

Motivation and factors affecting motivation



About this free course

This free course is an adapted extract from the Open University course E113 *Working and learning in sport and fitness* www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/e113.

This version of the content may include video, images and interactive content that may not be optimised for your device.

You can experience this free course as it was originally designed on OpenLearn, the home of free learning from The Open University:

www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/motivation-and-factors-affecting-motivation/content-section-0.

There you'll also be able to track your progress via your activity record, which you can use to demonstrate your learning.

Copyright © 2016 The Open University

Intellectual property

Unless otherwise stated, this resource is released under the terms of the Creative Commons Licence v4.0 http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB. Within that The Open University interprets this licence in the following way:

www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/frequently-asked-questions-on-openlearn. Copyright and rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons Licence are retained or controlled by The Open University. Please read the full text before using any of the content.

We believe the primary barrier to accessing high-quality educational experiences is cost, which is why we aim to publish as much free content as possible under an open licence. If it proves difficult to release content under our preferred Creative Commons licence (e.g. because we can't afford or gain the clearances or find suitable alternatives), we will still release the materials for free under a personal end-user licence.

This is because the learning experience will always be the same high quality offering and that should always be seen as positive – even if at times the licensing is different to Creative Commons.

When using the content you must attribute us (The Open University) (the OU) and any identified author in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Licence.

The Acknowledgements section is used to list, amongst other things, third party (Proprietary), licensed content which is not subject to Creative Commons licensing. Proprietary content must be used (retained) intact and in context to the content at all times.

The Acknowledgements section is also used to bring to your attention any other Special Restrictions which may apply to the content. For example there may be times when the Creative Commons Non-Commercial Sharealike licence does not apply to any of the content even if owned by us (The Open University). In these instances, unless stated otherwise, the content may be used for personal and non-commercial use.

We have also identified as Proprietary other material included in the content which is not subject to Creative Commons Licence. These are OU logos, trading names and may extend to certain photographic and video images and sound recordings and any other material as may be brought to your attention.

Unauthorised use of any of the content may constitute a breach of the terms and conditions and/or intellectual property laws.

We reserve the right to alter, amend or bring to an end any terms and conditions provided here without notice.

All rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons licence are retained or controlled by The Open University.

Head of Intellectual Property, The Open University

Contents

Introduction	4
Learning Outcomes	5
1 Motivation	6
2 Understanding motivation	7
3 Definitions and dimensions of motivation	9
4 Theories of motivation	11
Conclusion	14
References	14
Acknowledgements	14

Introduction

Motivation is a key concept in sport and fitness as it is motivation which gives us the push to either doing what has to be done or pushing ourselves harder and harder to achieve greater things. That said, it's an easy thing to mention but a harder thing to understand. For example, why on some days are we full of energy and bursting to get things done while on other days we will do everything we can to avoid doing what we have to do?

Motivation is important in many sport and fitness relationships. A football manager has to find ways to keep their players motivated; a personal trainer has to keep their customers motivated so they can achieve their goals despite only seeing them for two to three hours a week. An even greater challenge is workplace managers keeping their staff motivated and working towards the goals of the organisation without annoying them.

This course introduces some of the views and theories of motivation through written and audio-visual resources. There are a number of activities designed to allow you to engage with the resources.

This OpenLearn course provides a sample of level 1 study in [Education, Childhood & Youth](#).

Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- define the term 'motivation'
- appreciate different views of how people are motivated
- apply different theories to an individual's motivation.

1 Motivation

The study of motivation seeks to find out why people behave in certain ways and do the things they do on a daily basis. In this course we will explore what we mean by the term 'motivation' by looking at a range of definitions and some of the factors that cause us to gain or lose motivation. We will then look at some of the most influential theories of motivation that help to explain the causes of motivation. Some of these theories are based on observing people in sport and fitness environments, some on observing people in sport and exercise environments and some on observing how people behave generally.

2 Understanding motivation

Motivation underlies all aspects of human behaviour and can help to explain why people do what they do. At times, though, it may be difficult to understand even your own motivation. Sometimes you will have a clear idea of what you are intending to achieve by your behaviour and the motivation behind it. There may be other times, however, when your motivations are less clear. If it is hard to understand your own motivation, you can appreciate that it is even harder to understand the motivation of others. You also need to appreciate that what motivates you may not motivate another person. If you are active yourself and value the benefits of activity, you may find it difficult and frustrating that this is not shared by others.

The first activity presents a case study of motivation and how it can change due to major life events.

Activity 1 Thinking about personal motivation

Allow about 45 minutes

Watch the following video clip titled 'Motivation through adversity: The Fabrice Muamba story' which shows Fabrice Muamba being interviewed about motivation.

Video content is not available in this format.

[Motivation through adversity: The Fabrice Muamba story](#)

Fabrice Muamba was born in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) on 6 April 1988 but moved to England at the age of 11. His football career began in 2002 when he asked for a trial at Arsenal and he joined their Youth Academy in 2004 – a year later he turned professional. He later played for Birmingham City and Bolton Wanderers but in March 2012 he suffered a cardiac arrest during a televised FA Cup match between Bolton and Tottenham Hotspur. While he did recover from this, he was forced to retire from professional football in the August of that year.

It is clear that Muamba has had to make a number of changes to his life over the last three years. While you are watching the video clip below, you should consider the following questions:

1. What factors do you think motivate Fabrice Muamba to play football and to succeed in general life?
2. How has Fabrice Muamba overcome the obstacles he has faced in his life?
3. To what extent do you identify with the factors that motivate Fabrice Muamba or are you motivated in a different way?

Comment

1. Fabrice seems to be motivated to play football by the love and enjoyment of the sport. He talks about enjoying playing football from a young age – and getting his school work done so that he could play football – and how he always wanted to be a professional footballer. It is interesting that he wanted to keep playing after his cardiac arrest but was advised not to. When he talks about only being able to watch football he says how much he misses playing and that 'deep down, it kills

me'. Shauna, Fabrice's wife, describes how driven he is to win and how he always tries his best. She says he is always looking to be a better player and a better person.

2. There are three main obstacles that Fabrice has had to overcome. Firstly, coming to this country from Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), and having to integrate into the education system and face the language barrier. He quickly realised how important it was to learn the language so he could learn and live in the UK. Secondly, there has been much rejection in his path to becoming a Premier footballer, as he was rejected initially by the Arsenal Academy and then sold by Arsenal after two appearances. He overcame this by dropping down a league and then working hard to gain promotion with Birmingham City. Thirdly, the largest obstacle was his cardiac arrest due to a congenital heart condition. Anyone who has had to retire from the sport they love can understand a small amount of the pain he must have experienced through retiring at the age of 23. However, due to his own drive, and attitude to education, he is working to gain meaningful employment and appreciating life outside of sport with his family. He has the attitude that these things are challenges rather than obstacles.
3. Fabrice seems to be strongly motivated by internal forces rather than external factors, such as fame or money. The effect of internal and external motivating factors is a recurring theme of this study topic and you may find that you are motivated more strongly by one than the other. Fabrice also touches on the effects of the environment and other people on motivation when he describes his first match as a Premiership player. You may find that these also influence you.

3 Definitions and dimensions of motivation

Before we can look at theories of motivation we need to clarify exactly what is meant by the term 'motivation'. Defining terms is an important starting point whenever we look at a topic area.

A classic textbook definition of motivation is given by Mullins (2002), who says that motivation is a 'driving force' through which people strive to achieve their goals and fulfil a need or uphold a value. The important words here are 'needs', 'values' and 'goals' and these are the building blocks of motivation that lead to actions:

- Needs are basic requirements for survival and may be physical or psychological; for example, hunger, thirst, love or friendship.
- Values are the things that we consider to be most important; for example, family, health or wealth.
- Goals are the outcomes that we are working towards.

This is an interesting definition: describing motivation as a 'driving force' suggests a lot of energy being created within us to move us into action. You have probably experienced this whenever there has been something you really wanted, such as winning a race, winning a match, passing an exam or working hard for something you really wanted to buy. Our needs, values and goals are completely individual: two people may have the same goal they want to fulfil, but different needs or values. For example, in a race a person may want to win to feel good about themselves (need for self-esteem) or because they see winning as being in line with their values (the value is that success is important). In conclusion, we can say that motivation is specific to an individual, the result of their needs and values, which create their particular goals and are then translated into action.

Activity 2 Reading

Allow about 45 minutes

Now read the text entitled, '[Thinking about motivation in the workplace](#)' by Simon Rea. As you read, note down the definition the authors give for motivation and compare it with the definition from Mullins introduced above. Draw a table, like Table 1 below, to help you summarise the three approaches that can be taken to understand motivation. The first row of Table 1 has been completed as an example. Once you have finished the chapter, consider which approach you feel explains motivation best.

Table 1 The three approaches to motivation

Name of approach	Brief explanation	Application	Criticisms
Trait-centred view	Theory says that motivation is due to a person's individual characteristics, e.g. their personality	Personality will predict whether or not they will be motivated	Ignores the influence that the situation may have on the individual
Situation-centred view			
Interactional view			

Comment

Table 2 Summary of the three approaches to motivation

Name of approach	Brief explanation	Application	Criticisms
Trait-centred view	Theory says that motivation is due to a person's individual characteristics, e.g. their personality	Personality will predict whether or not they will be motivated	Ignores the influence that the situation may have on the individual
Situation-centred view	Theory says that motivation is determined by the situation	The environment needs to be constructed to ensure that all participants are motivated	Some participants will remain motivated despite a negative environment
Interactional view	Theory says that to understand motivation fully you need to consider both the personality and the situation and how they interact	Different personalities will respond in different ways depending on the demands of the environment. For example, different sports competitors will respond differently to competing alone or as part of a team	Some personalities will remain unaffected by changing environments

While the Interactional view is often the most popular approach to motivation by sport and fitness professionals – because it considers both personality and situation – it is important to have a solid understanding of both the trait-centred and situation-centred views, as these help our appreciation of the different ways in which individuals are motivated.

4 Theories of motivation

Here we present two key theories of motivation, which have been used to understand how people are motivated:

- need achievement theory (McClelland, 1961; Atkinson, 1974)
- Weiner's model of attribution (Weiner, 1985).

Need achievement theory (McClelland, 1961; Atkinson, 1974)

The aim of need achievement theory is to explain why certain individuals are more motivated to achieve than others. It is based on two psychological principles: the motive of an individual to achieve success and the motive of an individual to avoid failure. This theory is described as an approach-avoidance model because an individual will be motivated either (a) to take part in (approach) or (b) to withdraw from (avoid) a situation, based on the strength of the two forces in relation to each other. If an individual's intrinsic motivation to take part is stronger than their fear of failure, they will engage in a task. However, if their fear of failure is stronger than their intrinsic motivation to take part, they will either avoid or withdraw from the task. This theory can be said to be a trait-centred approach because achievement motivation is a personality trait (a relatively consistent way of behaving). However, this personality trait may not be the only factor affecting motivation. Another important factor is the role the situation plays in terms of the 'probability of success' and the 'incentive for success'. An individual who has low intrinsic motivation may become motivated to be successful if the probability of success is high and the reward on offer for success is great.

This theory is able to explain why individuals who are 'high achievers' choose difficult or challenging tasks (they will see value in their success in difficult challenges). It also explains that a 'low achiever' will choose easier tasks because they are less likely to fail and are therefore usually guaranteed success. For example, a high achiever may choose a task such as assessing the success of their organisation's marketing and then developing a new strategy to increase income by 10 per cent. A low achiever would avoid a high-risk activity like this and might just settle for leaving things as they are.

Weiner's attribution theory (Weiner, 1985)

Attribution theory focuses on how people explain their success or failure. Humans seek to understand the reasons for why things happen and an attribution is the reason we give for a particular outcome. We may also make an attribution to the behaviour we see in people or teams around us. Attributions can be categorised in two ways: firstly, whether they are stable (permanent) or unstable (constantly changing); and secondly, whether they are internal (inside us) or external (outside us). An internal factor is seen as being within our control and an external factor as outside of our control. These factors combined mean that a success or a failure can be attributed to either ability or effort, or task difficulty or luck. In Table 3 these are presented as four quadrants, with an example of each attribution.

Table 3 Attribution categories

	Internal	External
Stable	Ability <i>'It comes naturally to me'</i>	Task difficulty <i>'She was just too good for me to compete against'</i>
Unstable	Effort <i>'I worked really hard today'</i>	Luck <i>'I just didn't get the rub of the green today'</i>

The attributions that we make are important because they will affect motivation in an indirect way. They will have an effect on our self-confidence and thus on our expectations of future success. An attribution can be either *ego enhancing*, to make us feel better about ourselves, or *ego protective*, to stop ourselves feeling bad. A positive attribution to internal factors will enhance the ego and one attributed to task difficulty may serve to protect the ego. In turn, our level of self-confidence will influence motivation because the more confidence of success we show, the greater our motivation will become. For example, a tennis player who keeps winning can become more driven and seek out competition rather than avoid it.

Activity 3

Allow about 15 minutes

Consider the following statements made by managers or players regarding their team's performance and the outcome they achieved. Draw a table, like Table 4 below, and place each statement into one of the four quadrants in the table. Also consider why the managers or players have made these particular attributions.

- *'I have a belief in the potential of my team but we have to cope with the level of intensity that international opposition play at.'*
- *'It was a performance which turned ugly and we had to dig out a hard-fought win.'*
- *'I hit my second shot just where I wanted it but a gust got it in the air and it didn't really have a chance in the end.'*
- *'We were clearly the better team and I have no doubt we can beat anyone on our day.'*

Table 4 Assigning attributions

	Internal	External
Stable	Ability	Task difficulty
Unstable	Effort	Luck

Comment

Table 5 Attributions assigned

	Internal	External
Stable	Ability <i>'I have a belief in the potential of my team but we have to cope with the level of intensity that international opposition play at.'</i>	Task difficulty <i>'We were clearly the better team and I have no doubt we can beat anyone on our day.'</i>
Unstable	Effort <i>'It was a performance which turned ugly and we had to dig out a hard-fought win.'</i>	Luck <i>'I hit my second shot just where I wanted it but a gust got it in the air and it didn't really have a chance in the end.'</i>

We can see how the attributions assigned to effort and luck would help to protect the individual's ego and maintain their motivation for the future. The attribution to luck places the locus of responsibility outside of the individual and thus they can protect their ego and their self-confidence will not be affected. You may ask whether these attributions are accurate or are being used to mask the truth.

The first statement makes reference to two categories of attribution, because the 'intensity that international opposition play at' could refer to task difficulty, while 'belief in the potential of my team' refers to ability. When you are in a sport and fitness environment, listen to the attributions people make in order to account for their behaviour and the outcomes they achieve.

Conclusion

Having studied this course you should be able to discuss what is meant by the term 'motivation' and the situational and trait-centred views of motivation. You have examined two of the theories of motivation to develop your understanding more deeply.

The main learning points for this course are:

- People will be motivated by a range of factors and these are different for everyone.
- Personality and the environment both need to be considered when motivating people.
- Need achievement theory explains why high achievers choose difficult or challenging tasks and why low achievers choose easier tasks at which they are less likely to fail.
- Attribution theory shows that what we attribute our success or failure to will have an effect on our motivation.

References

- Atkinson, J.W. (1974) 'The mainstream of achievement oriented activity' in Atkinson, J.W. and Raynor, J.O. (eds) *Motivation and Achievement*, New York, Halstead.
- McClelland, D. (1961) *The Achieving Society*, New York, Free Press.
- Mullins, L.J. (2002) *Managing People in Organisations*, Milton Keynes, The Open University.
- Weiner, B. (1985) 'An attribution theory of achievement motivation and emotion', *Psychological review*, vol.92, pp. 548-73.

Acknowledgements

This free course is adapted from a former Open University course called 'Working and learning in sport and fitness (E113).'

Except for third party materials and otherwise stated in the acknowledgements section, this content is made available under a

[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 Licence](#).

The material acknowledged below is Proprietary and used under licence (not subject to Creative Commons Licence). Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reproduce material in this course:

Course image: [Matt Kowalczyk](#) in Flickr made available under [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Licence](#).

Activity 1 Video: © The Open University.

Activity 2 Reading: Rea, S. (2009) 'Thinking about motivation in the workplace', chapter 8 in Heaney, C., Oakley, B. and Rea, S. (eds) (2009) *Exploring Sport and Fitness: Work-based practice*, pp. 77–82, Abingdon, Routledge/Milton Keynes, The Open University. © The Open University.

Every effort has been made to contact copyright owners. If any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

Don't miss out:

If reading this text has inspired you to learn more, you may be interested in joining the millions of people who discover our free learning resources and qualifications by visiting The Open University - www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses