

# Literature Review

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## Self-Determination Theory

Basic psychological needs are considered to be essential to psychological health and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002). According to Deci and Ryan (2000) these needs are innate and universal. Basic psychological needs are satisfied within self-determined individuals. Self-determination theory, as discussed by Deci and Ryan (2000) is described as being self-endorsing at the highest level. A self-determined individual experiences a sense of freedom through pursuits that are interesting and important to them. Self-determination is not a static state however, it requires constant development and growth, achievement, a sense of belonging and room for curiosity to function optimally (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The theory describes these characteristics as inherent growth tendencies. In addition, self-determination theory is a macro theory concerned with the motivation behind choices of behaviour individuals make.

## Motivation Continuum

Motivation can be gauged in graduated stages along a scale called the self-determination continuum (Ryan and Deci, 2000). With motivation for physical activity in focus, it is important to understand each stage within the continuum with the exception of amotivation. Amotivation is considered to be completely lacking in self-regulation, for example, an individual has no desire to participate in the behaviour or task at hand (Markland & Tobin, 2004). An individual may sit anywhere along the self-determination spectrum from externally through to intrinsically regulated motivation. In fact, there are five stages within the spectrum; from external, introjected, identified, integrated through to intrinsic regulation. An effective exercise practitioner will position themselves in a role that supports an increase in self-regulation towards intrinsic motivation.



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To gain a more informed understanding of the different forms of self regulation from Deci and Ryan (2000), let us further explore the features of each stage with examples of application. The continuum characterises externally regulated individuals to be motivated by factors outside of their personal control. For example, they may participate in a workplace bootcamp because their employer deemed this mandatory. One step along from the previous example is introjected regulation which is motivated by a sense of guilt before, or experienced relief after an activity. This could be seen whereby the same individual is no longer required to participate in the workplace bootcamp, but feel obligated to as the service is offered to employees at no personal cost. Moving on, identified regulation could paint a picture of the same individual a couple of months into the programme. They become motivated to engage in the boot camp because they decide that regular exercise is a valued part of their life. As a critique of contemporary fitness sensationalism it could be misconstrued that the next step, integrated regulation, is the pinnacle of self regulation for motivation. This is a state whereby an individual would participate in a workplace bootcamp because it is consistent with who they are, and therefore, they feel a sense of satisfaction for doing so. However, there is a final stage whereby an intrinsically regulated individual would be motivated to engage in the bootcamp because the activity involved feels good. With an understanding of the subtle differences between degrees of self regulation, a trainer will first seek to identify where the individual they are working with is situated. This understanding can enable the trainer to facilitate a transition from an externally regulated to an intrinsically regulated individual.

### Locus of Causality

Locus of causality is the perceived level of control an individual has over their own behaviours and therefore, the outcomes in their lives. Internal locus of causality is an understanding within an individual that they initiated an activity and that they are in control (DeCharms, 1968). Whereas, external locus of control could be demonstrated by the same individual engaging in an activity because they feel obliged to. The differentiation is important to note here in reference to the trainer and client



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relationship. In order to strengthen self-endorsing behaviours, personal development and therefore intrinsic motivation, an individual needs to have and perceive that they have initiated and maintained certain actions or behaviours on their own accord (Rotter, 1966).

### Basic Psychological Needs

Intrinsic motivation within individuals is facilitated through the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The three basic psychological needs associated with self-determination theory are; autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy is fundamentally important (Ryan, Williams, Patrick & Deci, 2009). It refers to behaviour that is self-endorsed, in other words, the individual agrees with what they are doing. An autonomous individual initiates and engages in behaviour out of their own volition which gives a sense of control or governance over one's own life (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). Competence is essential to wellness. In order to facilitate competence and experience self-efficacy, an individual needs to feel confidence in their own abilities (Ryan, Williams, Patrick & Deci, 2009). Furthermore, competence development leads individuals to develop mastery in certain self-endorsed behaviours as it provides a sense of control over the outcome (White, 1959). Relatedness is a universal desire to connect to, care for, interact with and feel a sense of belonging with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These desires are the innate reasons that individuals engage in relationships. Moreover, relatedness is enhanced when the associated relationship supporting behaviours are reciprocal (Ryan, 2013).

Although autonomy, relatedness and competence are fundamental psychological needs that are distinct from each other, they are also deeply inter-related. As such, self-determination theory suggests that if only one or two and not all three needs are supported or if they are in some way thwarted, this would have a significant detrimental effect on the psychological health and well-being of an individual (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, failure to satisfy these needs will also undermine intrinsic motivation. An understanding of self-determination through satisfaction of basic



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psychological needs, and the varying states of self regulation enables an exercise practitioner to apply the theories involved within another tool. This helpful tool for understanding the complexity of motivational states is called the hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

The hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation provides an understanding of motivation at three levels of generality (Vallerand, 2007). According to Vallerand (2000) these levels of generality allow us to study motivation with precision and refinement. The model describes how different types of motivation are interrelated, along with the determinants that contribute towards them and consequences of these orientations. One of the strengths of this model is its ability to represent motivation from a multidimensional perspective (Vallerand, 2000).

The three hierarchical levels of generality within the model are global, contextual and situational (Vallerand, 2000). Within each level of generality intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivation affect an individual. The global motivational level is the highest level of the hierarchy, and this refers to an individual's general personality and their motivational orientation when engaging in behaviours. The contextual motivational level sits on the second tier as the intermediate level of the hierarchy. It is specific to the life domain in focus such as a profession, sport or relationship. The situational motivational level is the third and final in the hierarchy. This refers to the current state, in other words, the motivational factors contributing to here and now (Vallerand, 2000; Vallerand, 2007).

The next feature Vallerand (2000) refers to in the model is about motivational determinants and the multiple factors that influence these. He discusses how social factors contribute to the intrinsic, extrinsic or amotivated orientation at each three levels of generality. For example, situational factors affect situational motivation. Another influence is that perceptions of autonomy, relatedness and competence within an individual can mediate the effect of social factors towards motivation, again,



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at every level of generality. Subsequently, Vallerand notes that this feature further reinforces the significance of basic psychological needs satisfaction. The motivational dynamic or the relationship between the levels of generality is another influence on motivational determinants. For instance, a top-down effect can occur from the motivational orientation of a higher level in the hierarchy to a lower level. In addition, a similar influence can occur in reverse where a motivational orientation is ongoing and therefore creates a bottom-up effect. Finally, interplay between contextual motivation orientations can also occur whereby, for example, one context is not intrinsically motivated, the individual may over compensate within another context.

According to Vallerand (2000) psychological outcomes are the final dimension of the model, and there are four components within this dimension. The first describes outcomes as either cognitive, affective or behavioural. The second is that different motivation orientations affect the outcome differently, for example, the majority of positive outcomes are produced by intrinsic motivation. Thirdly, outcomes are produced at all three levels of generality and as a consequence of the motivation orientation within that generality, for instance, situational motivation leads to situational consequences. The fourth and final component describes how contextual outcomes should be determined by the relevant contextual motivator, such as, sporting consequences being attributed to sporting motivational orientations (Vallerand, 2007).

The hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is a helpful tool for understanding motivation within individuals. Humans are motivationally complex and the hierarchical model recognises that different types of motivation exist at each level of generality, within every individual (Vallerand, 2007). Furthermore, this model describes how motivation is not simply an intrapersonal phenomenon but a social phenomenon as well, as others influence our world. Vallerand (2000) discusses how addressing motivation in general is insufficient and for this reason the hierarchical model provides a tool for gathering a comprehensive understanding of motivation in others.



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The comprehensive approach of the hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation enables an exercise practitioner to understand their client, athlete or team with exceptional depth. The multi-dimensional model further reinforces the complex nature of motivation, and as such, the ability to practically apply the principles of this model would demonstrate expertise in facilitating positive personal development within individuals.

### Eudaimonia and Hedonism

The final theory to be addressed draws away from direct focus on behaviour in individuals to an extent. Eudaimonia and hedonism are theories used to study happiness, pleasure and wellness, and the pursuit thereof (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008). Although it may seem self explanatory, the pleasure and positive affect associated with happiness is important, as Isen (2003) and King et al. (2006) discuss, happiness represents intrinsically preferred states. Ryan, Huta and Deci (2008) support this and add that it is inter-related with functioning optimally, psychological health and pleasure. Therefore, the pursuit of happiness is congruent with the types of goals associated with physical activity and throughout general life.

Eudaimonia and hedonism are different with regard to their respective target. Ryan, Huta and Deci (2008) describe how eudaimonia is concerned with living well and the process required to pursue a happy or well lifestyle. The variation here sees hedonism focus on the outcome of the feeling, or the sensation itself. In other words, hedonism focuses on the positive affect or pleasure associated with happiness and the absence of negative affect or pain (Kahneman et al. 1999).

Let us discuss the details of eudaimonia in more depth to gain a better understanding. Eudaimonia is the pursuit of depth and understanding which is intrinsically regulated and self endorsing (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008). According to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, his philosophy of happiness translated by Broadie and Rowe (2002); the origins of eudaimonia focus on the following behaviours in the pursuit



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of wellness. The first behaviour depicts an individual striving to be their best self which expresses an authentic expression of the individual. Secondly, an individual is engaged with the content of their life through reflective practice, and self awareness is valued. This behaviour leads the individual to seek the truth in all situations, even when it doesn't necessarily feel good. The third and possibly most important feature is that an individual chooses to pursue this approach to life. Ryan, Huta and Deci (2008) suggest that pleasure and positive affect are not only correlates but consequences of living well, of eudaimonia. Huta and Ryan (2006) provide a complimentary conclusion when they describe how eudaimonia should yield more stable and enduring hedonic happiness.

In contrast, the supreme concern of hedonism is the pursuit of pleasure; therefore, a hedonistic pursuit is often shallow and lacking in depth in nature (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008). Moreover, a lack of truth seeking behaviour is also seen when pleasure is the primary motivator. While the individual may actually feel good it is most likely to be short lived. This is an example of temporary satisfaction gained through external regulators.

An understanding of eudaimonia and hedonism leads an exercise practitioner to evaluate the training processes employed for achieving the goals within their work. Despite the nature of the trainer client relationship, the professional is responsible for ensuring a meaningful and sustainable pathway is pursued, which is congruent with supporting best practice. Therefore, it could be suggested that the fundamentals of eudaimonia are a required integration into training programmes or processes.

Conclusion



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The theories covered within this literature review offer useful insights for approaches and methods used by physical activity trainers. Although the literature is comprehensive, much of the existing implementation of self-determination theory and basic psychological needs is quantitatively driven. Therefore, focus has remained fixated on what happened as opposed to how it happened. This identifies a limitation in practical interpretation of theories and models within training practice. Moreover, best practice would consider how Vallerand's hierarchical model contextualises the practitioner's role at the situation level of generality.

These limitations identified provide relevance for research that supports the use of dyads and empathetic approaches by exercise practitioners. Berscheid (1999) introduces this notion when she suggests that relationship researchers need to "think dyadically". Jowett and Ntoumanis (2003, 2004) provide more depth through their discussion of the 3 Cs, which are interpersonal constructs of closeness, commitment and complementarity. The 3 Cs as a construct is intended to provide understanding of both the coach and athlete or client's behaviours, cognitions and emotions within a training relationship. Jowett (2006) discusses the benefits of implementation of the construct in practice such as; interpersonal satisfaction, motivation to strive toward common goals and achievement in performance. Later on Jowett introduces one more dynamic to the 3 C's approach, co-orientation. This term includes the following dimensions; empathic accuracy, and actual and assumed similarity. The extended model of the 3 + 1 Cs sufficiently caters to the intricacies involved in an interpersonal coach and athlete or client relationship. In keeping with the guidelines supplied by Jowett, it could be suggested that a dyadic an integrated reflective approach is fitting in generating understanding in this area.

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