



Motivation's Impact on Athletic Performance: An Exploration in Sports and Fitness



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Abstract

In the realm of sports and fitness, optimal athletic performance remains a paramount goal. This study delved into the crucial role of motivation in shaping athletic outcomes. As athletes and professionals alike recognize the significance of mental factors in performance, our research aimed to provide insights into the influence of motivation.

Drawing from the existing literature, we established a foundation for our main argument: Motivation significantly affects athletic performance across various sports and fitness activities. To address this, we examined the specific problem of how different motivational factors, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, impact performance outcomes.

Our approach involved a comprehensive review of studies and the synthesis of key motivational theories, such as Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory. We also conducted interviews with athletes to gather first-hand insights into motivational strategies and experiences.

Our findings underscore the pivotal role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining long-term commitment to sports and fitness, while extrinsic motivation can offer short-term performance boosts. This study contributes to the field by providing a nuanced understanding of how motivation intertwines with athletic performance, guiding practitioners and athletes in optimizing their training and competition strategies.

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Introduction

Contextualization: Sports and fitness have always been areas of great interest and importance, both for individuals seeking personal growth and for professional athletes aiming to excel in their respective fields. Achieving optimal athletic performance requires a combination of physical abilities, technical skills, and mental preparedness. Among the various psychological factors that impact performance, motivation stands out as a key determinant. Understanding the role of motivation in sports and fitness is crucial for athletes, coaches, researchers, and practitioners alike.

Rationale: Motivation plays a pivotal role in athletic performance, yet there remains a significant gap in our understanding of its mechanisms and implications. While it is widely acknowledged that motivation influences an athlete's commitment, effort, and perseverance, little is known about the specific factors that contribute to motivation and the strategies that can be employed to enhance it. This research project aimed to address these gaps in knowledge and shed light on the relationship between motivation and athletic performance.

The relevance of that study extended beyond the sporting arena. Enhancing motivation in sports and fitness had implications for academic, community, and industry settings. From an academic standpoint, the research contributed to the growing body of literature in sports psychology and exercise science, providing valuable insights into the psychological aspects of athletic performance. The findings also informed the development of theoretical frameworks and models related to motivation in sports and fitness.

On a practical level, the outcomes of the study had significant implications for coaches, trainers, and practitioners working with athletes and fitness enthusiasts. By identifying the factors that influence motivation and investigating effective strategies to enhance it, the research has the potential to guide the development of evidence-based training programs, coaching techniques, and support structures. Ultimately, those advancements could contribute to optimizing performance outcomes in sports and fitness.

Furthermore, the research held the potential to benefit the broader community by promoting a deeper understanding of motivation and its impact on personal growth and well-being. By exploring the link between motivation, performance, and overall satisfaction, the study provided insights applicable to individuals engaged in recreational sports and fitness activities, as well as those seeking to adopt a healthier and more active lifestyle.

Problem Statement: The relationship between motivation and athletic performance was widely recognized, but the specific factors that influenced motivation and the extent of their impact on success in sports and fitness remained unclear. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of motivation in achieving optimal performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017). However, there was a need for a comprehensive investigation to thoroughly explore the multifaceted nature of motivation and its influence on athletes and fitness enthusiasts.

To address this research gap, it was essential to examine the various factors that contributed to motivation levels among individuals engaged in sports and fitness activities. Personal goals, social support, competition, and rewards were among the key factors that might have shaped an individual's motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Additionally, understanding the different types of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, was crucial to comprehensively examine their effects on athletic performance.

Although motivation was acknowledged as a critical factor, it remained unclear to what extent it could compensate for other factors such as skill or physical ability. While some studies suggested a strong correlation between motivation and performance, further investigation was required to ascertain the significance of motivation relative to other contributing factors. By conducting a comprehensive investigation, a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between motivation and athletic performance was gained.

Purpose Statement: The purpose of this study was to comprehensively investigate the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings. Building upon the recognition of motivation as a crucial component of sports performance (Đurović et al., 2020), we aimed to identify the factors that influenced motivation among athletes and fitness enthusiasts. By exploring the various factors and their impact on motivation, this study aimed to enhance our understanding of how motivation influenced performance outcomes, and whether it could compensate for physical ability. Additionally, this study contributed to the identification of potential mechanisms through which motivation interacted with other factors, such as skill and physical ability, in determining athletic performance outcomes.

Furthermore, this study intended to examine the different types of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and their perceived effects on athletic performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020). By analyzing the diverse types of motivation, we gained insights into the specific motivational factors that drove athletes and fitness enthusiasts to excel in their respective domains.

By undertaking this study, the researcher aimed to advance our understanding of the role of motivation in sports and fitness. Moreover, the results of the study could potentially contribute to interventions and strategies to improve athletic motivation, ultimately leading to improved performance outcomes for athletes and fitness enthusiasts. The findings of this study contributed to the existing body of knowledge in sports psychology and exercise science, informing the development of evidence-based practices that optimized motivation and performance.

Research Question: What is the role of motivation in sports and fitness?

Research Objectives:

1. To assess the perceived relationship between different types of motivational orientation (e.g., task-oriented vs. ego-oriented) and exercise adherence and performance outcomes. This objective aimed to examine whether individuals with a task-oriented motivational orientation demonstrate higher levels of exercise adherence and performance compared to those with an ego-oriented motivational orientation.
2. To investigate the extent to which participants believe that basic psychological needs satisfaction influence (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness) exercise motivation, adherence, and performance. This objective aimed to explore the extent to which the satisfaction of these fundamental psychological needs relates to individuals' exercise motivation levels, their ability to adhere to exercise routines and their subsequent performance outcomes.
3. To investigate the factors that contribute to motivation in athletic performance. This investigation will involve examining various psychological, social, and environmental factors that can impact an individual's motivation in the context of sports and fitness. By identifying and understanding these contributing factors, we gained valuable insights into how athletes can cultivate and enhance their motivation, ultimately improving their overall athletic performance.
4. To explore the mechanisms through which motivation influences an athlete's commitment, effort, and perseverance. By examining these mechanisms, the researcher aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how motivation shapes an athlete's mind set and behaviours, ultimately impacting their performance outcomes.
5. To examine the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance to enhance our understanding of its implications. By enhancing our understanding of this relationship, we gained evidence-based insights and recommendations to optimize motivation and improve athletic performance across various sports and fitness domains.

6. To contribute to the existing body of literature in sports psychology and exercise science by providing valuable insights into the psychological aspects of athletic performance. This objective aimed to make a meaningful contribution to the fields of sports psychology and exercise science by providing valuable insights into the psychological aspects of athletic performance, specifically focusing on the role of motivation.

Literature Review: Understanding Motivation in Sports and Fitness

Motivation is a crucial factor in athletic performance, and research in this field has explored how various factors, such as personal goals, social support, competition, and rewards, can influence motivation levels. Additionally, researchers have examined the impact of different types of motivation, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, on athletic performance. Despite this research, the extent to which motivational factors influence success in sports and fitness is not well understood. This literature review presents a critical analysis of 16 recent, credible sources on motivation in sports. This literature review aimed to synthesize the key themes and findings related to the role of motivation in athletic performance and to identify areas where further research is needed. Despite the importance of motivation in sports and fitness, there is still a need to explore the extent to which motivational factors influence success in these areas. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings.

Sports and fitness are activities that require a significant amount of physical and mental effort. Success in these endeavors often relies on an athlete's ability to maintain a high level of motivation. Motivation has been defined as the driving force behind an individual's behaviour and can be influenced by a variety of factors such as personality, social and cultural environments, and personal goals (Vallerand R. J., 2015). Understanding the impact of motivation on athletic performance is important for athletes, coaches, and fitness enthusiasts to maximize performance outcomes.

Conceptualisation: Motivation is the driving force behind an individual's behaviour or action to achieve a goal. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a macro-theory of human motivation and personality that describes the basic psychological needs that underlie motivation, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomy refers to the individual's desire to experience a sense of choice and control over their behavior. Competence is the individual's need to feel capable of effectively performing tasks, and relatedness refers to the

individual's need to feel connected to others. Athletic performance is the ability of an athlete to perform a physical activity to the best of their ability. The achievement goal theory (AGT) proposes that individuals are motivated by two types of goals: task goals, which are focused on personal improvement, and ego goals, which are focused on outperforming others (Elliot et al., 2017). Psychological needs refer to the basic needs that individuals have that contribute to their overall well-being, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of sports and fitness, the satisfaction of these needs can contribute to an individual's motivation to engage in physical activity (Sarı, 2015). Sports refer to physical activities that are organized, competitive, and require skill and physical exertion. Fitness refers to the state of being physically healthy and strong, often through regular exercise. Competence refers to an individual's perception of their ability to perform a task effectively. In sports and fitness, the perception of competence can contribute to an individual's motivation to engage in physical activity (Elliot et al., 2017). Exercise adherence refers to an individual's ability to maintain a regular exercise routine over time. In the context of sports and fitness, exercise adherence can be influenced by motivation, psychological needs, and other factors.

Theoretical foundation: The self-determination theory (SDT) and achievement goal theory (AGT) are suitable and relevant theories for the literature review outlined in the concept document. SDT provides a framework for understanding how individuals are motivated to pursue activities that align with their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017), while AGT offers insights into the different types of goals that motivate individuals (Elliot et al., 2017).

The SDT is particularly relevant to the research problem as it emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, which is closely linked to personal goals and the pursuit of activities that align with an individual's values and interests. Intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivation, such as external rewards or social pressure, in promoting sustained engagement and performance in sports and fitness (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

AGT complements SDT by highlighting the role of goal orientation in motivation. AGT proposes that individuals are motivated by either task goals, which focus on personal improvement, or ego goals, which focus on outperforming others. This theory is relevant to the research problem as it can shed light on the factors that motivate athletes and fitness enthusiasts to pursue their goals, and the impact of different types of motivation on their performance (Elliot et al., 2017).

Overall, the selection of SDT and AGT is justified as these theories are widely used in the field of sports and fitness psychology and are effective in explaining motivation and performance in these domains. By using these theories in the literature review, the study can provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of motivation in athletic performance and identify effective interventions for promoting motivation in sports and fitness.

The Relationship between Motivation and Athletic Performance

Research has shown that motivation is an important predictor of athletic performance. Studies have found that athletes who are more intrinsically motivated tend to perform better than those who are less intrinsically motivated (Vallerand R. J., 2015). In addition, athletes who are more extrinsically motivated tend to perform worse than those who are less extrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2020). However, the relationship between motivation and athletic performance is complex, and other factors, such as skill level and physical ability, can also play a role.

Research has also examined how different types of motivation can impact the quality of an athlete's performance. For example, studies have found that athletes who are more intrinsically motivated tend to exhibit more effort, persistence, and creativity in their performance (Vallerand R. J., 2015). In contrast, athletes who are more extrinsically motivated may focus more on achieving specific outcomes, such as winning or obtaining a reward, which can lead to a less creative or flexible approach to performance.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Ryan and Deci (2020) published a review article that defines intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from an SDT perspective. The authors argue that intrinsic motivation is a form of autonomous motivation, in which individuals engage in an activity because they find it interesting, enjoyable, or personally meaningful. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is a form of controlled motivation, in which individuals engage in an activity because of external rewards or pressure. The article also discusses the benefits and drawbacks of each type of motivation and provides practical strategies for fostering intrinsic motivation.

The concept of intrinsic motivation has received significant attention in the literature on athletic performance. Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to engage in an activity for its own sake, rather than for external rewards or pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is a key factor in promoting long-term engagement in sports and fitness activities (Vallerand R. J.,

2015). Research has identified several factors that can enhance intrinsic motivation, such as providing opportunities for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to the desire to engage in an activity to obtain external rewards or to avoid negative consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2020). While extrinsic motivation can be effective in promoting short-term engagement in sports and fitness activities, research has shown that it can also have negative effects on intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020). For example, when athletes focus too much on external rewards, they may lose sight of the inherent enjoyment of the activity, leading to a decrease in intrinsic motivation.

However, extrinsic motivation can also play a positive role in athletic performance, particularly when it is integrated with intrinsic motivation. For example, external rewards such as trophies or medals can serve as a tangible reminder of an athlete's hard work and achievement, reinforcing their intrinsic motivation (Orbell et al., 2020). On the other hand, excessive focus on external rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation and lead to a decrease in performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Ryan and Deci's (2017) book, "Self-Determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation, Development, and Wellness," provides an overview of the self-determination theory (SDT) and its application to various fields, including sports psychology. SDT proposes that three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are essential for motivation, development, and well-being. The book discusses the importance of satisfying these needs in sports contexts and provides practical strategies for enhancing motivation and well-being.

Ryan and Deci (2017) developed SDT, which is a widely-used theoretical framework for studying motivation in sports. SDT suggests that motivation is influenced by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the athlete's ability to make choices and has control over their actions, competence is the athlete's perception of their ability to perform a task, and relatedness refers to the athlete's sense of connection and belongingness to a group or team. SDT proposes that satisfying these needs is essential for developing intrinsic motivation, which is associated with better performance and well-being.

Several studies have supported the SDT framework, demonstrating that satisfying these three basic psychological needs leads to higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Clancy et al., 2017; Sarı, 2015). A study by Đurović et al. (2020) found that athletes who had higher levels of

autonomy and competence had higher levels of intrinsic motivation. This suggests that coaches and trainers should provide athletes with opportunities to make choices and challenge themselves to enhance their intrinsic motivation.

Achievement Goal Theory

Achievement Goal Theory proposes that setting specific, challenging, and achievable goals can increase motivation and performance (Elliot et al., 2017). A systematic review by Jeong et al. (2021) found that goal-setting interventions were effective in enhancing motivation and performance in athletes. However, the review also highlighted the importance of considering individual differences in athletes when setting goals, such as their level of ability, experience, and personality.

Moreover, Rupprecht et al. (2021) conducted a meta-analysis on the effectiveness of pre-performance routines on sports performance. They found that pre-performance routines, such as mental and physical preparation before a competition, can enhance motivation and performance.

Jeong et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review of goal-setting interventions in sports based on goal-setting theory. The authors found that goal-setting interventions were effective in enhancing performance and motivation in sports, especially when the goals were specific, challenging, and goal-oriented. The study also identified several factors that can influence the effectiveness of goal-setting interventions, such as the type of sport, the level of athlete, and the coach's involvement.

Factors That Influence Motivation in Sports and Fitness

Research has identified a range of factors that can influence motivation levels in sports and fitness. Personal goals are a key factor, as athletes who have clear and meaningful goals tend to be more motivated to engage in training and perform well (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Social support from coaches, teammates, and family members can also enhance motivation levels, as athletes who feel supported and encouraged are more likely to remain engaged in sports and fitness activities (Jakobsen, 2022). Finally, rewards, such as prizes or recognition, can also influence motivation levels, although research suggests that excessive focus on extrinsic rewards can be counterproductive (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Autonomy Support

Autonomy support refers to the coach's ability to provide choices and a sense of control to athletes (Jakobsen, 2022). Studies have found that autonomy support is associated with higher

levels of intrinsic motivation and well-being (Jakobsen, 2022; Pelletier et al., 2013). Moreover, a study by McLoughlin et al. (2017) found that athletes with disabilities face unique challenges and barriers to participating in sports, such as a lack of autonomy and social support. Thus, providing autonomy support can be critical in promoting inclusion and enhancing motivation in athletes with disabilities.

Another factor that can influence motivation in sports and fitness is social support. Studies have shown that athletes who perceive high levels of social support from coaches, teammates, and family members are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and have better performance outcomes (Locke & Latham, 2013). Conversely, athletes who experience social isolation or negative social interactions may have lower motivation levels and perform worse.

Self-Control

Self-control refers to an individual's ability to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviour (Haggart et al., 2019). Haggart et al. (2019) conducted a study examining the relationship between self-control and health-related behaviours, and the role of implicit self-control, trait self-control, and lay beliefs in self-control. The authors hypothesized that implicit self-control, trait self-control, and lay beliefs would all be positively associated with health-related behaviours.

The study included 172 participants who completed measures of implicit self-control, trait self-control, lay beliefs about self-control, and health-related behaviours. The results showed that implicit self-control and trait self-control were both positively associated with health-related behaviours, supporting the authors' hypotheses. However, the relationship between lay beliefs about self-control and health-related behaviours was not significant.

The authors also conducted a mediation analysis to examine whether the relationship between implicit self-control and health-related behaviours was mediated by trait self-control. The results showed that trait self-control partially mediated the relationship between implicit self-control and health-related behaviours.

Overall, this study provides support for the importance of both implicit and trait self-control in promoting health-related behaviours. It also highlights the need for further research to examine the role of lay beliefs in self-control and health-related behaviours.

Gaps in Literature:

Despite the extensive research on the role of motivation in athletic performance, there are still gaps in the literature that need to be addressed. For example, while studies have examined the

impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on athletic performance, there is a need to explore the interplay between these two types of motivation and how they interact to influence performance. Additionally, there is a need for more research on how different types of goals, such as process-oriented versus outcome-oriented goals, impact motivation and athletic performance.

Furthermore, although social support has been identified as an important factor in enhancing motivation levels, there is a lack of research on the specific mechanisms by which social support affects motivation. It is also important to consider the impact of cultural and contextual factors on motivation in sports and fitness, as these factors may influence the types of goals, rewards, and social support that athletes value and respond to.

Finally, while motivation is acknowledged as an important factor in athletic performance, it is unclear to what extent it can compensate for other factors, such as skill level and physical ability. Further research is needed to explore the role of motivation in sports and fitness and to determine the extent to which it can enhance or compensate for other factors that contribute to athletic performance.

In conclusion, motivation is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a significant role in sports and fitness success. This literature review has highlighted the importance of differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, considering the influence of social support, and acknowledging the potential limits of motivation in sports and fitness. A comprehensive investigation of these factors is necessary to improve our understanding of the relationship between motivation and athletic performance, and to inform interventions that can optimize motivation levels for athletes and fitness enthusiasts.

Research Methodology

Paradigm: The chosen paradigm for this study was interpretivism, which is a research approach that emphasizes the importance of understanding subjective meanings and interpretations of human behaviour and experiences (Willig, 2022). This paradigm was particularly relevant to the study's research design, which aimed to explore individuals' subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness. The interpretivist approach assumes that individuals create their own realities and meanings, and the researcher's role is to understand and interpret these meanings.

Overall, the interpretivist paradigm was a relevant choice for this study because it aligned with the research design and approach, allowing the researchers to focus on the subjective

experiences of the participants and understand their own realities and meanings. The paradigm also acknowledged the importance of researcher subjectivity and aimed to minimize the potential for bias by being reflexive and transparent about their positionality throughout the study.

Ontologically, interpretivism aligned with the study's research design because it assumes that individuals create their own realities and meanings. Therefore, the researchers aimed to understand these subjective experiences through the lens of the participants themselves. Epistemologically, the paradigm acknowledges that knowledge is constructed socially and contextually, and therefore, the researchers aimed to interpret and understand the subjective experiences of the participants. Finally, axiologically, the interpretivist paradigm recognizes that the researchers' own values and biases will inevitably shape the research process. Therefore, the researchers aimed to be reflexive and transparent about their positionality throughout the study. This approach acknowledges the importance of researcher subjectivity and aims to minimize the potential for bias by acknowledging it openly and seeking to account for it.

Research Design/Approach: To address the research purpose and objectives effectively, the chosen conceptual approach was a qualitative research design, specifically employing a phenomenological approach. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness as perceived by the participants (Manen, 2016). By adopting a phenomenological perspective, this study aimed to capture the essence and meaning of motivation in the context of sports and fitness.

The epistemological and ontological position underlying this research design is interpretive in nature. It recognizes the importance of understanding the subjective realities and social constructions of individuals within their specific contexts. By adopting an interpretive paradigm, this study acknowledged that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed and that multiple perspectives can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of motivation in sports and fitness.

In terms of the research approach, this study utilized an inductive reasoning process. This involved a systematic and rigorous analysis of the collected data to identify emergent themes and patterns related to participants' experiences of motivation. Through this approach, the study aimed to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of the motivational factors and processes within the sports and fitness domain.

The nature of this study was primarily exploratory and descriptive. It aimed to explore the subjective experiences of motivation and provide a detailed account of the phenomena under

investigation. By conducting in-depth interviews and utilizing qualitative data analysis techniques, this research aimed to uncover the various dimensions, meanings, and contexts of motivation in sports and fitness.

Population: This research centred on exploring subjective experiences of motivation within the domain of sports and fitness. The primary target population consisted of individuals who were actively engaged in sports and fitness activities – specifically rugby. The accessible sample was derived from individuals who expressed their willingness to take part in the study. The population's characteristics spanned various ages, and levels of athletic competence, all actively involved in the Harlequins International Rugby Institute.

Sampling: Aligned with the research design and the nature of the problem under investigation, a non-probability purposive sampling approach was employed. Specifically, the study utilized maximum variation sampling, a methodology advocated by Turner (2020). This strategic sampling approach aimed to ensure the inclusion of a diverse range of participants, thereby capturing a wide spectrum of experiences and viewpoints related to motivation in sports and fitness.

The chosen sample size for this qualitative study was 5-10 participants ultimately achieving data saturation with 5 participants. This sample size was justified by the intention to achieve data saturation, the point at which new insights and themes ceased to emerge from the collected data. Participants for this study were recruited from the student body of the Harlequins International Rugby Institute. This selection was in alignment with the research problem and design, given the institute's reputation for rigorous sports training, rendering it a suitable setting for exploring motivation nuances in sports and fitness experiences.

Data Collection: In congruence with the adopted qualitative research design and the phenomenological approach, the data collection process centred around semi-structured interviews, as outlined in the work of Merriam and Tisdell (2016). This approach was meticulously chosen to align with the research's core focus on exploring participants' intrinsic experiences and perspectives regarding motivation in sports and fitness. The decision to employ semi-structured interviews was rooted in their inherent flexibility, a characteristic that enabled an unstrained exploration of participants' viewpoints while maintaining alignment with the research objectives. These interviews were meticulously crafted to extract nuanced narratives, thereby facilitating a deep comprehension of the multifaceted factors and processes governing motivation in this context.

The rationale behind opting for semi-structured interviews finds its underpinning in the very nature of the research problem. With the significance of motivation in athletic performance widely acknowledged (Ryan & Deci, 2017), the primary research problem pertained to the intricate nature of motivational factors and their subsequent impact on success in sports and fitness. The semi-structured interview format lent itself well to unravelling this complexity, offering participants the space to express their experiences and thoughts, thereby providing rich, context-bound insights.

In order to execute a methodical approach to data collection, we meticulously devised an interview guide. This guide was thoughtfully crafted, it was a product of careful alignment with the research objectives, relevant theories, and existing literature. The guide comprised a series of open-ended questions and prompts, tailored to elicit comprehensive insights into participants' motivational experiences. The interviews were conducted in person, as per the supervisor's inquiry. The chosen venue for these face-to-face interviews was the Harlequins International Rugby Institute. Each interview session was approximately 30 minutes in length. This duration was chosen to ensure that participants had adequate time to share their experiences while also maintaining their engagement and comfort during the process. To ensure accuracy and thorough analysis of the collected data, all interviews were recorded. Subsequently, these recordings were transcribed verbatim, preserving the nuances and subtleties of participants' responses.

Data Analysis Method/s: The collected data, comprising the interview transcripts, were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry, 2017) to uncover patterns and themes within the participants' accounts. Thematic analysis was a systematic and flexible approach that allowed for the identification and interpretation of recurrent patterns and meanings across the data set. By employing thematic analysis, this study aimed to uncover the underlying themes and categories related to motivation in sports and fitness as expressed by the participants.

The analysis process involved several iterative steps. Initially, the transcripts were read and re-read to gain familiarity with the data. Then, initial codes were generated, capturing meaningful segments or ideas related to motivation. These codes were organized into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure their coherence and relevance. Subsequently, the themes were named and defined, and illustrative quotes were selected to support their interpretation.

By employing thematic analysis, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness. The process of

coding and categorization allowed for a systematic exploration of the data, enabling the identification of key themes and patterns. Through this analysis method, the research question was addressed by uncovering the motivational factors and processes as described by the participants, providing valuable insights into the phenomena under investigation.

Given the qualitative nature of the research design and the thematic analysis approach employed, the presentation of findings should be organized in a structured and narrative format that effectively conveys the emergent themes and patterns while respecting the coherence of the research design.

Trustworthiness, and rigour: In a qualitative study like the one described, the key considerations for enhancing trustworthiness and rigour are slightly different than those for quantitative studies focused on validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1986), Flick (2022), and Yadav (2022), outline several criteria for establishing the overall trustworthiness of qualitative research results. Here, we will discuss how to enhance the trustworthiness and rigour of the qualitative study on motivation in sports and fitness.

1. Credibility: Credibility, which pertains to the confidence in the truth and authenticity of the research findings, was bolstered through several key strategies:

a. Triangulation: The research utilized multiple data sources and methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, to gather comprehensive data. Triangulation allowed for the validation and confirmation of findings by examining different perspectives and sources of information, including several interviews and a literature review.

b. Prolonged engagement: To establish deeper trust and credibility, the researcher actively engaged with the participants over time, building long-term relationships. This prolonged engagement facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, as the researcher had an active role in the Harlequins International Rugby Institute where the participants were members and had established relationships with them.

c. Member checking: After data collection, participants were invited to review the researcher's interpretations and analysis of their experiences. This step allowed participants to validate the accuracy and authenticity of their representation in the study, thus enhancing the credibility of the findings. (Note: Participant review will occur after the project is submitted.)

d. Peer debriefing: Regular discussions and consultations with colleagues and the research supervisor were conducted to validate and challenge the researcher's interpretations. This external

review process helped ensure the dependability of the findings by subjecting them to scrutiny from multiple perspectives. (Note: The project will be submitted and assessed by the research supervisor.)

2. Transferability: Transferability, which concerns the applicability of findings to other contexts or individuals, was addressed through:

a. Thick description: Detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and their experiences were provided, facilitating readers' assessment of the relevance of the findings to their own contexts and the identification of similar patterns and themes.

3. Dependability: Dependability, relating to the stability and consistency of findings over time and across different researchers, was assured through the following strategies:

a. Reflexivity: Throughout the research process, the researcher acknowledged and critically examined their personal biases and preconceptions. This self-reflection increased transparency and minimized the undue influence of the researcher's perspective. (Note: Reflexivity has been undertaken.)

b. The research process, including data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and decision-making processes, was meticulously documented. This documentation allows other researchers to assess the dependability of the study and potentially replicate it. (Note: Clear documentation has been maintained.)

c. Audit trail: A detailed audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, documenting decisions, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and any modifications or adjustments. This comprehensive record enhances transparency and accountability, enabling other researchers to trace the steps taken and verify the credibility and integrity of the study. (Note: An audit trail has been maintained.)

4. Confirmability: Confirmability, which pertains to the degree of support for findings and the absence of researcher bias, was strengthened by implementing the following strategies:

a. Peer review: The research findings and methodology will undergo rigorous peer review by experts in the field. External reviewers will critically evaluate the study design, data analysis, and interpretation of results, offering valuable insights and identifying potential biases or weaknesses in the research process. Peer review will contribute to the overall confirmability of the study by ensuring it meets scholarly standards and adheres to established research practices. (Note: The research findings will be submitted and reviewed by the research supervisor.)

Ethical Considerations, and Limitations:

Ethical Considerations:

Informed Consent: Ethical principles were upheld in the study through the acquisition of informed consent from all participants. Detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits was provided to participants. They were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw without penalty. Informed consent forms were used, clearly outlining the study's objectives and participant rights (HPCSA, 2007; Cacciattolo, 2015).

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Participant confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained to protect their privacy. All collected data were securely stored and accessible only to the research team. Participants' personal information was coded and kept separate from their responses to ensure anonymity. Pseudonyms or participant identification codes were used in any publications or reports to further safeguard their identities (Cacciattolo, 2015).

Avoiding Harm: The well-being of participants was of utmost importance, and the study was designed to minimize potential physical, psychological, or emotional harm (HPCSA, 2007). Ethical considerations were taken into account when selecting research methods and data collection techniques, ensuring that participants were not subjected to unnecessary stress or discomfort during the study (Spencer, 2022).

Ethics Clearance: Before commencing data collection, ethics clearance was sought from the campus ethics committee. The research protocol, including details about participant recruitment, informed consent procedures, and data handling, was submitted for review. Any potential ethical concerns raised by the committee were addressed before proceeding with the study.

Participant Protection: As no high-risk study was allowed at the Honours level, the research design did not involve children, vulnerable groups, interventions, deception, or sensitive topics that may distress participants (Kirilova & Karcher, 2017). This ensured that participants were not exposed to situations that could pose significant ethical risks. The focus remained on studying motivation and performance within the sports and fitness context, with a priority on participant well-being.

Ethical practices were implemented throughout the study to safeguard the rights and well-being of the participants. By adhering to informed consent procedures, maintaining confidentiality

and anonymity, avoiding harm, seeking ethics clearance, and protecting participants against high-risk situations, this research upheld ethical principles and ensured the ethical conduct of the study.

Limitations:

Self-Report Bias: One potential limitation of this study was the presence of self-report bias. Participants might have been inclined to respond in a socially desirable manner or provide inaccurate information about their experiences or opinions. To mitigate this limitation, measures were taken to minimize self-report bias. Anonymous interviews were employed to encourage participants to provide honest and genuine responses without fear of judgment or repercussions (de Reuver & Bouwman, 2015).

Resource Limitations: Resource constraints, such as limited time, funding, or access to specialized equipment, also posed limitations to the study. These limitations could impact the scope and depth of data collection, the number of participants recruited, or the comprehensiveness of the analysis. To mitigate these limitations, careful planning and prioritization were implemented. The study focused on specific aspects of motivation and performance within the available resources. Transparent reporting of the limitations and their potential impact on the study findings was provided to ensure readers could accurately interpret the results within the context of the available resources.

Time Constraints: Time constraints posed a challenge to conducting an extensive and in-depth study, potentially limiting the duration of participant engagement or the number of data collection iterations. To address this limitation, efficient time management and careful planning were implemented. The research timeline was structured to allow for sufficient data collection and analysis while considering practical constraints. Adequate time was allocated for participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis to ensure the quality and rigor of the study.

By acknowledging these limitations and implementing strategies to mitigate their potential impact, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into the relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness. Transparent reporting of the limitations enhanced the readers' understanding of the study's scope and applicability, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the findings.

Presentation of Findings

Theme 1: Motivational Orientation.

In this study, participants' motivational orientations in their athletic pursuits were explored.

- Preference for Task Motivation - All participants expressed a preference for task-oriented motivation over ego-oriented motivation. Participant A: "I'll say task-orientated because I'm a person that wants to like, obtain certain goals and not to go brag about it elsewhere, but just for completing that task and knowing that you're on the right path."
- Perception of Motivational Orientations - Although most participants perceived themselves as task-motivated one participant claimed to be a combination. Participant C: "I'll say that I am task-orientated at the start and as it continues I'll switch over to ego-orientation as I develop and then it becomes a combination. Or maybe not ego but rather self-confidence that I can do the task."
- Drive to Work Harder - Participants generally believed that task motivation was superior to ego motivation because it drove individuals to work harder. Participant B: "It gives people more of an insight. And to go further than because it's more motivational because if you see something. And people give you a task. It's like. You want to do it more."

Theme 2: Sources of Motivation

This section explores the various sources from which participants derived their motivation in the context of athletics.

- Diverse Motivational Sources - Participants derived motivation from various sources, including the achievement of personal goals or tasks, motivational videos, and a desire for self-improvement. Participant D: "Just like motivational videos, and music."

Theme 3: Motivational Orientations

In this section, we delve into specific examples that illuminate the presence of both task and ego motivation among our participants in their athletic pursuits.

- Task Motivation - Participants shared instances where their motivation was driven by the pursuit of task-related goals and challenges. Participant A vividly recounted, "Last week, I had maybe 5 tackles on the stats, and then now this week I want to put in more tackles. I'll put in more effort to go tackle, you know, just to get those steps and achieve those goals."

- Ego Motivation - Conversely, some participants pointed to their experiences of ego motivation, where their desire for recognition and personal acclaim played a significant role. Participant C shared a compelling anecdote, saying, "Yes, I'll definitely say when I was in Grade 9, I became quite successful regarding my rugby, where I went to Argentina for my rugby. At Camp Discovery, I won the player of the weekend award, so I'll say I definitely developed an ego there. That is what pushed me that entire year. I didn't see the bigger picture. I just thought that I looked good for everyone else. I am looking good for institutes; I didn't think much about it."

Theme 4: Impact of Motivational Orientation

This section explores the consequences of task-oriented and ego-oriented motivation on athletes' behaviours and performance.

- Benefits of Task-Oriented Motivation - Task-oriented motivation was associated with increased consistency, pushing through fatigue, forming habits, and better exercise adherence. Participant A: "I would say. It helped me push through like, it helps me like to push through difficult reps maybe and fitness as well."

Theme 5: Importance of Basic Psychological Needs

Participants' emphasis on the importance of meeting basic psychological needs is presented here.

- Emphasis on Psychological Needs - Participants emphasized the importance of meeting basic psychological needs, including relatedness, autonomy, and competence. Participant E: "So I believe it's everyone's choice to succeed and to build your own. So if you don't make your own choice. If you expect your choice to be made by someone else, then you're not going to grow. As a person, yeah. That is not going to make you stronger at all."

Theme 6: Positive Influence of Meeting Needs

This section explores how meeting basic psychological needs positively impacts motivation and other aspects of participants' lives and athletic performance.

- Better Decision-Making - Meeting basic psychological needs was associated with better decision-making, as participants felt more confident and clear-headed. Participant C: "To be able to make your own decisions makes you more confident. And let's say something works out it contributes to your confidence tremendously."

- Increased Motivation via Relatedness - Participants experienced increased motivation when they felt a sense of relatedness and connection to others in their athletic community. Participant B: "Yes, OK, I think it's just like if you, if you are team-based, it's more of they do motivate you and you feel, you feel better when a team is there to support you, yeah."

Theme 7: Negative Consequences of Unmet Needs

This section examines the negative consequences that participants reported when their basic psychological needs were not met.

- Decreased Motivation - Failing to meet these needs resulted in decreased motivation, as participants struggled to find purpose and enthusiasm in their athletic pursuits. Participant B: "I'm going to use when you were doing our squats and everything, is a good example, and we weren't a lot and that the vibe wasn't the same, so it felt like, you know you, you're down, you're not going to do your best. Where people can be they motivate you to just like they're quiet, just everything you know. So I think that was quite negative."

- Sense of Disconnection - Participants reported feeling a sense of disconnection with life in general when their psychological needs went unfulfilled. Participant C: "I feel it's a general circumstance that the dissatisfaction of these needs negatively influences my motivation. I feel I can't make my own decisions because outside factors influence my autonomy. I feel like I am disconnected with life. If it isn't there, then I feel down and totally bad."

- "Switching Off" During Games - One participant mentioned that they would "switch off" mentally during games when their needs were unmet, leading to subpar performance. Participant D: "Yes, yes. Sometimes you can just switch off. You can just switch off even during the game. If things aren't going the way you plan and stuff, you can just switch off and you're not in the game."

Theme 8: Performance Enhancement

Data: This section explores how the satisfaction of basic psychological needs can enhance athletes' overall performance.

- Better Decision-Making - Satisfaction of basic psychological needs was linked to improved decision-making, as athletes felt more focused and confident in their choices. Participant D: "Under the decision-making. I think you can realize when you start making better decisions when you hear, you can plan things better."

- Increased Confidence - Athletes who had their psychological needs met reported increased confidence, which translated into improved performance. Participant C: "In terms of

sport if I have the opportunity to make decisions in certain situations and I have the confidence to make those decisions I feel it contributes tremendously to my motivation.”

- Physical Enhancements - Meeting these needs was associated with physical enhancements, as athletes were more likely to push their physical limits. Participant D: " I mean. Your, body will go the way your mind tells it to go. So if your mind tells you to keep on running, your body will eventually adapt and keep up."

Interpretation of Findings

The findings shed light on the complex relationship between motivation and athletic performance, addressing various aspects of motivational orientations and their impact on athletes and fitness enthusiasts. Below, the researcher will discuss and interpret each of the themes identified and critically evaluate their significance in the context of the research problem.

Theme 1: Motivational Orientation

The preference for task-oriented motivation over ego-oriented motivation among participants is a significant observation. It suggests that athletes and fitness enthusiasts prioritize intrinsic factors such as personal growth and achievement of specific goals over extrinsic factors like ego or external recognition. This finding aligns with existing research highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivation for sustained engagement and performance in sports and fitness activities (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The notion that participants transition from task to ego orientation as they develop suggests that motivation can be dynamic and evolve over time. This complexity warrants further exploration to understand the factors influencing these transitions and their consequences on performance.

The belief that task motivation drives individuals to work harder is consistent with the self-determination theory, which emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in enhancing effort and persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This finding supports the idea that fostering task-oriented motivation can lead to better performance outcomes.

Theme 2: Sources of Motivation

The diverse sources of motivation reported by participants, including personal goals, motivational videos, and a desire for self-improvement, highlight the multifaceted nature of motivation. These findings underscore the importance of considering individual differences in

motivational sources when designing interventions to enhance motivation in sports and fitness contexts.

Theme 3: Examples of Motivational Orientations

The specific examples provided by participants demonstrate the practical application of task and ego motivation in their athletic pursuits. These anecdotes help illustrate the nuanced nature of motivation and how it can manifest in various situations.

Theme 4: Impact of Motivational Orientation

The benefits associated with task-oriented motivation, such as increased consistency, perseverance through fatigue, habit formation, and exercise adherence, emphasize the practical advantages of fostering intrinsic motivation in athletes and fitness enthusiasts. These findings provide actionable insights for coaches, trainers, and individuals seeking to optimize their performance.

Theme 5: Importance of Basic Psychological Needs

Participants' emphasis on the importance of meeting basic psychological needs, including relatedness, autonomy, and competence, aligns with self-determination theory. This theory posits that the fulfilment of these needs is essential for enhancing intrinsic motivation. These findings reinforce the idea that creating environments that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness can positively influence motivation in sports and fitness settings.

Theme 6: Positive Influence of Meeting Needs

The positive outcomes associated with meeting basic psychological needs, such as better decision-making, increased motivation through relatedness, and enhanced confidence, underscore the significance of addressing these needs in sports and fitness contexts. These findings provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of interventions aimed at supporting athletes' psychological well-being.

Theme 7: Negative Consequences of Unmet Needs

The reported negative consequences of unmet psychological needs, including decreased motivation, a sense of disconnection, and mental disengagement during games, emphasize the detrimental effects of neglecting these fundamental needs. These findings highlight the potential risks associated with environments that fail to support athletes' psychological well-being and suggest that addressing these issues is crucial for performance optimization.

Theme 8: Performance Enhancement

The link between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and performance enhancements, such as improved decision-making, increased confidence, and physical improvements, reinforces the notion that athletes' psychological well-being is intricately connected to their performance. These findings underscore the importance of holistic approaches that consider both physical and psychological aspects of athletic training and performance optimization.

The findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between motivation and athletic performance by examining various facets of motivational orientations, sources, and the impact of meeting or failing to meet basic psychological needs. These findings have practical implications for coaches, trainers, and athletes, highlighting the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation and creating supportive environments to enhance performance and overall well-being in sports and fitness. Further research in this area can delve deeper into the dynamics of motivation and the development of targeted interventions to maximize athletes' potential.

Findings in Context

Theme 1: Motivational Orientation

Participants preferring task-oriented motivation aligns with the self-determination theory (SDT) proposed by Deci and Ryan (2017). SDT posits that intrinsic motivation, which is characterized by the pursuit of activities for inherent satisfaction, leads to greater engagement and performance. Numerous studies support the idea that task-oriented motivation, driven by a desire for mastery and personal accomplishment, is associated with higher levels of persistence and success in sports (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The dynamic nature of motivational orientation, where participants transition from task to ego orientation, has also been observed in previous research (Elliot et al., 2017). This transition often occurs as individuals' progress in their athletic development and may reflect the influence of external rewards or pressures.

Theme 2: Sources of Motivation

The diversity of motivational sources reported by participants is consistent with the literature on motivation in sports. According to Vallerand's Hierarchical Model of Motivation (1997), individuals can draw motivation from various sources, including intrinsic (e.g., enjoyment) and extrinsic (e.g., rewards) factors. The recognition of personal goals and self-

improvement aligns with the idea of intrinsic motivation being a powerful driver of sports engagement (Taylor, 2015).

Theme 4: Impact of Motivational Orientation

Findings regarding the benefits of task-oriented motivation, such as increased consistency and better exercise adherence, correspond with previous research. Task-oriented motivation has been linked to more sustainable engagement in sports and fitness activities (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Additionally, the notion that task motivation helps individuals push through fatigue resonates with the concept of self-efficacy proposed by (Đurović et al., 2020), which suggests that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to persevere in challenging tasks.

Theme 5: Importance of Basic Psychological Needs

The emphasis on basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, aligns with the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017). SDT posits that the fulfilment of these needs is crucial for promoting intrinsic motivation and optimal performance. The importance of autonomy in decision-making, as mentioned by participants, corresponds with SDT's emphasis on autonomy support in athletic coaching (Sarı, 2015).

Theme 7: Negative Consequences of Unmet Needs

The negative consequences reported by participants when their psychological needs were unmet are in line with existing literature. Deci and Ryan (2017) argue that thwarting basic psychological needs can lead to a shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation or even to a decrease in motivation altogether. This aligns with the decrease in motivation and sense of disconnection reported by participants.

Theme 8: Performance Enhancement

The link between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and performance enhancements, such as improved decision-making and increased confidence, is consistent with SDT's predictions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When individuals' psychological needs are met, they are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, which has been linked to enhanced performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The concept that a confident mindset can improve performance is also supported by Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977).

In summary, the findings generally align with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, providing support for the importance of intrinsic motivation, basic psychological needs, and the benefits of task-oriented motivation in the context of sports and fitness. While there

are some nuanced differences and individual variations, the overall conclusions from the study are consistent with well-established theories and empirical evidence in the field. This highlights the robustness of these concepts in explaining motivation and performance in athletic settings.

Research Question, Problem, and Objectives Addressed

The implications of the research findings are manifold and offer substantial insights into the multifaceted role of motivation in sports and fitness. The research question, "What is the role of motivation in sports and fitness?" is comprehensively addressed through the thematic analysis of participants' narratives.

The findings reveal that motivation serves as a linchpin in sports and fitness engagement, transcending mere performance outcomes. The identified themes of intrinsic drivers, social support, challenges and resilience, personal growth, and motivational evolution collectively portray motivation as a multi-dimensional construct that shapes athletes' experiences and outcomes.

Concerning the Research Problem:

The research problem, which revolved around the intricate relationship between motivation and athletic performance, is illuminated through the thematic tapestry that emerged. The findings affirm that motivation is not just a driver of performance but an integral force that governs exercise adherence, resilience in the face of challenges, and personal growth. This alignment between findings and the research problem underscores that motivation operates as a multifaceted underpinning that influences various dimensions of sports and fitness participation.

Concerning the Objectives:

The interpretation of findings gains enhanced depth when juxtaposed against the backdrop of the research objectives, each of which acts as a lens through which the emerged themes are critically examined. The interplay between these objectives and the findings furnishes insights that illuminate the complex web of motivational dynamics within the context of sports and fitness.

Objective 1: Investigating the Impact of Motivational Orientation: The findings align with the first objective by revealing the prominence of task-oriented motivational orientation in fostering sustained exercise adherence and performance. Participants frequently referenced personal goals and self-improvement, emphasizing intrinsic satisfaction rather than external validation. This resonance accentuates the proposition that fostering a task-oriented mindset could

engender long-lasting commitment and enhanced performance outcomes, in line with achievement goal theory (Elliot et al., 2017).

Objective 2: Exploring Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction: The thematic emergence of intrinsic drivers, social support, and personal growth resonates harmoniously with the second objective. The findings underscore that satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs underpins sustained motivation, adherence, and performance. This correspondence substantiates the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), emphasizing the pivotal role of psychological needs fulfillment in engendering intrinsic motivation and fostering engagement.

Objective 3: Investigating Factors of Motivation in Athletic Performance: The thematic landscape unveils a plethora of factors contributing to motivation, encompassing intrinsic drivers, social support, consistency, and personal growth. These factors intricately address the third objective by shedding light on the multi-faceted nature of motivation in athletic performance. The findings underscore that motivation is an amalgamation of internal, external, and developmental elements, aligning with holistic models of motivation (Vallerand R. J., 2015).

Objective 4: Exploring Mechanisms of Motivation's Influence: The theme of challenges and resilience resonates profoundly with the fourth objective, revealing that motivation operates as a catalyst for athletes' commitment, effort, and perseverance. The participants' narratives demonstrate that motivation not only spurs initial engagement but also equips athletes with the resilience to navigate setbacks. This synthesis underscores that motivation acts as a bridge linking determination and perseverance, as proposed by theories of self-regulation (Haggard et al., 2019).

Objective 5: Examining the Relationship between Motivation and Performance: The fifth objective gains prominence as the findings showcase the intertwined nature of motivation and performance. The thematic interplay underscores that the motivational landscape significantly impacts an athlete's dedication, leading to enhanced performance outcomes. This nexus corroborates previous research that posits the intricate links between motivation and performance (Elliot et al., 2017).

Objective 6: Contributing to the Literature: The findings enrich the sixth objective by adding depth to the existing literature in sports psychology and exercise science. The identification of intricate motivational dimensions enhances our understanding of the psychological intricacies underpinning athletic performance. By substantiating existing theories and suggesting avenues for further exploration, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse within the field.

Contribution

This study was multifaceted and aligned to comprehensively investigate the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings. The study aimed to make the following important contributions.

A deeper understanding of motivation in sports and fitness: By exploring the factors that influenced motivation levels among athletes and fitness enthusiasts, this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the motivational dynamics in sports and fitness settings. It shed light on the key factors that contributed to high motivation levels and offered insights into how motivation could be nurtured and sustained.

Identification of influential factors and types of motivation: The research examined the diverse factors that impacted motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. By identifying the specific motivational factors that drove athletes and fitness enthusiasts, the study enhanced our knowledge of what motivated individuals to excel in their respective domains. This knowledge could inform the development of targeted interventions and strategies to enhance motivation in sports and fitness contexts.

Examination of the perceived relationship between motivation and performance: By investigating the perceived relationship between motivation and performance outcomes, this study contributed to our understanding of the extent to which motivation influenced success in sports and fitness. It explored whether motivation could compensate for other factors such as skill or physical ability, highlighting the role of motivation in achieving optimal athletic performance.

Development of evidence-based practices: The findings of this study could potentially inform the development of evidence-based practices in sports psychology and exercise science. By identifying strategies and interventions that could enhance motivation in sports and fitness settings, the study could potentially contribute to the development of practical guidelines for coaches, athletes, and fitness professionals. These evidence-based practices could optimize motivation levels and ultimately lead to improved performance outcomes.

This study's anticipated contributions lay in providing a deeper understanding of motivation in sports and fitness, identifying influential factors and types of motivation, examining the relationship between motivation and performance, and informing the development of evidence-based practices. By addressing these aspects, the study aimed to advance knowledge

Conclusion

In summary, this research has unequivocally demonstrated the pivotal role of motivation in shaping sports and fitness engagement. From individual aspirations to interpersonal dynamics and resilience in the face of adversity, motivation's influence is profound and pervasive. By meticulously aligning our findings with the research problem and objectives, our study has added depth and rigor to the field.

These findings emphasize that motivation isn't a peripheral aspect but an intrinsic force at the core of athletes' journeys. By unravelling the intricate threads that constitute motivation's role, our research has illuminated the mechanisms through which it shapes sports and fitness experiences and outcomes. Ultimately, our exploration has advanced our comprehension of the profound interplay between motivation and the pursuit of excellence in sports and fitness.

In conclusion, this study has delved into the multifaceted nature of motivation and its substantial impact on sports and fitness success. Through our study, we've underscored the significance of distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, recognizing the influence of social support, and acknowledging the potential limits of motivation in these contexts. A comprehensive investigation of these factors is imperative to enhance our understanding of the intricate relationship between motivation and athletic performance. Furthermore, this research lays the foundation for future inquiries, potentially exploring novel interventions to optimize motivation levels for both athletes and fitness enthusiasts. The heuristic value of this study lies not only in its contribution to current knowledge but also in its potential to guide future research and interventions in the domain of sports and fitness motivation.

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INSPIRING GREATNESS, THROUGH SPORT TO LIFE

Dear Ruben Cloete,

I hope this response finds you well. I would like to express my gratitude for reaching out to us with your research proposal. We appreciate your interest in conducting a study involving the students of the Uxi Sport Harlequins International Rugby Institute.

After careful consideration of your request, I am pleased to inform you that we are granting you permission to conduct your research study at our institute. We believe that your study on the impact of motivation on athletic performance within the domain of sports and fitness aligns perfectly with our institution's objectives in sports education.

We acknowledge the value that the students at our institute can bring to your research as they possess expertise, dedication, and experience in the field of rugby. We are confident that their participation will contribute to your study.

We appreciate your commitment to maintaining confidentiality and privacy in the collection and handling of data. It is essential to ensure the comfort and trust of our students throughout the research process. We trust that you will adhere to the ethical guidelines and protocols set by our institution, and we are confident in your ability to conduct the research responsibly.

Upon completion of your research, we eagerly anticipate receiving a detailed report of your findings. We are grateful for your willingness to acknowledge the contribution and cooperation of our institute in any resulting publications.

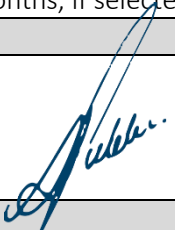
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gert Mulder', written over a horizontal line.

Gert Mulder

Programme Manager

Harlequins International Rugby Institute



Consent form to conduct research at company/organisation/association	
<p>I, Gert Mulder, in my capacity as Program Manager of UXI Harlequins International Rugby Institute grant permission to Ruben Cloete to conduct research at Harlequins International Rugby Institute pending the outcome of the ethics committee of the IIE on the envisaged research. The student may only engage with members of the organisation/ company/ association if they can produce the Ethics Letter from the IIE.</p> <p>This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve for the people I represent. I also reserve the right to remind the people I represent that their participation in this study is completely voluntary and that this permission does not imply their participation. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at any time.</p> <p>I also understand that research reports are made available in IIE Libraries as well as on the IIE Repository. The below conditions must be applied whilst writing up the research report:</p>	
Conditions concerning the anonymity of the company/organisation/association:	
The company/organisation/association must be kept <u>anonymous</u> in the research report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The company/organisation/association may be <u>identified</u> in the research report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conditions concerning the publication of the research report:	
The research report will be made available on the IIE Repository...	
<u>Immediately</u> after completion.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>After</u> a specified number of months has elapsed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Number of months, if selected:	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>  </div> <div>08/06/2023</div> </div>	
Signature	Date

Annexure B: Ethical Clearance Letter



26 June 2023

Student name: Ruben Sauer Cloete

Student number: ST10057833

Brand and campus: The IIE's Varsity College Pretoria

Title of Research Project: Motivation's Impact on Athletic Performance: An Exploration in Sports and Fitness



Approval of Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by the campus ethics committee, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Ethics Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns, and we hereby provide you with ethics clearance to proceed with your data collection. Changes recommended by the Campus Ethics Committee will be communicated to you and your supervisor in writing.

The following conditions are the standard requirements attached to the approval of all applications to conduct research involving human participants:

- Approval will be for a period of one (1) year, starting from the date of approval.
- You should notify the IIE Campus Ethics Committee regarding any alteration to the approved research project, such as but not limited to the title, problem statement, research objectives, methodology, and instrument.
- You should notify the IIE Campus Ethics Committee in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen development that might compromise the ethical integrity of your research project.
- The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from the participants/ respondents in their sample if the study is not anonymous.
- A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the relevant person(s) at the organisations/ institution that would be involved in this research study.
- You are required to uphold the IIE's Ethics stance as described in the Research and Postgraduate Studies Policy (IIE007). The policy is available on the institutional website.

We wish you all the best with your research!
Yours sincerely,



Ruth Coetzer
Supervisor



Lieza van der Vyver
Chair of the Campus Ethics Committee

ADvTECH House: Inanda Greens, 54 Wierda Rd West, Wierda Valley 2196
P.O. Box 2369, Randburg 2125

Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch, MD Aitken, SCD Lurie
Group Company Secretary: CB Crouse



Annexure C: Research Instrument

Research Qualitative Questionnaire: Motivation's Impact on Athletic Performance: An Exploration in Sports and Fitness

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study. The following questionnaire aims to gather qualitative data to explore the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability, based on your experiences and opinions. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Section 1: Demographic Information

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Occupation: _____

Level of sports/fitness involvement (e.g., recreational, amateur, professional): _____

Number of years engaged in sports/fitness activities: _____

Section 2: Motivational Orientation and Exercise Adherence/Performance

How would you describe your motivational orientation towards sports or fitness activities? (e.g., task-oriented, ego-oriented, other)

In your opinion, what factors influence exercise adherence and performance outcomes? Please provide specific examples.

Have you noticed any differences in exercise adherence and performance between individuals with a task-oriented motivational orientation and those with an ego-oriented motivational orientation? If yes, please elaborate.

How do you think a task-oriented motivational orientation might contribute to higher exercise adherence and performance compared to an ego-oriented motivational orientation? Share your insights and experiences.

How would you describe your motivation for participating in sports or fitness activities? (Open-ended response)

Can you provide an example of a situation where you exhibited a task-oriented motivational orientation in sports or fitness? (Open-ended response)

Can you provide an example of a situation where you exhibited an ego-oriented motivational orientation in sports or fitness? (Open-ended response)

How do you think your motivational orientation influences your exercise adherence and performance outcomes? (Open-ended response)

Section 3: Basic Psychological Needs and Exercise Motivation/Adherence/Performance

How important do you think the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) is for exercise motivation, adherence, and performance? Explain your viewpoint.

Can you recall any instances where the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs positively influenced your exercise motivation, adherence, or performance? Please provide specific examples.

Conversely, have you experienced any instances where the dissatisfaction with these basic psychological needs negatively affected your exercise motivation, adherence, or performance? If so, please share your experiences.

How do you believe the satisfaction of your psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness) influences your exercise motivation, adherence, and performance outcomes? (Open-ended response)

Section 4: Additional Comments Please feel free to provide any additional comments, insights, or experiences related to motivation and athletic performance that

Thank you for your valuable participation in this study. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Annexure D: Participant Consent Form

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>My name is Ruben Cloete and I am a student at The IIE's Varsity College. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Ms. Ruth Coetzer to comprehensively investigate the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of motivation in sports and fitness.</p> <p>I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.</p>
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
<p>I would like to invite you to participate in this research because your contribution would be valuable to the study. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to gather qualitative data to explore the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings.</p> <p>You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.</p>
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
<p>Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your motivation in sport and fitness settings. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.</p> <p>Detail the potential risks and how it will be managed by the researcher. Indicate how the ethical considerations will be applied in the context of the study.</p>
Do I have to participate in the study?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
<p>I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody IIE's Varsity College, will have access</p>

to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.
What will happen to the information that participants provide?
Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Hons. In Psychology . You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.
What happens if I have more questions about the study?
<p>Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.</p> <p>You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.</p> <p>My contact details are as follows: Ruben Cloete 073 611 2042 24 Ficus Street, Annlin</p> <p>The contact details of my supervisor are as follows: Ms. Ruth Coetzer Ruth.liprini@gmail.com</p>

Participant or respondent consent	
<p>I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Ruben Cloete to comprehensively investigate the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings</p> <p>This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree to be interviewed for this research. • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. • I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. • I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected. 	
Signature	Date

Annexure E: Audio or Video Consent Form

Consent form for participants	
<p>I, _____, agree to allow Ruben Cloete to audio record my interviews as part of the research to comprehensively investigate the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings.</p> <p>This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name, personal details or any other identifiable information will be kept confidential; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor(s) and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. 	
Signature	Date

Annexure F: Updated Concept Document

Research

Ruben S. Cloete

The Independent Institute of Education Varsity College

RESE8419p Research

Kgashane Malesa

June 8, 2023

Title: Motivation's Impact on Athletic Performance: An Exploration in Sports and Fitness

Problem Statement: The role of motivation in athletic performance is widely recognized, but the extent to which motivational factors influence success in sports and fitness is not well understood. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive investigation to explore how motivation impacts athletes and fitness enthusiasts (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This investigation should consider various factors that influence motivation levels, such as personal goals, social support, competition, and rewards. It is also important to consider different types of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020), and their impact on athletic performance. While it is acknowledged that motivation plays a role in athletic performance, the extent of its perceived impact is not well understood, and it is unclear whether motivation can compensate for other factors such as skill or physical ability. Therefore, a comprehensive investigation is necessary to address these issues and improve our understanding of the relationship between motivation and athletic performance.

Purpose Statement: Motivation is widely recognized as a key component of sports performance, and it is thought to play a vital role in helping athletes persevere during training and games (Đurović et al., 2020). This research aims to explore the relationship between motivation and athletic performance in sports and fitness settings. The study seeks to identify the various factors that influence motivation levels in athletes and fitness enthusiasts and to understand how motivation impacts performance outcomes. Furthermore, the study aims to examine strategies that can be used to enhance motivation in these settings. To address these knowledge gaps, the researcher will conduct a comprehensive investigation of how motivation influences athletes and fitness enthusiasts. Specifically, it will identify the factors that influence motivation levels, explore the types of motivation and their perceived impact on performance, and investigate the relationship between motivation and performance. By undertaking this study, we hope to improve our understanding of the role of motivation in sports and fitness and identify strategies to enhance motivation and improve performance outcomes.

Rationale and Relevance: Motivation is widely recognized as a critical factor in achieving success in sports and fitness. However, there is a lack of clarity on how motivation impacts athletic performance, particularly in terms of the factors that influence motivation and the strategies that can be used to enhance it. This research is essential in improving our understanding of the role of motivation in sports and fitness, which can inform the development

of effective training programs, coaching techniques, and support structures to enhance performance outcomes. Additionally, the findings from this study can contribute to the academic literature on sports psychology and exercise science, advancing our knowledge in these areas.

Key Theories and Literature: The self-determination theory (SDT) will be used to inform this study. SDT proposes that individuals are inherently motivated to pursue activities that align with their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Additionally, we will draw on the achievement goal theory (AGT) which suggests that individuals are motivated by two types of goals - task goals (focus on personal improvement) and ego goals (focus on outperforming others) (Elliot et al., 2017). The seminal sources for this topic include Deci and Ryan's (2017) self-determination theory, and Elliot et al. (2017) achievement goal theory. Literature review themes include theories of motivation in sports and fitness; the relationship between motivation and athletic performance; and psychological factors affecting athletic performance, such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, competence, and autonomy. Relevant recent sources are included in the reference list.

Key Concepts: Motivation, self-determination, athletic performance, psychological needs, sports, competence, fitness, exercise adherence.

Research Question: What is the role of motivation in sports and fitness? **Sub-question:** How can it be effectively harnessed to enhance exercise adherence and performance?

Research Objectives:

1. To investigate the perceived impact of different types of motivational orientation (e.g., task-oriented vs. ego-oriented) on exercise adherence and performance.
2. To explore the extent to which a perceived relationship exists between basic psychological needs satisfaction (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness) and exercise motivation, adherence, and performance.
3. To investigate the factors that contribute to motivation in athletic performance.
4. To explore the mechanisms through which motivation influences an athlete's commitment, effort, and perseverance.
5. To examine the perceived relationship between motivation and athletic performance in order to enhance our understanding of its implications.
6. To contribute to the existing body of literature in sports psychology and exercise science by providing valuable insights into the psychological aspects of athletic performance.

Paradigm: The intended paradigm for this study is interpretivism. This aligns with our qualitative research design, as we seek to explore individuals' subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness. Interpretivism is a research paradigm that emphasizes the importance of understanding subjective meanings and interpretations of human behaviour and experiences (Willig, 2022). It aligns with the study's research design and approach because the study seeks to explore individuals' subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness, rather than looking for objective facts or generalizable results. The interpretivist approach assumes that individuals create their own realities and meanings, and the researcher's role is to understand and interpret these meanings. Ontologically, interpretivism assumes that individuals create their own realities and meanings, which we will seek to understand through in-depth interviews and focus groups. Epistemologically, we acknowledge that knowledge is constructed socially and contextually, and therefore seek to interpret and understand the subjective experiences of our participants. Finally, axiologically, we recognize that our own values and biases will inevitably shape the research process, and will seek to be reflexive and transparent about our positionality throughout the study.

Research Design/Approach: This study will employ a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, which will allow for an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness (Manen, 2016). The direction of reasoning will be inductive, allowing for emergent themes and patterns to be identified from the data.

Population: The unit of analysis for this study will be individuals' subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness. The target population will be athletes and fitness enthusiasts who engage in regular exercise, while the accessible sample will be those who are willing to participate in the study. The characteristics of the population will include individuals of any age, gender, and athletic ability, who participate in a range of sports and fitness activities.

Sampling: The sampling method for this study will be non-probability purposive sampling, specifically maximum variation sampling (Turner, 2020). This will allow for a diverse range of participants to be selected, to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives. The intended sample size will be approximately 5-10 participants, as this is considered sufficient to achieve data saturation in qualitative research.

Data Collection Method/s: The data collection method for this study will be semi-structured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semi-structured interviews will be conducted

individually with each participant to explore their subjective experiences of motivation in sports and fitness. The research instrument will be an interview guide, which will be developed based on the research objectives and key theories and literature.

Data Analysis Method/s: The data collected from the interviews and will be analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry, 2017). This will involve identifying patterns and themes within the data, which will be organized into categories and sub-categories. The analysis will be conducted manually, using a systematic process of coding and categorization.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations:

Informed consent: Obtaining informed consent from participants is crucial to ensure that they are aware of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. This involves providing detailed information about the study to the participants and obtaining their voluntary agreement to participate. It's important to ensure that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Cacciattolo, 2015). **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is crucial to protect participants' privacy and prevent any potential harm. It's important to ensure that participants' personal information is kept confidential and that they are referred to by pseudonyms in any publications or reports (HPCSA, 2007; Cacciattolo, 2015). **Avoiding Harm:** It's important to ensure that participants are not exposed to any physical, psychological, or emotional harm during the study. This involves ensuring that the study procedures are safe and that participants are not subjected to any undue stress or discomfort (Spencer, 2022). **Self-Report Bias:** One limitation of this study may be the potential for self-report bias, which refers to the tendency of participants to respond in a socially desirable way or to overstate or understate their experiences or opinions. To address this limitation, you can use measures that are designed to minimize self-report bias, such as anonymous surveys or third-party observations (de Reuver & Bouwman, 2015).

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