

**CHAPTER 7: Attribution theory, confidence and self-efficacy**

**Practice questions at - text book pages 124 to 125**

- 1) Weiner's model of attribution refers to:
- a. stable factors, such as efforts and luck.
  - b. unstable factors such as ability or task difficulty.
  - c. future expectations are related to unstable factors.
  - d. success is best explained by internal attributions.

**Answer:** d.

- 2) Bandura's model of self-efficacy does not include:
- a. performance accomplishments.
  - b. excitement-arousal.
  - c. vicarious experiences.
  - d. verbal persuasion.

**Answer:** b.

- 3) Vealey's model of sport confidence includes:
- a. competitive orientation.
  - b. a nurtured personality.
  - c. confidence at all sports.
  - d. a subjective outcome.

**Answer:** a.

- 4) A thrower prepares for a qualifying competition, but suffers from stress and tries too hard and so performs badly. Which theory explains this behaviour?
- a. catastrophe theory.
  - b. multi-dimensional anxiety theory.
  - c. inverted U theory.
  - d. drive theory.

**Answer:** c.

- 5) Over-confidence is dangerous to the athlete because:
- a. it can lead to inadequate preparation for a major event.
  - b. it can lead to over arousal in the competition situation.
  - c. it might lead to an increase in motivation to continue with the sport.
  - d. it might be too easy to correct faults which occur.

**Answer:** b.

- 6) a) Figure 7.16 partly illustrates Weiner's model of attribution.  
Explain the term attribution using a sporting situation. 2 marks

**Answer:**

- Attribution means the **reasons** that we give for our behaviour.
- The reasons can be **dispositional** (due to the performer's mood or feelings) or **environmental**.
- They can affect his or her **motivation**.

- b) Explain the terms locus of causality and stability when applied to attribution theory. 4 marks

**Answer:**

- Locus of **causality** = location of **causes or reasons** for the performer's behaviour.
- **Internal causes** are dispositional, the reasons are **from within the group** or an individual and are due to his or her **mood** or state of mind.
- **External causes** are environmental, the reasons are **out of the individual's control**.
- The **stability** dimension refers to how **changeable** the reasons or attributions are over the short term.
- If **stable** - not very changeable.
- If **unstable** - very changeable.

- c) Redraw the model and place on it relevant attributions for each of the four boxes. 4 marks

**Answer:**

- See figure Q7.1.

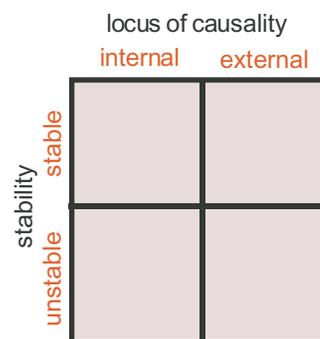
- d) What attributions would you encourage if your team were playing well but often losing? 5 marks

**Answer:**

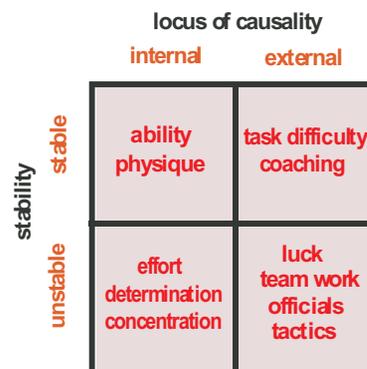
5 marks for five of:

- Attribute the losing to **external** factors.
- Attribute the fact of losing to the **superiority of the opposition** or the **task difficulty**.
- Emphasise that **tactics** could be changed.
- Losing could be due to **unlucky** events within the game or competition.
- And team members could be **wrongly treated by officials** if this was the case.
- **Emphasise** the positive aspects of their play.
- **Reinforce** their efforts or commitment.
- **Encourage unstable attributions** such as team work or tactics which could be changed.

**figure 7.16 – Weiner's model of attribution**



**figure Q7.1 – Weiner's model of attribution**



7) a) Many young people claim to be hopeless at gymnastics. Suggest three reasons why these youngsters might have a negative attitude to gymnastics.

3 marks

**Answer:**

3 marks for three of:

- The perceived **high difficulty** or complexity of gymnastics.
- The media highlights the **perceived difficulty** of gymnastics (only expert performers are ever shown on TV).
- The beginner has had **early failure** or a negative past experience at gymnastics.
- The beginner may be fearful of gymnastics as a dangerous activity or one with high risk.
- He or she may have **fear of the unknown** (no past experience).
- The beginner may have **high motive to avoid failure** or have negative personality or trait factors.
- He or she may have been told that he or she is **useless** at gymnastics.
- There may be a race or **gender** or age **constraint** (boys think that it's a girls' sport or there is peer group pressure against the activity).
- He or she may **attribute** (attribution theory) past failure to lack of ability (I tried it before and failed).
- The beginner may have **performance goals** (to achieve a complex move) rather than a learning goal (to achieve a satisfaction through learning something which is achievable).

b) What is meant by learned helplessness (LH) and how is it caused?

3 marks

**Answer:**

- LH is a **lack of motivation** due to a feeling of hopelessness.
- LH can be **specific** (to a single sport or activity) or **global** (to all sport).
- LH is caused by **reinforcement of failure**.
- If LH is reinforced by the high status of others who are succeeding, then new peers can be found who are roughly equal in ability.
- Previous experiences are perceived as failing and are internally attributed.

c) How would you attempt to attract beginners to a gymnastics class, and then change any negative attitudes?

4 marks

**Answer:**

1 mark given for any description of a strategy to attract newcomers:

- Open days or **advertising** or **displays**, which portray a positive image, using desirable **role models** and so on.

3 marks given for changing attitudes:

- The coach may **attribute** early failures to **controllable factors**.
- Attribution retraining or 'you can put right what went wrong'.
- The coach could explain early failure.
- The coach would give **early success experiences**.
- And redefine success.
- By stressing **personal improvement** (or health or fitness or image) rather than competition.
- Make the activity enjoyable (coach must have a positive personality to encourage this).

8) Those who achieve little in sport often attribute their failure to factors outside their control and learned helplessness can result.

Using examples from sport, explain what is meant by learned helplessness and identify how self-motivational techniques may help to limit the effects of learned helplessness.

6 marks

**Answer:**

6 marks for six of:

- **Learned Helplessness (LH)** is a negative feeling of **hopelessness**.
- This perceived inadequacy has arisen from **previous** failure.
- This **failure** if reinforced is more likely to lead to LH.
- **Global LH** is the feeling of hopelessness in all sport.
- **Specific LH** is the feeling of hopelessness in a **particular** activity.
- **Imagery or visualisation** of success may help.
- Set achievable **short-term goals**.
- Raise **self-esteem** by having more self-belief.
- Somatic **stress management** or relaxation.
- Meditation to mentally practise **success**.

9) a) What is meant by the term self-efficacy when applied to sports psychology?

1 mark

**Answer:**

- **Self-efficacy** is the level of self-confidence an individual has in a given situation (also called state confidence).

b) Bandura suggested that self-efficacy is influenced by four factors. Identify and apply these factors to a sport of your choice.

8 marks

**Answer:**

- **Performance accomplishment** which means prior success.
- For example, a hockey pass successfully completed would tend to increase self-efficacy the next time a pass was expected.
- **Vicarious Experience**, which is seeing others of similar standard successfully complete task.
- This is modelling of a task by someone else - seeing the task performed successfully by someone else can increase self-efficacy of the observer.
- **Verbal Persuasion** or encouragement by others.
- This can be by a coach or significant other shouting encouragement from the sidelines during a game.
- Such a tactic can include deception - in which a player is encouraged in spite of faults.
- **Emotional Arousal** which is influenced by level of anxiety.
- For example, feeling anxious before a game can raise arousal and increase or decrease self-efficacy.
- This can also affect and be affected by motivation and determination of the player.
- A more highly motivated (determined) player will have higher arousal and greater self-efficacy when faced with a task such as attempting to beat a favoured team at hockey.

c) As a coach of a sports team, how would you raise an individual's level of self-efficacy?

4 marks

**Answer:**

- Ensure the performer experiences **success**.
- Show the performer a **model** of similar age or ability being successful.
- **Encourage** the performer or persuade the performer that success is attainable.
- **Calm** the performer down if anxiety is high.

10) Drawing on your knowledge and understanding of sports psychology, examine the theories and methods that you might use to raise the levels of confidence of a sports performer. Illustrate your answer with practical examples. 20 marks

**Answer:**

4 marks for definitions and introduction:

- **Confidence** is a key element of mental preparation for sports performance.
- **Confidence** includes self-confidence or a feature of a sportsperson's attitude towards his or her sporting activity.
- And **self-efficacy** which is a situation-specific form of self-confidence.
- **Sport confidence** is the level of belief a person has in his/her ability to be successful at sport.
- Confidence arouses **positive emotions**, facilitates concentration and enables the performer to focus on the important aspects of the task.

6 marks for theories:

- **Bandura's self-efficacy** theory states that self-efficacy predicts actual performance when skill and motivation are equal, as between yourself and your opponent.
- If you are as motivated and skilful as your opponent whoever has the highest self-efficacy will win.
- **Self-efficacy** can be improved by following Bandura's four component model:
- **Performance accomplishments**, the performer would use past good performances which have the most powerful effect on self-efficacy.
- **Vicarious experiences** show the performer a demonstration of the required skill. This will persuade the performer that the task is achievable.
- **Verbal persuasion**, others would verbally encourage the performer that he has the ability to succeed.
- **Emotional arousal**, a coach or significant other would get the performer to feel confident about his level of arousal and be able to alter the level of arousal to achieve the optimal level.
- **Vealey** used self-confidence and self-efficacy theories to develop a specific model of confidence in sport.
- According to Vealey **sport confidence** can be assessed when the following factors are taken into account:
- **Trait sport confidence** or the level of sport confidence a performer usually has.
- **Competitive orientation** or the perceived opportunity to achieve a performance or outcome goal.
- **State sport confidence** or the level of sports confidence a performer has in a specific sporting situation.
- **Trait sport confidence** and competitive orientation are used as predictors of the confidence of a performer in any sporting situation.
- For example, 'I feel confident in taking part in a penalty shoot out' (state sport confidence).
- 'I feel generally confident in taking penalties' (trait sport confidence).
- 'I am motivated by the opportunity to score winning goals' is an example of competitive orientation.
- Vealey also related **attribution theory** to sport confidence.
- Attributing **success** to factors like ability and effort will increase a performer's sport confidence.
- By increasing the performer's future expectancy of success.

6 marks for critical evaluation of application of methods:

- **Coaches** should realise that performers are individuals and have different levels of trait confidence and different competitive orientations.
- **Performer** should draw on and learn from **past experiences**.
- Coach and performer should ensure adequate **preparation**.
- Performer should be highly **motivated**.
- Performer should **control arousal** level under pressure.
- Coach and performer should carefully select **achievable goals**.
- Performer should focus on **successful personal performance** and not winning.
- Performer should not be **over-confident** or **under-confident** – both will lead to a disappointing outcome.

3 marks for recognition of confidence traits for the elite performer as an aid to raising performer's confidence:

- **Males** have a higher sport confidence than females.
- **Elite performers** have high sport confidence.
- **Elite sporting males** have the same level of sport confidence as elite sporting females.
- Therefore elite sporting females are less affected by traditional female stereotyping and roles.
- Elite performers are more **performance orientated**, which means that their feelings of confidence are based more on how well they perform whether they win or lose.

1 mark for conclusion:

- Confidence is a very significant aspect of **mental preparation** for sport performance.
- It is important that performers are made aware of psychological strategies that will **enhance self-belief** in their ability to be successful in sport.

11) How can self-concept affect performance in a sporting situation?

6 marks

**Answer:**

- The term **self-concept** is a general term used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates or **perceives themselves**.
- To be **aware of oneself** is to have a concept of oneself.

The self-concept has three different components:

- The view you have of yourself (**self-image**).
- How much value you place on yourself (**self-esteem** or self-worth).
- What you wish you were really like (**ideal-self**).
- **Self-esteem** should be based on who you are as a person instead of how well you can perform in your sport.
- Or how high you go in a sporting career.
- If you take away the part of you who is an athlete, how would you describe yourself?
- What are your **personal characteristics** that describe you?
- This is what self-esteem should be based on.

12) a) How does self-efficacy explain performance?

4 marks

**Answer:**

4 marks for four of:

- **Self-efficacy** is the level of self-confidence an individual has in a given situation (also called state confidence).
- Self efficacy is a **specific** form of self confidence, it is specific to a person's chosen sport.
- She might be highly **confident** at netball, and play for a top team, but not so confident at badminton.
- So this person has high self-efficacy at netball, but low self-efficacy at badminton.
- This can also affect and be affected by **motivation** and **determination** of the player.
- A more highly motivated (determined) player will have higher **arousal** and greater self-efficacy when faced with a task such as attempting to beat a favoured team at hockey.

b) Describe each of the sections of self-efficacy theory.

8 marks

**Answer:**

- **Performance accomplishment** which means prior success.
- For example, a hockey pass successfully completed would tend to increase self-efficacy the next time a pass was expected.
- **Vicarious Experience**, which is seeing others of similar standard successfully complete task.
- This is modelling of a task by someone else - seeing the task performed successfully by someone else can increase self-efficacy of the observer.
- **Verbal Persuasion** or encouragement by others.
- This can be by a coach or significant other shouting encouragement from the sidelines during a game.
- Such a tactic can include deception - in which a player is encouraged in spite of faults.
- **Emotional Arousal** which is influenced by level of anxiety.
- For example, feeling anxious before a game can raise arousal and increase or decrease self-efficacy.

c) Provide a sport-based example of self-efficacy theory.

3 marks

**Answer:**

- She might be highly **confident** at netball, and play for a top team, but not so confident at badminton.
- So this person has high self-efficacy at netball, but low self-efficacy at badminton.
- A more highly motivated (determined) player will have higher **arousal** and greater self-efficacy when faced with a task such as attempting to beat a favoured team at hockey.