

Study regarding the role of motivation in the sport performance activities

Authors' Contribution:

A – Study Design
 B – Data Collection
 C – Statistical Analysis
 D – Data Interpretation
 E – Manuscript Preparation
 F – Literature Search
 G – Funds Collection

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Key words: *motivation, sport, performance, sport management, leadership.*

Abstract

Background: *What does it mean to be motivated? This is a question often formulated by psychologists and other researchers of human behavior. However it is a question which interests more or less managers and coaches, but the produced effects can be determinative for the activity of sports performance at all levels.*

Material/Methods: *The present work aims to analyze the measurements in which the actions connected to athletes' motivation, undertaken by sports organizations, influence and support their activities in order to increase performance. For this purpose we used the literature survey, a questionnaire, data analysis and data processing.*

This research was conducted on a total of 177 registered athletes from various sports clubs. Stability issues were tracked in the sports club, the conditions in which they operate, the level of motivation in training and competitions, team status, the level of aspiration, the level of appreciation and rewards, etc.

Results: *It is remarkable that the athlete's option for the possibility to achieve high performance constitutes a more important motivator than the opportunity to have greater earning money though financial conditions.*

Conclusions: *The motivation in training shows fluctuations due to factors of sports nature but also material stability, especially influencing athletes' mental comfort.*

The levels of assessment, communication and reward are important motivational factors with direct effects on the results obtained by athletes both in competition and in training.

Word count: 1,461

Tables: 0

Figures: 9

References: 20

Received: November 2013

Accepted: January 2014

Published: March 2014

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Introduction

This paper deals with the role of motivation in sport at the level of athletes [1, 2, 3, 4], which is fundamental factor in achieving superior performance at all levels of activity.

The frequent changes occurring on the economic, social and sports plane, as well as the proven importance of the motivational act, provide it with a special importance both as a theoretical approach and especially as a practical approach [5, 6].

Thus, the present paper work aims to bring a modest contribution to the analysis of the phenomenon of motivation, which became a factor of utmost importance for the high performance sports activity as well.

From the etymological point of view, the term "motivation" comes from the Latin word "movere", which means movement. The Romanian Language Dictionary [7] defines motivation as being the totality of reasons or mobiles (conscientious or not) which determines someone to do something or achieve certain purposes.

Zlate defines motivation as the body's inert state of necessity which orients and directs the behavior towards its satisfaction and, therefore, its elimination. Jones defines motivation as being the measure in which a persistent effort is directed towards reaching a goal. Lewin explains motivation through the stimuli which act upon the body, a fact which triggers a response behavior, while Nuttin insists upon the dynamic and directional aspects of motivation [5]. Thus, most authors relate motivation to attitudes. Newcomb considers that attitudes are accompanied by reasons and that their variable intensity depends on their intrinsic motivation. Motivation is thus both a prerequisite and a product of attitude [8].

In the domain of high performance sports activities, motivation has been less related to directing functions and more to the activating ones [9, 10, 11]. Studying athletes' motivation dynamics [12, 13, 14], Vanek presents their following four stages:

1. Generalization stage when a child or a teenager is motivated by the tendency to move and to succeed;
2. Differentiating stage, when a sports discipline is chosen;
3. Specialized preferences stage, when the athlete achieves performance in the chosen discipline, going through various motivational routes;
4. Motivational involution stage, when the athlete falls back under the influence of primary or secondary motivations (material advantages, failures, injuries, lack of cohesion in the group, etc.).

High performance sport requires efforts and giving up things which most often are difficult to understand (activities taken to the limit of biological and mental bearing, repeated stressful situations, temporary deprivation of satisfying certain natural needs, etc.) [15]. Thus, the following question is raised: what does performance sport offer to compensate for so many inconveniences?

Starting from the assumption that in time it has been proven that the difference of value between two teams or two athletes can be replaced by strong motivation and proper physical training, this research was focused on the following themes:

- determination of the application level of methods and means mentioned in the specialty literature;
- inventory through proper procedures and techniques of motivational indexes of the studied subjects;
- identification of internal and external factors which may stimulate performance;
- analysis of motivation policy in order to obtain high performance.

Material and methods

The choice of research methods and techniques has been made according to the studied issue, with the established objectives and hypotheses, endeavor which has allowed us to get to know the studied phenomena in relation with up-to-date theories, practices and realities. In consequence, the following methods and techniques have been chosen:

- study of specialty literature
- a questionnaire.

After establishing the research approach strategy, I have decided to accomplish the study on a number of 200 athletes belonging to various sports clubs. Because of some of the potential respondents' reserve and because of the mistakes in filling in the questionnaire, 177 correctly filled in questionnaires were collected.

The sampling was mixed (random and directed) because of the following reasons:

- sports organizations of various sizes and statuses were taken into consideration;
- from each type, the subjects were selected first of all according to their availability to answer the questionnaire.

The sample was subjected to analysis through the following:

- the practiced sport: most of them (29%) practice football, followed by handball (20%), volleyball (12%), basketball (10%), tennis and karate (6%), judo and athletics (5%), sledding (4%) and gymnastics (3%);
- the level of performance: level IV – beginners, level III - the ones who pass to the performance sport, level II - performance athletes, level I - high performance athletes;
- gender: 63% are males and 37% are women;
- the level of instruction: high school (68%), academic studies (17%), post-graduate studies (11%) and 4% graduated from or are about to graduate from coaching courses;
- gender: 63% are males and 37% are female;
- time spent at the sportsclub: the largest category comprises athletes who have spent up to 3 years within the sports club where they currently practice (71%), followed by those who have been with the current club for 4-7 years (20%) and those who have been with the club for over 7 years (9%).

Data interpretation followed the analysis of some marks which can provide important aspects regarding the level of subjects' motivation (stability within the club, significance and importance of activity, material and financial conditions, status in the team or group, aspiration level, acknowledgement of merits, etc.).

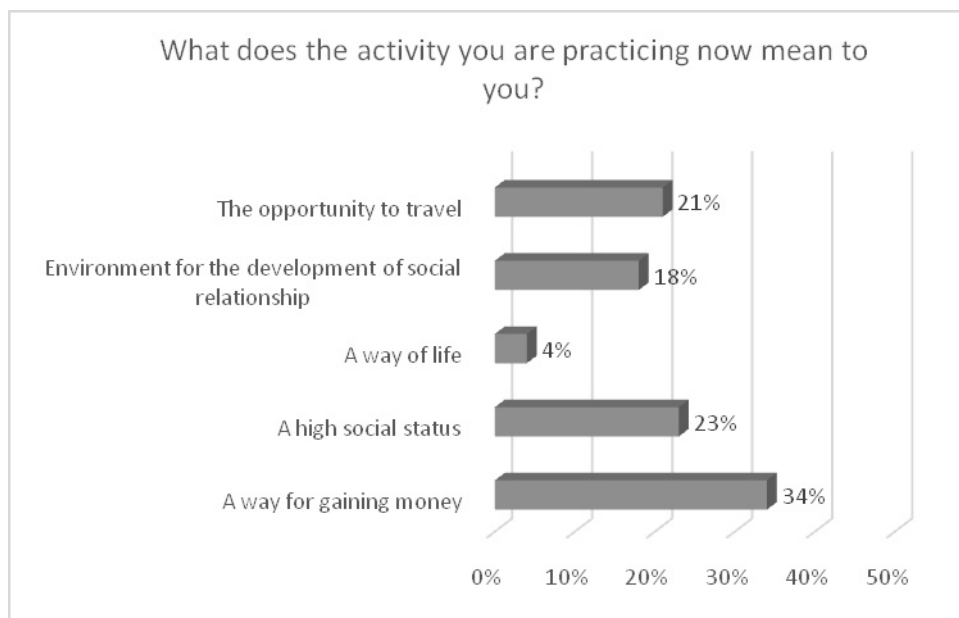


Fig. 1. The significance of the activity

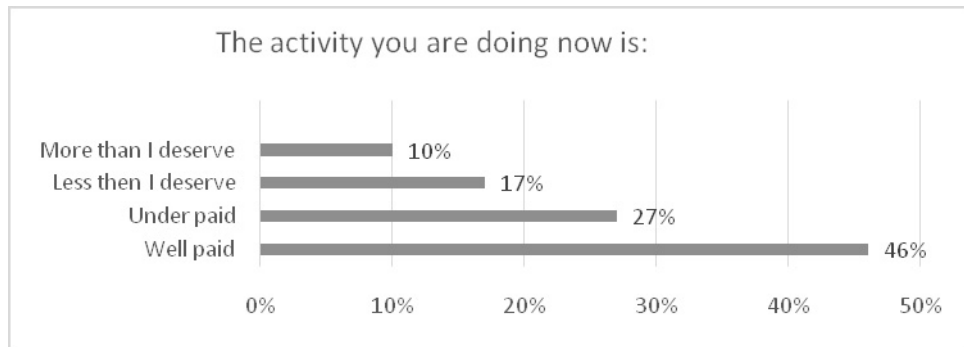


Fig. 2. The level of financial reward

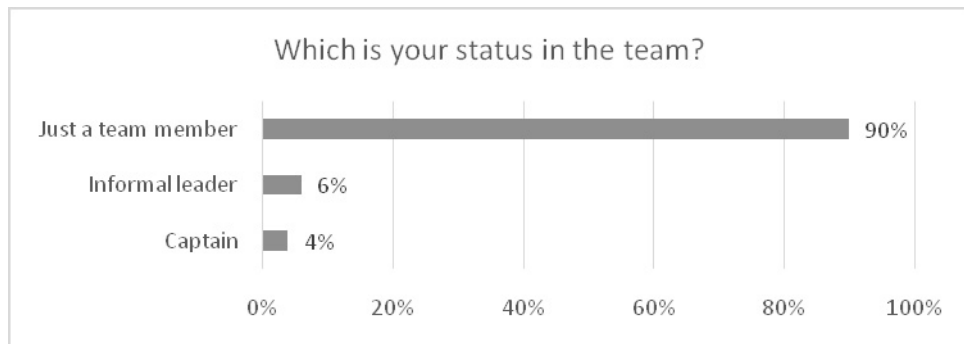


Fig. 3. The status in the team

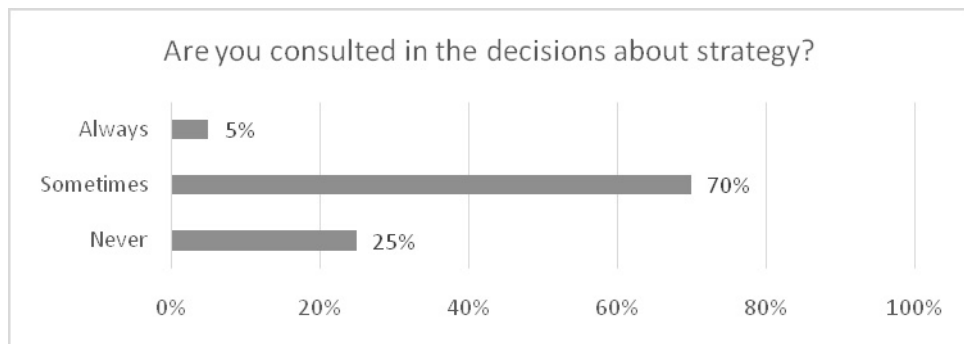


Fig. 4. The importance within the group

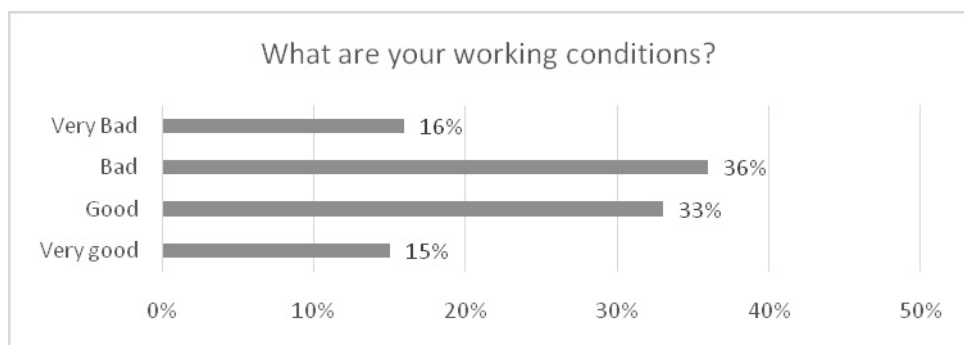


Fig. 5. Working conditions



Fig. 6. Motivation in training

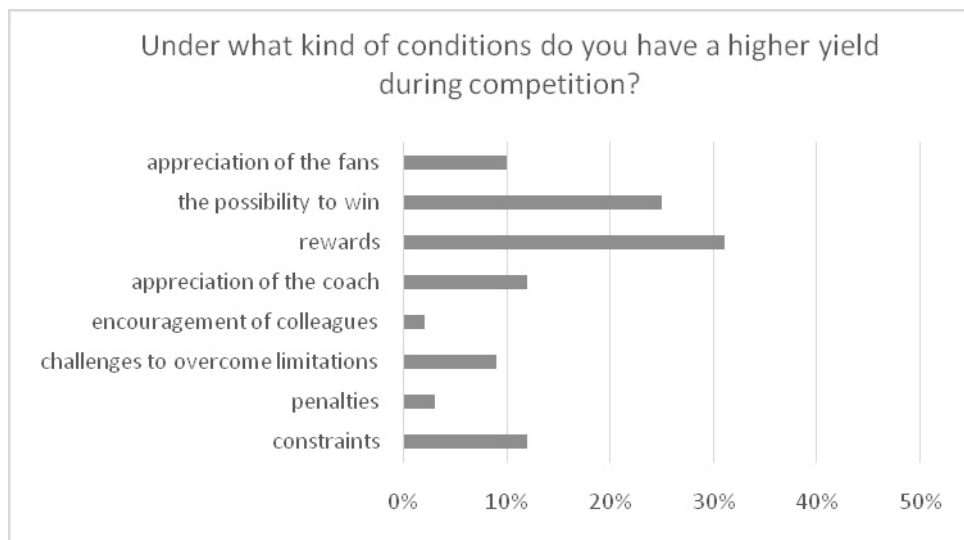


Fig. 7. Motivation in competitions

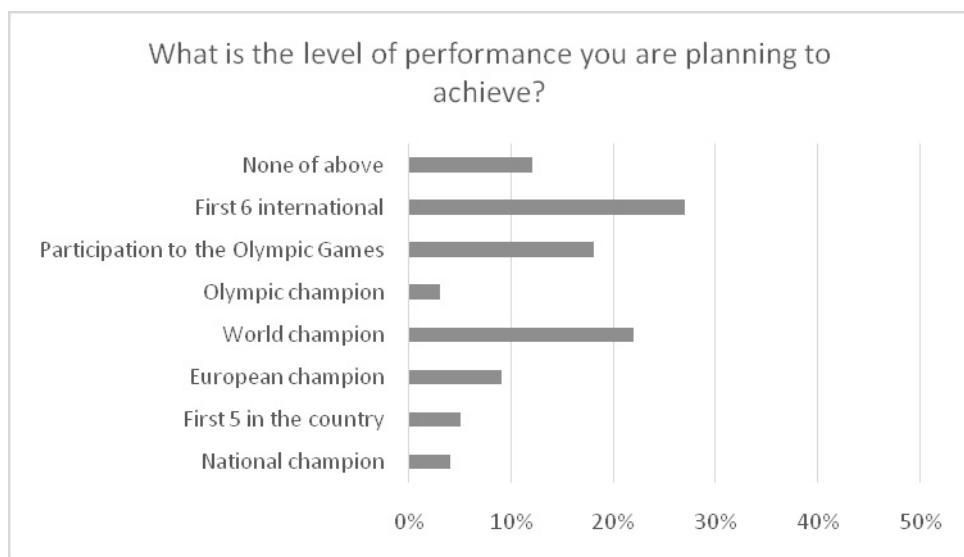


Fig. 8. Aspirations at the sports level

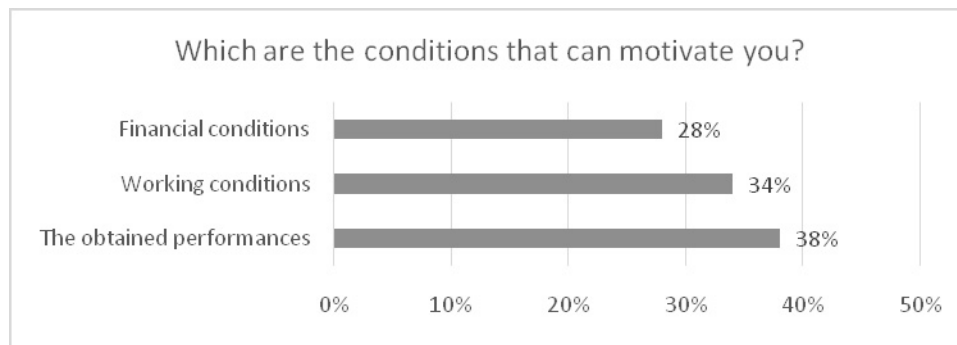


Fig. 9. Motivating factors

Discussions

Stability within a sports club [10] presents important landmarks in terms of athletes' motivation. The transfer of high performance athletes from one club to another is made only based on certain reasons (more or less objective) related to the situation and moment in which the transfer is accomplished.

Just as working conditions represent an important motivating element for employees [16], athletes are also more motivated when they benefit from proper training conditions. It is obvious that providing quality conditions increases their pleasure and efficiency.

The athletes' status in the team or group [17] can bring supplementary motivation regarding themselves and their colleagues. First of all, team captains, due to their responsibility, should motivate the team, especially during difficult moments. Experienced athletes or influential ones in the group can constitute really strong points in terms of morals and motivation.

Each athlete of the group should be encouraged to express their opinions [18], even if unfavorable to some of the group, as long as they have reasons for them. They should be sure of the fact that they have the possibility to express themselves favorably to the group, without having the tendency to place themselves in the center of attention. They should also state their expectations of the team, an element which favors good communication.

The level, to which athletes involved in high performance activity aspire, indicates their motivation level during trainings and competitions. If athletes do not have high aspirations, one cannot have high expectations of them [12].

Material motivation cannot be ignored when it comes to athletes' performance [19, 20]. Finally, more emphasis is laid on the material part than on stimulation related to achieving certain great sports performance.

Conclusions

Beside the material motivating methods and means, a series of non-material methods should be used: methods which complete the material ones or, sometimes, even replace them.

The possibility of obtaining superior performance constitutes a motivating element which is, in most cases, more important than the possibility of gaining money. In this respect, a statement made by a famous football player is relevant. He said: "You can buy players, but not history. I prefer the glory at Liverpool than the money of Manchester City. I am proud to wear the cormorants' shirt".

An obvious relationship was noticed between motivation and individual performance: the strongly motivated are always efficient; they succeed in everything they do and they become real professionals, irrespective of their activity domain. The more motivated they are, the sooner they succeed, the better they become, and all this without apparent effort.

Graphically, the connection between them could be represented as follows:

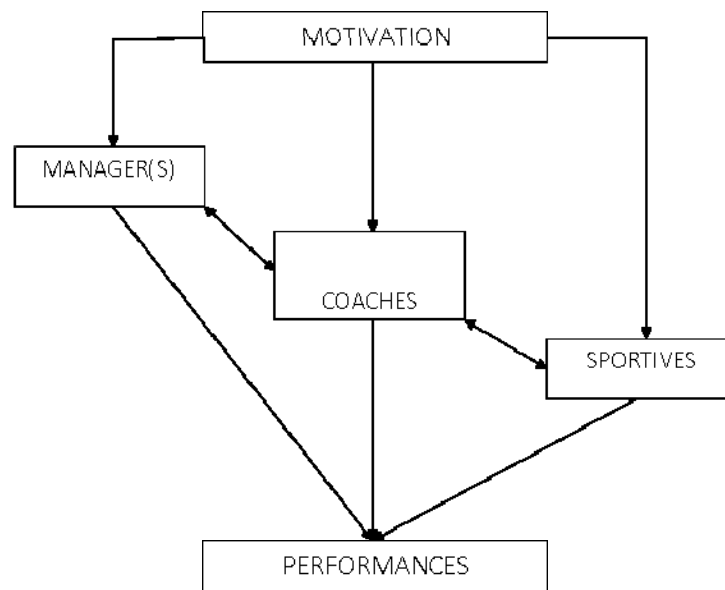


Fig. 10. Motivational link

It is difficult to imagine something that is more important than motivation in obtaining success in sports. Often, we are tempted to state that great performances are based on inborn skills. A closer look upon the lives and training of great performers makes us acknowledge the fact that their performance is a combination of physical abilities and the intense desire to be better and better. The sports literature and history are rich in sports names who excelled due to a strong inner desire to succeed at the sports level, being able to supply the physical attributes such as height, velocity, strength or skill.

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