

3.1 Motivational Climate (I)

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Introduction

The motivational climate refers to the environment, atmosphere or context generated by coaches in regard to the team or athletes they train.

This climate created by coaches is obvious through what they do or don't say, how they say and do things, and what they do or don't do. Thus, the way they interact with athletes, the type of feedback they provide, the way they plan training sessions and competitions, the aspects they reinforce or punish, the instructions they give, and the tone they use to communicate with their athletes all contribute to the development of a more or less favorable climate for athlete motivation, well-being and performance.

The following section will provide a description of different types of motivational climate, the consequences associated with adopting a particular climate, and how to foster a motivational climate that optimizes athletic performance.

Upon completing the module, the reader should be able to identify the different motivational climates and the influence of the type of motivational climate on athlete motivation, well-being and performance, as influenced by the coach. This will provide you with the elements and strategies for promoting a positive motivational climate and an understanding of the tools geared toward improving the interpersonal skills of the coach.

1. Definition of motivational climate

1.1 Motivational climate from an achievement goal theory perspective

The term **motivational climate** is based on the achievement goal theory, which was formulated in educational contexts and generalized for the sports context by authors such as Duda (2001).

As the name indicates, the motivational climate refers to the environment and to motivation. Carol Ames (1992) introduced the term motivational climate to describe the different environments that significant members (i.e. coaches) created in achievement environments. The author proposed two types of motivational climate through which success and failure were defined in a given context: the task-involvement motivational climate (which promotes effort and individual improvement) and the

ego-involvement motivational climate (which promotes social comparison). A task-involvement motivational climate is related to positive attitudes toward the athletic experience (i.e. satisfaction, interest, commitment, well-being), while an ego-involvement climate is related to negative attitudes (i.e. fear of failure, feelings of inadequate execution, low satisfaction). The following table presents the main characteristics of task- and ego-involvement motivational climates, in terms of the different elements that coaches promote.

Table 1: Principal Characteristics of Task/Ego Motivational Climate

	Task-involvement climate	Ego-involvement climate
Preparation for training sessions	Planning challenging and diverse tasks.	Lack of variety in tasks.
Leadership style	Non-authoritarian management, which gives athletes the autonomy to make decisions.	Authoritarian management style, which does not allow athletes to make decisions.
Reinforcement and feedback	Private recognition of achievements based on the athlete's individual progress.	Public recognition of athletes based on social comparison.
Training methodology	Grouping of athletes during practice in such a way that cooperative learning is fostered.	Grouping players by their ability.
Evaluation	Evaluations are based on task mastery and on individual improvement.	Evaluation based on winning or losing or on comparison.
Athlete care	Distribution of practice times are adjusted to individual abilities.	Distribution of practice times are the same for all athletes.

Source: Prepared by the author

In addition to the motivational climate, the achievement goal theory expresses three central elements:

- a) **The motivational climate.** This is the atmosphere that coaches create; it is a situational/contextual variable.
- b) **The motivational orientation.** This is the predisposition of the athletes to be more task- or ego-oriented, in accordance with their previous experiences. This is a personal/dispositional variable.
- c) **The involvement objective.** This deals with the involvement in activities that signify the achievement of objectives in terms of task or ego; it is the result of the interaction of situational and dispositional factors.

According to the theory, both the motivational climate that coaches generate and the motivational orientation of the athletes influence the objective of participation or involvement. In other words, an ego-oriented motivational climate fostered by the coaches, plus a predisposition in the athlete toward being ego-oriented, will encourage the athlete to feel motivated mainly by an activity where the objective is to outdo everyone else and be the best, more so than by their own improvement and by doing the best they can.

In terms of **quantity**, both task- and ego-involvement provide motivation for an activity. However, in terms of **motivational quality**, task orientation is better, since it is focused on the individual (the comparison is with oneself). Thus, it relies to a great extent on aspects that are controllable by athletes themselves. Both a basketball player who competes with the objective of being the best scorer in the game (ego-involvement) and a player who competes with the objective of improving his own scoring record compared to the previous competition, or whose objective is to use a certain technique a certain number of times – for example, shooting the ball at the highest point of a jump – (task-involvement) are motivated by achieving an objective. However, the motivation for the former is more fragile and of a lower quality, since it depends on factors that are not exclusively tied to the player and it is more likely that he will experience frustration.

This aspect is especially important for coaches when establishing individual and team objectives. So substituting the objective of winning for task-focused objectives is recommended. An example of this is John Wooden, the coach with the most titles in the US college basketball league. As unlikely as it may seem, this coach never asked his players to win a game. He only asked them to try their hardest, since this was something they could control. Likewise, Pep Guardiola, as the coach of the first division team for FCB, claimed in a press conference that he would not promise titles, only effort and dedication. These examples clearly allude to the importance of establishing task-

focused objectives. In addition, it is relevant to note that when the task is the primary focus and the result is secondary, both athletic performance and results follow.

Task-focused objectives are a source of motivation that never runs out. When athletes are oriented toward being the best, what happens when they are? And having achieved this, what happens when they stop being the best? Perhaps practicing stops making sense and they no longer feel motivated. In exchange, when athletes are oriented toward being better, they can always find elements that motivate them. If the best player on a team or in an athletic discipline were oriented exclusively toward being the best, she may lose a sense of what she is doing. However, she may find a new source of motivation by being oriented toward being the best at developing new facets of her game, or improving personal scores and records, for example.

Establishing task-focused objectives is known to lead to a motivational process that helps athletes put in effort towards achieving the objectives resiliently and constructively, regardless of whether they perceive that their skill level is high or low (Pensgaard & Roberts, 2000). This contributes towards creating an adaptive achievement pattern in athletes, including the following positive behaviors:

- Participating in training (e.g. attending practices, even when they are not compulsory).
- Giving their best in training and in competitions.
- Demonstrating persistence even when things do not go well.
- Selecting opponents and sports activities which offer the right level of challenge.
- Consistently performing to the best of their ability.
- Working continuously to improve in different aspects of the game.

These positive behaviors, which are derived from an adaptive achievement pattern involving a greater task-involvement motivational orientation, may also occur when athletes are ego-oriented. However, in this case, it would only occur if athletes perceive themselves as having a high skill level. If athletes focus exclusively on demonstrating their superiority and, at the same time, have doubts about their level of ability, they will likely develop a maladaptive achievement pattern. This pattern is reflected in the following ways:

- They restrict the amount of effort put into training and competition.
- Their performance is limited because they are worried about whether they are good enough.
- They choose sports-related tasks or competitors that are too difficult (so they do not feel bad if they lose) or too easy (so that success is guaranteed).

- They give up on the sport due to reduced commitment and the belief that they are not good enough.

According to the achievement goal framework, the theory also predicts that athletes focused primarily on ego-focused rather than task-focused objectives will sooner or later doubt their athletic skills. Athletic success comes and goes; in fact, sometimes it never comes back. Throughout an athletic career, competitive events and training sessions present a number of threats to athletes' confidence in their ability. These include injuries, performance decline and learning new techniques or strategies.

For athletes who pursue task-focused objectives, the theory suggests that their perception of skill will be more solid and resistant to doubts, since they do not need to be better than other athletes to feel good about themselves.

In addition to the task/ego dichotomy in achieving objectives, a perspective considering an approach/avoidance dimension has also been noted recently (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). This focus has four different types of objectives:

- Goals for pursuing tasks or mastering a skill, which focus on developing abilities and mastering tasks.
- Goals for avoiding tasks or the mastery of skills; i.e. one avoids displaying a self-determined incompetence.
- Goals for pursuing ego or performance, which focus on gaining favorable judgments on competencies as defined by regulations.
- Goals for avoiding ego and performance, which lead athletes to avoid demonstrating incompetence in comparison to others.

See the table below with examples related to this focus.

Table 2: Definition of competencies

	Intrapersonal / absolute	Normative
	Task approach	Ego approach
Positive	Example: the focus of the goal is to improve a personal best in the 400 meters or master a particular landing in gymnastics	Example: the focus of the goal is to show that you are the best golfer on the team or to score the most goals in a soccer match
	Task avoidance	Ego avoidance
Negative	Example: the focus of the goal for a swimmer is not to log a slower swim time than in the previous race	Example: the focus of the goal for a tennis player is not to obtain the same or a lower score against an opponent whom they played previously

Source: Prepared by the author based on Elliot, 1999.

Based on the achievement goal theory and with the objective of providing practical strategies for fostering task-involvement in athletes, Ames (1992) adapted the TARGET terminology devised by Epstein (1989). This acronym refers to the main characteristics of the motivational climate (task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation and time).

The following table shows some of these strategies in terms of the areas and strategies.

Table 3: Areas and strategies

Goal structure	Strategies
Task: what the athletes are asked to learn and the tasks they are given to complete (e.g. training activities, structures of practice conditions).	Provide athletes with a variety of moderately demanding tasks that emphasize individual challenge and active participation. Help athletes establish performance goals and the self-referencing process. Create a training environment which is appropriate for development, by individualizing the demands of the task.
Authority: type and frequency of participation in the decision-making process (e.g. involve athletes in decisions related to training and to establishing and complying with rules).	Encourage athletes to participate in the decision-making process. Consider the athletes' perspectives. Develop leadership opportunities. Make athletes responsible for their own athletic development, teaching them skills for self-control and self-management.
Recognition: procedures and practices used to motivate athletes and recognize their achievements and progress (e.g. reasons for recognition, distribution of awards, opportunities to obtain awards).	Use specific meetings between the coach and the athlete to focus on individual progress. Recognize progress, effort and individual improvements. Ensure equal opportunities for awards for everyone.
Grouping: the way in which athletes are grouped together or separated in training and competitions.	Use flexible and cooperative options. Provide a variety of options (i.e. individual, small group and large group activities). Highlight creative solutions to training problems.
Evaluation: established norms for athletes to learn and perform, and the procedures for monitoring and judging achievement of those norms.	Develop evaluation criteria based on effort, improvement, persistence and progress for obtaining individual goals. Involve the athletes in self-evaluations. Make sure the evaluations are significant and consistent.
Time: the appropriateness of the established time demands on learning and performance (e.g. pace of learning and development, administration of time, training schedule).	Acknowledge that even elite athletes do not train, learn, or develop at the same speed. Provide enough time before moving on to the next stage in skill development. Try to spend the same amount of time with each athlete.

	Help athletes establish training and competition schedules.
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Source: Prepared by the author based on Duda & Balaguer, 2007.

1.2 The current view of motivational climate

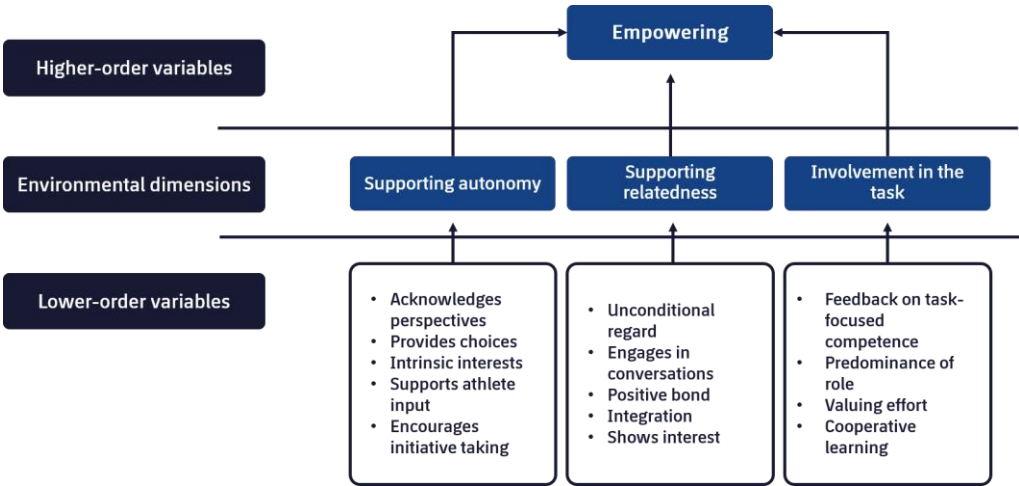
Currently, motivational climate is understood as a broader term, since it has taken elements from another motivational theory: the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). From the combination of these two motivational theories, we can establish two broad typologies of motivational climate (Duda, 2001):

- The *empowering* motivational climate.
- The *disempowering* motivational climate.

The empowering motivational climate refers to a psychological environment characterized by support for the basic psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness, and by promoting an understanding of competence based on task-involvement (the definition of these needs will be addressed later in this unit).

The creation of an environment that supports the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness is expected to lead to optimal development, more self-determined forms of motivation and higher levels of well-being. A task-focused understanding of competence will allow all the players on a team (not just the most talented) to feel successful. This will encourage healthy participation in the sport and long-term physical activity.

Figure 1: Empowering

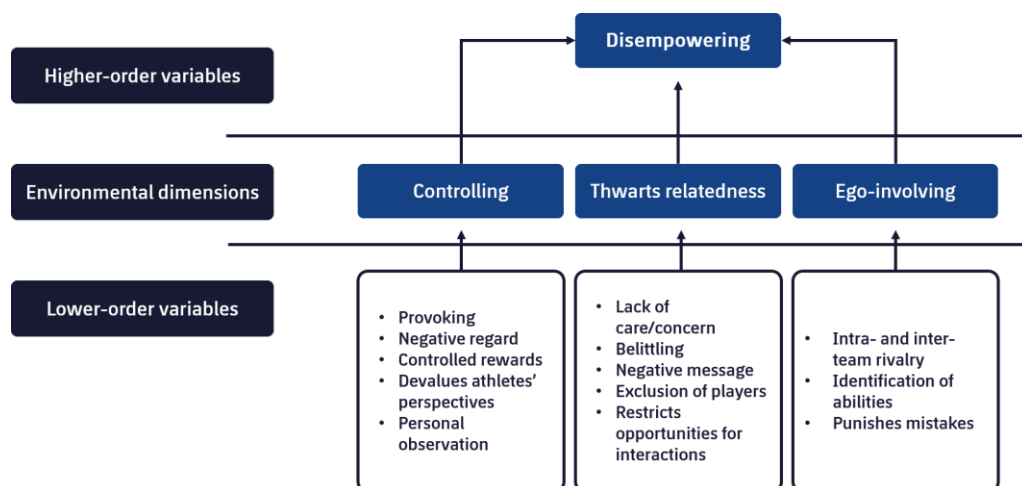


Source: Prepared by the author based on Empowering Coaching™, n.d.

The disempowering motivational climate refers to a psychological environment characterized by the thwarting of the basic psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness, and by promoting an understanding of competence based on comparison through ego-involvement.

The thwarting of psychological needs is positively correlated with a variety of maladaptive behavioral, emotional and cognitive responses. If players perceive that their needs are not being met, they could experience poor motivation and lower levels of well-being, and they may feel like giving up the sport.

Figure 2: Disempowering



Source: Prepared by the author based on Empowering Coaching™, n.d.

2. The influence of the motivational climate on athlete motivation

The motivational climate that coaches encourage for their teams influences the motivation of the athletes. Motivation refers to the “why” of behavior, to what athletes do or do not do and how they interpret their athletic reality. Thus, motivation is reflected in the way athletes behave, think and feel with respect to their sport.

As previously mentioned, motivation may be understood in terms of quantity and quality. If we use an iceberg as a metaphor for describing motivation, the visible part above the water would be considered the amount of motivation (i.e. how much motivation they have). Meanwhile, the part of the iceberg that cannot be directly observed would represent the quality of the motivation (i.e. why they are motivated).

Athletes reflect the quantity of motivation when they perform well at a given time or when they seem involved. However, the quantity of motivation only offers a small slice of reality. Furthermore, if we only look at the quantity, it may seem that an athlete has a high level of motivation at a given moment, but we cannot be certain that this will be maintained in the long-term. Quality, on the other hand, reflects the reasons that are

linked to the athlete. These reasons may be more autonomous (e.g. for the enjoyment) or controlled (e.g. due to pressures and rewards).

Figure 3: Quality and quantity of motivation



Source: Prepared by the author.

Being self-motivated is related to positive consequences, such as enjoyment of the sport (Balaguer, Castillo, & Duda, 2003), self-esteem, health and well-being (Balaguer, Castillo, & Duda, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Meanwhile, controlled motivation leads to negative results, such as frustration, lower confidence, or giving up an activity (Pineda-Espejel, Alarcón, López Ruiz, Trejo, & Chávez, 2016).

Research has shown that coaches who encourage an empowering climate promote optimal development in athletes (e.g. greater intrinsic motivation, increased enjoyment and greater desire to continue physical activity). Meanwhile, coaches who generate disempowering climates promote negative and maladaptive responses in their athletes, including greater physical and emotional fatigue and increased abandonment of sports (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2010; Duda, 2001; Duda & Balaguer, 2007).

Sometimes it is wrongly assumed that the quantity and quality of motivation are opposites and that you must sacrifice one (for example, the development and well-being of the player) for the other (such as good performance). However, as research has shown, this is not the case. Both the quantity and quality of motivation can be promoted.

Under this premise, the training program for coaches Empowering Coaching™ was developed by Duda (2013) within the framework of the European project PAPA (Promoting Adolescent Physical Activity). The main idea of this training program for coaches is to promote motivation

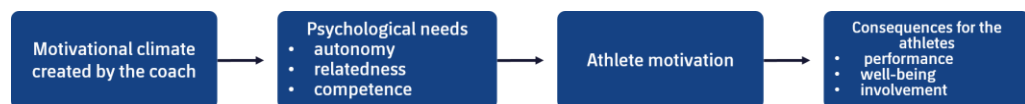
and well-being in athletes by developing empowering motivational climates.

One of the central aspects of an empowering climate is meeting basic psychological needs. In order to do so, coaches must go beyond technical-tactical objectives and incorporate the psychological ABCs into their training, since athletes are more likely to develop both quantity and quality of motivation when they feel:

- **Autonomy:** acting with volition and being able to give one's opinion (freedom of choice).
- **Relatedness:** respected by and connected to the coach and their teammates (feeling of belonging).
- **Competence:** they feel capable of facing the demands of a task, skill or game situation.

The following figure shows the influence of the motivational climate through the basic psychological needs for athlete motivation as well as the consequences, in terms of performance, well-being and involvement.

Figure 4: Motivational climate



Source: Prepared by the author.

A motivational climate that promotes the psychological ABCs will favor self-motivation in athletes, which in turn leads to better performance, well-being and involvement of the athletes.

3. Strategies for promoting a positive motivational climate

To conclude this unit, we will provide a range of strategies that coaches can develop to promote a positive motivational climate.

This is based on the TARGET areas (Ames, 1992) and the strategies proposed for fostering an empowering climate. The following seven strategies can be used by coaches to promote a positive motivational climate, and can be memorized using the acronym MOTIVAR.

Mastery
Objectives for Learning
Take other people's
perspective
Involved through
cooperation
Variety
Autonomous authority
Recognition and evaluation

Mastery

Mastery refers to putting an emphasis on doing the best you can as an athlete.

- All the players on a team (regardless of their skill level and confidence) have the opportunity to feel successful if they are encouraged to do their best, rather than be the best. From this perspective, effort is the most important aspect.
- The objectives established with the athletes should be primarily task-focused. For example, if the athletes are working on their shot, instead of focusing on whether or not the ball goes into the goal, we can break down the process to establish sequential task-focused objectives. Thus, the coach could focus first on whether the player's body position and orientation are correct. Once this phase has been achieved, they could focus on the impact surface of the ball, and then on whether the ball is aimed between the three posts.
- If the players are focused on doing the best they can and they establish task-focused objectives, they are less likely to experience large declines or serious changes in their confidence levels.

Table 4: Coaching strategies

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
"In this exercise, we are going to focus on improving our position when shooting." "During the game, we are going to try to improve our ball possession as a team."	• Encourage the contribution and agreement of the athletes in establishing both individual and team objectives in training and matches. • Help athletes record their own progress in achieving objectives.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Objectives for learning

This strategy refers to focusing the training climate on learning and continuous improvement.

- After a good execution, point out the learning that was acquired; after a mistake, identify what should be improved next time.
- Provide feedback based on:
 - What went well?
 - What could be improved?
 - How could it be improved?

Table 5: Coaching strategies 2

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
“What three things do you think you have learned in the training today?”	• Plan training exercises that foster individual and team learning. Make athletes aware of the learning acquired.
“What things went well in today’s match and how can we improve in the next match?”	• Focus the objectives for competition on putting into practice the new skills acquired during training.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Take other people’s perspective

This strategy refers to being aware of the athletes’ point of view, feelings and perspective. Instead of making assumptions, coaches ask questions and try to ensure that they understand both what their athletes think and how they feel.

- Coaches make sure athletes know that their feelings and points of view are being taken into account; they also encourage athletes to understand the perspectives of their teammates.
- Coaches separate the player from the performance. They recognize that the players’ worth is not only determined by what they do on the field.

Table 6: Coaching strategies 3

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
“How do you think your teammates feel after making a mistake in a match?” “Sometimes it’s hard when things don’t turn out the way we hoped. What do you think a coach could say or do to help a player or a team feel more secure when that happens?”	• Ask athletes about their interests and how their life is going outside the sports environment. • Before communicating with athletes in a training session or competition, think about the situation you want to deal with from the athletes’ perspective.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Involvement through cooperation

This strategy refers to using cooperation to promote the involvement of team members in order to achieve individual and shared objectives. It promotes cooperation rather than competition with each another.

- The coach ensures that the athletes understand the need to work together in order to improve together.
- The coach assigns a role to each team member. All the team members have a role, regardless of their performance level. Everyone should feel that they contribute something to the team and that their contribution is essential for the achievement of shared objectives.

Table 6: Coaching strategies 4

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
“In this exercise, it is very important to work as a team to help each other improve.” “Do you think we played well as a team during the match?”	• Plan exercises that promote cooperation between teammates and learning together. Plan exercises where athletes must work as a team in order to achieve an objective, and provide specific feedback on this, as well as on the technical-tactical aspects. • Ensure that each player understands the importance of their role in the team, including on match day (even the substitutes).

Source: Prepared by the author.

Variety

This strategy refers to the importance of creativity through the inclusion of new elements that break up the monotony of the regularly planned training sessions or activities.

- The coach plans new exercises to work on classic concepts. The coach uses materials that are different from those used on a regular basis.
- The coach proposes extracurricular activities that break up the everyday monotony (for example, escape rooms, outings and excursions).

Table 7: Coaching strategies 5

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
“In today’s training session, we will be working on a standard concept, but in a very different way.”	• Plan exercises that include original and unusual components.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Autonomous authority

This strategy refers to giving a say to the athletes, so they feel that they can contribute on the matters that concern themselves and the team. It also refers to giving athletes the possibility to choose what they need to work on and the objectives that are established in training and competitions.

- The coach understands the areas to work on and proposes different alternatives so that the athletes can decide what to work on and how to go about it.
- The coach encourages the players to make decisions and participate.

Table 7: Coaching strategies 6

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
“After the match, we decided that we would work in groups during the week. Should we start with defending against free kicks or corner kicks?” “How can we get each player to share his point of view on the match?”	● Involve the players in choosing training activities. Offer the real opportunity to choose an activity from among attractive alternatives. ● Encourage the players to discuss and decide on the tactics and rules that regulate the operation of the team.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Recognition and evaluation

This strategy entails recognizing effort above all else and giving evaluative feedback that is not primarily linked to the results (for example, winning or losing).

- The coach's evaluation is always tied to task-orientation and the goal of doing the best that one is capable of.
- The coach encourages the athletes to learn to reflect more on their own performance and the achievement of personal objectives.
- The coach encourages and takes into consideration the evaluation that the players and team make about their own performance.

Table 8: Coaching strategies 7

Things that coaches can say	Things that coaches can do
“At the end of the season, when you analyze your performance, what areas of your game have you improved?” “What were our strong points in the match?” “What objectives do you have today?” “What could you/we have done differently?”	● Look for opportunities to provide individualized feedback to each player. ● Encourage players to self-evaluate and to focus on doing the best they can during trainings and matches.

Source: Prepared by the author.

3.2 Motivational Climate (II)

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Introduction

This unit looks at two practical cases that will allow readers to learn to identify the elements that will help them understand the type of motivational climate being promoted by coaches.

By looking at everyday situations that offer an in-depth understanding of the reality of the athletic environment, these two case studies will illustrate the distinctions between the different motivational climates.

In addition to the practical cases, this unit will also cover a number of the tools available for assessing the motivational climate generated by coaches.

Upon completion, the student should be able to identify elements of the motivational climate through everyday situations that often occur in the athletic environment, and have the resources available to analyze and quantify the motivational climate.

1. Types of motivational climate: presentation of cases

To begin this unit, we will present two hypothetical cases that could reflect the current athletic reality in terms of motivational climate and the typology of different coaches.

Case 1

Hank is a coach with a proven track record. He has been coaching in his sport for years and he enjoys his work. This season, he began training a team that was promoted in the previous season. His main challenge in terms of athletic performance is for the team to remain in that division. The club where he coaches is confident that he will meet the season's objectives. The players know the coach's reputation and trust that his experience in the division will help them overcome the challenges. Hank is known for being a methodical, involved and demanding coach, with a high level of knowledge of the sport.

New recruits have been brought in – contributing additional skills to the squad – while several of last year's players have left. In order to prepare the team, the pre-season has been physically very challenging, with double training sessions every day and two matches each week. The

technical-tactical aspect has also been challenging, with the introduction of a new playing style and new concepts.

On the first day of training, before heading to the field, Hank gave a brief talk in which he introduced the members of the coaching staff and the new players he had brought in to improve the level of the team. He emphasized their experience in the division and the benefits their inclusion would bring. Hank also stressed the main objective for the season: avoid relegation. During this talk, Hank explained that the season would be hard in this division, and that the way the team had been working so far would be inadequate for achieving their objective.

Likewise, he explained that the training sessions would be more difficult than they had been up to this point, and that the competition between players would also be tough. In his talk, Hank described the main rules the team would have to follow and the penalties for breaking each of them, and he distributed a document to each player. In terms of the captains, he explained that during this week, he and his staff would observe the team to decide who had the best profile to take on the role.

Each week, three players have to be removed from the team due to the limited number of registered players allowed in the competition. In the last training session before a competition, Hank posts a list in the locker room of those who will be playing. In the first few months, the same three players are the ones who have been dropped from the team. As a result, one of the players goes to speak with the coach face-to-face to learn which aspects of training he can improve for the next selections. The coach explains that he does not pay attention to these aspects in order to avoid favoritism, and that it is the players' responsibility to try their hardest in each training session, rather than asking for explanations of the decisions he makes as a coach. After learning what the coach thinks, the other players have stopped asking to talk to him.

The results up to this point have not been favorable, and the team is under threat of relegation to a lower division. Because of this, Hank has begun lengthening the training sessions and implementing collective punishments for poor team performance. Hank justifies this by the perception he has of the players' low involvement and level of effort. So until the team performs better in matches, he says he will limit ball exercises and concentrate on physical work. The players find the training sessions monotonous with little variety in tasks. In the exercises, Hank groups the players by their ability and argues that not everyone is at the same level and that not paying attention to this will slow the pace of training. He also believes that this will motivate the less skilled players to reach the more skilled group.

In competitions, Hank seems tense, gives a lot of instructions to the players and continuously makes corrections. He spends long hours

analyzing videos of the matches in order to show the players the aspects they need to improve. The coach holds video sessions in which he explains his analyses and offers video clips of the players who performed better and those who performed worse. He explains that understanding the successes and mistakes of teammates helps provide reference models for the things they do well and those they need to improve. He also highlights and recognizes those players who are working well and promotes a mature and cohesive group, in which teammates give each other feedback on what they are doing well and what they are doing poorly. Hank complains that the players neither listen nor pay attention to the areas they need to improve; he has therefore decided to give the players scores during the week and to rank them.

Hank seems concerned about the team's performance and the poor results. He can see that there is little synergy among players and frequently says that they do not work as a team and that, individually, they are not performing to their potential, with the exception of a couple of players who he uses as an example of the standard for effort and involvement. He also says that the captains should act as leaders, especially during difficult times, so he has held meetings with them to increase their involvement and he insists that they make the same demands on their teammates as he does. Hank has also had conflicts with some of the players who asked him why they were always left on the bench. As a consequence, these players were disciplined and were taken off the team.

Due to the poor results and the team's overall performance, the club has decided to hire the services of a sports psychologist to reverse the negative dynamics the team is experiencing.

Case 2

Martin is a coach with a high level of knowledge of his sport. He has a lot of experience managing teams and he enjoys his profession. This season, he began coaching a team that was promoted to a higher division. The club's main request is that he ensure that the team remains in the new division. The club is confident that he will meet the season's objectives. The players have heard about the coach from other teammates who have been coached by him.

He is known for being passionate about his sport, open to dialogue and warm in his dealings with the players. He has a high command of the

tactical concepts and a training methodology whereby the players suggest the areas to work on, and he seeks cooperation from everyone.

Before meeting the players, Martin prepares for their first encounter. He spends a lot of time thinking about how to communicate the season's objectives. He also holds a meeting with the coaching staff in which they all reach an agreement on the roles they will play and the functions associated with each role. Together they decide how to handle the first meeting with the players and what each person will explain.

The team has been strengthened by calling up new players, and some of the previous year's players are no longer on the team. Martin has already met with the new recruits to learn about their experience and to share his. With respect to the players that are no longer on the team, Martin has spoken to them individually to thank them for their contribution to the team and to explain why they have been removed and which aspects they can keep working on in order to improve as athletes. He also tells them that he is willing to help them find another team.

On the first day of training, Martin and his staff meet in a room with all the players. First of all, the staff members introduce themselves and explain the roles they will play. After that, Martin asks the players to get into pairs and introduce themselves in terms of their career, strengths and what they can contribute to the team. Then he asks the players to share what their partner said. Afterwards, he gives a piece of paper to each player and asks them to write down the objectives they think the team should achieve, as well as their individual objectives. Finally, he asks them to share the team objectives and save the individual objectives for later. The players and the coaching staff then work together to define the team's objectives for the season, with an emphasis on the main objective of progress and continual improvement.

After choosing the season's objectives, Martin explains that in order for a team to function, certain rules have to be defined. He therefore divides the team into sub-groups and assigns each sub-group an area (i.e. equipment, behavior on the field, behavior off the field). He asks them to think about the rules for their area. The sub-groups then share what they have written down, and they all decide on the rules together. Martin and his coaching staff actively participate and contribute other aspects that were not mentioned during the group discussion. Finally, the consequences for not following the rules are decided and they all sign their acceptance and commitment. In terms of the captains, he asks the players to define the skills that a leader must have and to be aware of them over the next few days. After that, they will choose the captains based on an anonymous vote, using the leadership criteria established together.

Each week, three players have to be removed from the team due to the limited number of registered players allowed in the competition. Martin meets with each player to explain why they were taken off, which areas they should improve and what they should focus on the following week in order to be included on the list.

The initial results have not been favorable, and the team is under threat of relegation to a lower division, so some of the players seem unmotivated. To counteract this, the coaching staff encourages them to focus on the things they have done well and on the aspects they can improve. They explain that the result is a consequence of completing all the other actions, and that they should focus on this aspect.

Martin and his staff hold a post-match evaluation session in which the players actively participate. They emphasize the areas in which they have done well, those aspects they need to improve or correct in the next match, and how they are going to work during the week in order to achieve it. The coaching staff often have to redirect the players' involvement so they can focus on aspects that they can control themselves.

Martin also holds regular meetings with each player for individualized follow-up oriented around the individual objectives that were set at the beginning of the season. These are then modified and an action plan is established for their achievement.

Beyond the athletic environment, Martin is interested in other aspects of the players' lives. In addition to providing feedback in their meetings, Martin asks for his players' opinions on areas the coaching staff could improve. He also ensures that the players feel important to the team. In order to do so, he emphasizes the contributions each person makes to the team. Martin recognizes their individual achievements privately and avoids comparing players.

In matches, Martin's instructions are mostly reminders of the aspects they have worked on during the week, and he is more focused on reinforcing successes than criticizing failures. When he does spot failures, Martin notes them down so that he can approach players at the right time and guide them towards improving in the future.

Martin's training sessions are diverse and varied. The players participate in choosing the exercises and activities, as well as what is worked on and how. Martin also promotes cooperative learning; he designs tasks for teamwork and for achieving a common objective.

There is good team synergy and the players often do extracurricular activities as a group. The integration of the new members has been successful and there is a good climate of community and work.

Despite the poor results at the beginning of the season, the team has had a series of victories that has pulled them out of the relegation zone. Two months into the season, Martin meets with the team to show them their progress in technical-tactical aspects and explains that the team should be focused on improving these aspects.

2. Motivational climate

If we analyze the examples given, we can identify certain elements of motivational climate that lead us to reflect on the areas where improvements could be made. The following table uses the content covered in the previous unit to identify the elements of motivational climate promoted by Hank and Martin.

Table 10: Motivational climate

	Negative motivational climate	Positive motivational climate
Preparation for training sessions	Hank is a coach with high mastery of the sport; he prepares the training sessions conscientiously and puts in a lot of effort. However, there is no variety in the tasks and the players find the training monotonous. Hank clearly understands which areas to work on, but he does not involve the players in this, nor does he explain why it is important to work on them. Consequently, the players have very little autonomy and are bored with the training.	Martin is a coach who masters the sport and who prepares the training sessions conscientiously. He makes an effort to give the players a voice and involves them in what they are working on and how they are working on it. In addition, he looks for ways to train differently and for variety in the tasks. Martin clearly understands which areas need working on, but instead of telling the players, he involves them in the process until they realize for themselves that these aspects need improvement. Consequently, the players have autonomy and enjoy the training.

Evaluation	the more skilled players to relax while the others are frustrated and unmotivated.	sessions. This aspect is essential in order for the players to support each other during matches.
	Hank's evaluation is based on results. Winning is the most important aspect, and how to do so is secondary. This increases the pressure on the players and promotes a focus on aspects that they are not able to control directly. This in turn makes them forget how to correctly follow the processes that make a good result more likely. The season's objective is defined in terms of avoiding a negative result, and comparison between players is used constantly.	Martin focuses on the process and on improvement, whether the results are favorable or not. In this way, he reduces the pressure on the players and makes them focus on aspects they can control. He explains that the result is a consequence of carrying out the other processes correctly. The season's objective is defined in terms of individual progress and improvement. To evaluate the athletes, he focuses on their improvement and progress.
Athlete care	Hank does not provide individual sessions to talk to the athletes regarding their development and well-being. Nor does he establish individual objectives with the players or encourage them to understand their role and contribution to the team. He is not interested in aspects outside the athletic environment, or in the well-being of the players.	Martin allocates individual time with each player to discuss their development and progress in terms of the objectives that the athletes themselves defined at the beginning of the season. He also helps them create an action plan to reach these objectives. Martin ensures that each player understands their role within the team and the contributions they can make towards achieving the common goals. He is also interested in aspects outside the athletic environment; he makes players feel like people and not just athletes.

Source: Prepared by the author.

In our analysis, we identified two very different types of coaches. In the first case (Hank), it would be advisable to modify certain aspects in order to promote the players' motivation, well-being and performance. This can be achieved by meeting the players' basic psychological needs and by implementing the strategies presented in the previous unit.

In the second case (Martin), emphasis should be placed on further strengthening these aspects, even when the match results are not the ones they were aiming at.

3. An observational tool for assessing motivational climate

To conclude this unit, we provide an observational tool for assessing the motivational climate of a coach: the MMCOS (Multidimensional Motivational Climate Observation System), originally developed by Smith, Balaguer and Duda (2006).

This observational tool stems from work on the empowering motivational climate (Duda, 2001) and is based on the AGT and SDT motivational theories.

It is designed to examine the strength of the motivational climate created by the coach. To evaluate the motivational climate, the observers-coders use a point system and template to observe the interpersonal style of the coach (presented below). For this analysis it is recommended to record the training session on video. Coaches can then be shown video clips from the recording, so they can reflect on their interpersonal style and the motivational climate they create.

The assessment procedure consists of two parts:

Part 1

During specific time intervals (for example, 5 or 15 minutes), the interpersonal style of the coach is evaluated according to the 7 environmental dimensions included in the observational system (autonomy support, controlling, task-involvement, ego-involvement, supporting relatedness, thwarting of relatedness, and structure). For each dimension, the strength of the coach's behavior is scored (0 = not at all; 1 = weak potency; 2 = moderate potency; 3 = strong potency).

Part 2

Once the session has been completed, the observer-coder makes a general assessment of the degree to which the climate has been empowering or disempowering. Coaches are expected to show

characteristics of both types of climate during their training sessions/matches, so it is proposed that the empowering and disempowering climates are independent, rather than opposites. An assessment is therefore made for each climate.

Figure 5: Empowering

0	-	Not present
<i>empowering/disempowering</i>		
1 - Weak <i>empowering/disempowering</i>		
2	-	Moderate
<i>empowering/disempowering</i>		
3 - Strong <i>empowering/disempowering</i>		

Source: Prepared by the author.

The coach and the environmental dimensions.

Figure 6: Multidimensional Motivational Climate Observation System

0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency
The coach does not use any strategies	- The coach may use one type of strategy - The strategies may be used infrequently - They may be used privately with a small number of players - The coach may appear to use strategies passively and unintentionally	- The coach may use more than one type of strategy - These could be directed towards many players (privately or publicly to the entire group) - They could be of low/moderate intensity - Note: the coach could focus more on emphasizing the dimension	- The coach clearly uses a variety of different strategies - These strategies may affect an entire group (whether privately with many players or publicly with the team) - The coach will strongly emphasize the dimension - The coach could not emphasize the dimension any more than he already does

0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency
In general, the climate does not present or rarely presents empowering or disempowering characteristics	- The strategies used by the coach could support/thwart one of the basic psychological needs (for example, autonomy). - The environment created could potentially support/thwart other needs, but with low intensity	- The strategies used by the coach clearly support/thwart more than one of the basic needs. - The other need(s) could also be supported/thwarted, but it would be less evident. - The environment could still be more empowering/disempowering through the use of different strategies.	The strategies the coach uses and the way they are transmitted create a climate prone to support/thwart all the basic psychological needs and promote a task- or ego-focused understanding of competence. All the needs are either supported or thwarted by the strategies adopted by the coach.

Higher-order scale: at the end of the session observed, rate the degree to which the general environment was empowering and disempowering

Source: Prepared by the author.

Figure 7: Environmental dimensions

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
Supporting autonomy	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	• Offers meaningful choices				
	• Offers rationale for tasks, requests and limitations				
	• Emphasizes and encourages intrinsic interest in the task				
	• Creates opportunities to contribute				
	• Encourages initiative taking				
	• Acknowledges feelings and perspective				

The coach tries to identify and promote the needs, interests and preferences of the players, while encouraging them to take control of their own participation

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
Controlling style	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	• Using extrinsic rewards				
	• Using controlling language (I want, I need, you should)				
	• Intimidation (using threats)				
	• Negative conditional regard				
	• Overt personal control				
	• Devalues players' perspective				

The environment created by the coach thwarts the feeling of control in the players by coercing and pressuring them to act a certain way.

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
Involvement in the task	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	• Emphasizes/recognizes effort and/or improvement				
	• Uses cooperative learning				
	• Provides feedback on task-focused competence				
	• Explains player role importance				

The coach focuses on self-referenced criteria to evaluate success. In a task-involving climate, the coach emphasizes the importance of improving oneself, demonstrating task mastery and exerting effort to achieve success.

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
Ego-involvement	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	• Punishes mistakes				
	• Emphasizes/recognizes an inferior/superior ability				
	• Encourages inter/intra-team rivalry				

The coach focuses on comparison to evaluate success. The coach focuses on whether the players outperform one another and whether they demonstrate high normative standards.

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Supporting relatedness Supporting the feeling of relatedness and an understanding environment promote feelings of care, acceptance, inclusion, trust and respect, and this is communicated kindly, positively, consistently and unconditionally	- Ensures that players are included in the exercises and activities - Engages in conversations with players that are not related to coaching/training - Adopts a warm communication style - Shows care and concern for players - Shows unconditional regard				

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Thwarts relatedness An environment that thwarts relatedness is characterized by behaviors that interfere with the feeling of relatedness (belonging). A relatedness-thwarting environment is prone to being cold, critical and characterized by acceptance contingent on desirable behavior.	- Excludes players from certain exercises and activities - Restricts opportunities for interaction and conversation - Shows a lack of care and concern for players - Belittles (tries to embarrass) players - Adopts a cold communication style				

Environmental dimensions	Lower-level strategies	Time			
	0_not present	1_weak potency	2_moderate potency	3_strong potency	
			0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Structure A structured motivational climate is marked by the coach providing players with information about organization and performance, as well as guidance and expectations for learning.	- Provides instructions and organization - Offers expectations for learning - Provides guidance throughout the activities/exercises				

Source: Prepared by the author.

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