of the person. You can’t teach someone to be motivated but you can help them out by giving them things if they do what is asked (this is called extrinsic motivation), for example.

Motivation is responsible for:

- The selection and preference for an activity.
- The persistence at the activity.
- The intensity and effort put into the performance.

Biddell (1984) states intrinsically motivated performers are more likely to continue participating than those extrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation is of benefit at first and provides initial drive but does not last. An example of this is Micelle Shumaker, he earns millions upon millions of pounds but he still races. Why? Is it because of the money? No. If it was because of the money he could have stopped a long time ago. The money was probably one of the initial factors but now the majority of his motivation will be from enjoyment (intrinsic) and the winning (extrinsic).

Types of motivation.

Intrinsic motivation:

Intrinsic motivation comes from within a person. It is the personal satisfaction achieved from doing something. For example, a lock in a rugby game scores the winning try in the last few seconds of the game because he barged through three defenders. This would give the player huge satisfaction and happiness. The main examples for intrinsic motivation are fun, enjoyment, achievement and satisfaction. These are some of the factors for intrinsic motivation. Like Biddell said people who have lots of intrinsic motivation would last longer in a sport because the extrinsic motivation wears off because people need more and more extrinsic motivation to meet their need for it.

Extrinsic motivation:

Extrinsic motivation is the opposite of intrinsic, it comes from outside things. These things can be either emotional (praise, fans) or physical (money, trophies). The reason that this is usually one of the reasons for taking part in an activity in the beginning is because the majority of people want these things, they want to be praised and be given trophies. But the main problem with this type of motivation is that the emotional factors and physical factors can get to a person’s head and then this can make their

performance level go down because they can become arrogant and big headed, they will think that they are so good that they don't need to try hard. Also if the individual becomes better then the two factors will have to increase to satisfy their "need" for them. This is why it isn't good for an individual to be motivated totally extrinsically.

Primary motivation:

Primary motivation is derived from the activity itself. It is the satisfaction one gets from taking part in the activity.

Secondary motivation:

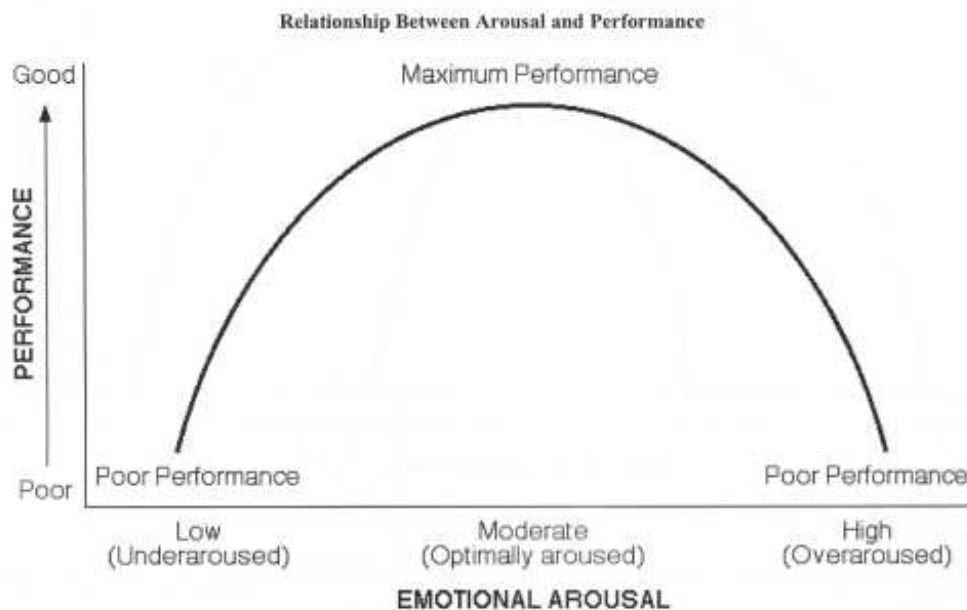
Secondary motivation comes from anything other than taking part in the activity. For example, from the coach, friends or from winning medals.

Positive and Negative motivation:

Any aspect of competing can have a positive or negative affect on motivation. Winning is a positively motivating, losing can be negatively motivating. An audience can have either a positive or negative effect on motivation. For example, if an individual has the crowd supporting them then this will lift their spirits and make them more motivated.

But what happens if you are too motivated?

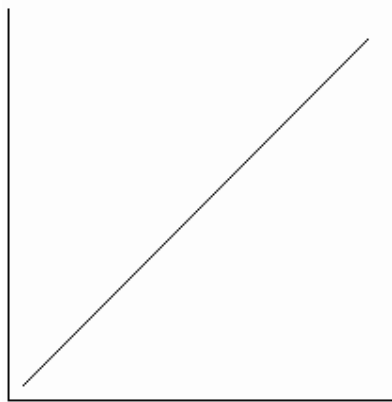
The inverted "U" theory (Yerkes Dodson Law) states that "as motivation increases so performance improves." This arousal can be detrimental after a certain point however. There's a balance needed between over and under arousal. Examples



include tennis players after a bad call.

A certain level of arousal is needed to perform well. Too much arousal can make the performer tense, overanxious and this leads to making mistakes. The main aim for the performer is to reach the highest performance with the most motivation possible, or the optimum. So in a sport a coach will have to manipulate the athlete's level of motivation in order to maximise performance. The relationship between motivation and performance is very similar to the relationship between arousal and performance, the performer who is highly motivated will also be aroused.

Another theory suggested is, Hull's drive theory. The Drive theory states that "performance increases with increasing levels of arousal, therefore the more arousal the better the performance." This is like the inverted U theory but it is slightly different. The graph shows what the theory means:



Performance

Arousal

This graph shows you that to increase performance you need to increase the arousal. But there are exceptions. Because the inverted U theory says that performance only increases with arousal to a certain point. There is also more evidence to suggest that the inverted U theory is correct. The evidence is with professional rugby players. They are very highly skilled in rugby but if they are too motivated in the beginning of the match problems usually occur. For example, fights usually break out in the first ten minutes of a match because that's when everyone is extremely motivated. This proves that too much motivation is bad because it lowers your level of performance.

Ability, Technique and Skill:

Ability:

A general capacity of an individual. Ability is inherited. A skill is learned.

There are lots of different types of ability such as, co-ordination, speed, reaction time, balance, agility, manual dexterity, and depth perception. These are gross motor skills that a person can be born with but they can also be learned.

In order to be able to learn and perform any skill, especially in sport, we must have the abilities required. Abilities are generally seen as innate.

Abilities are sometimes referred to as the building blocks of sport. Without these we will never be able to develop skill fully. Gross motor skills are required in sport

because without these abilities it would not be possible to learn skills such as a smash in badminton.

Technique:

Technique is often confused with skill. There is a relationship between skill, ability and technique though. In order to perform a skill in sport we learn the technique. In order to learn the technique fully, we must have the necessary abilities.

Skill = Ability + Technique

Technique is basically the defined movements of an action. Good technique is what makes a good athlete, for example, a front crawl swimmer. If the swimmer is all muscle and is extremely strong but lacks technique and skill then he won't go as fast as someone who has lots of technique and little muscle.

Skill:

Skill means the ability to perform a task. There are different types of skill cognitive, perceptual, motor and perceptual motor skills.

Cognitive skills:

Cognitive skills are also known as intellectual skills and involve thought process. For example, adding up the judges score for ice skating.

Perceptual skills:

These are skills which involve interpretation of something. We may see the same picture as someone else but our brain will interpret differently.

Motor skills:

Motor skills involve the muscular system and concentrate on the movement in something like a sport.

Perceptual motor skills:

Perceptual motor skills involve everything in a sport put together. This involves thought, interpretation and movement. This is cognitive, perceptual and motor skills all in one.

A theory was made to explain the different skill categories, its called the Knapp's open-closed continuum. This theory states that there are two different basic classifications of skills, open and closed.

Open skills are those which are directly influenced by the environment in which they are performed. They require adaptation each time they are performed. The adaptations could be the weather, pitch conditions, speed on the ball, the position of the opponent etc. Therefore an open skill is never performed the same way twice.

Closed skills are those that have no outside physical influences. They are the same every time they are performed. The performer will go through a learnt routine each

time when performing the skill. Therefore a closed skill is easier to teach and to learn because it is the same and it won't change. An example of this is a basket ball free throw. There is no one blocking the ball so the player can concentrate and repeat all the learnt gross motor sequence.

Conclusion:

From all this I can conclude that motivation is important in a successful competitive performance but ability is just as important. This is because motivation is needed to perform the activity with enthusiasm and concentration but ability is needed to perform the skill well. If a person has lots of motivation but no ability they won't be good at the activity. But if a person has lots of ability and not much skill the activity will be done well but without much enthusiasm. So both motivation and ability are just as important in a successful competitive performance.

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