

An overview of flow-research - a current project of the EFRN

Corinna Peifer^{1*}, Gina Wolters¹, Laszlo Harmat², Jean Heutte³, Jasmine Tan⁴, Teresa Freire⁵, Dionisia Tavares⁵, Carla Fonte⁶, Frans Orsted Andersen⁷, Jef van den Hout⁸, Milija Šimleša⁹, Linda Pola¹⁰, Lucia Ceja¹¹ & Stefano Triberti¹²

¹Unit Applied Psychology, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany; e-mail: corinna.peifer@rub.de

²Department of Psychology, Linnaeus University, Växjö, Sweden;

³EA 4354 - CIREL, Univ. Lille, F-59000 Lille, France;

⁴Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths University of London, Great Britain;

⁵School of Psychology, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal;

⁶Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University Fernando Pessoa, Porto, Portugal;

⁷Department of Education, University of Aarhus, Denmark;

⁸Eindhoven School of Education, Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands;

⁹Institute of Psychology Henri Pieron, Université Paris 5 René Descartes, France;

¹⁰Department of Cultural Heritage and Environment, University of Milan, Italy;

¹¹IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Spain;

¹²Department of Psychology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan, Italy

Keywords: flow-experience, European Flow-Researchers Network, Scoping Review

Background: Flow “is a gratifying state of deep involvement and absorption that individuals report when facing a challenging activity and they perceive adequate abilities to cope with it” [1]. During flow, people are deeply motivated to persist in their activities and to perform such activities again [1, 2]. Since the introduction of the flow concept, there has been much research investigating the concept itself, its preconditions, and its consequences. This research shows: “flow experiences can have far-reaching implications in supporting individuals’ growth, by contributing both to personal well-being and full functioning in everyday life” [1].

Aim: In this presentation, members of the European Flow-Researchers Network aim at providing a comprehensive overview of flow-research in the new millennium.

Method: To develop this scoping review, we followed the steps proposed by Arksey and O’Malley (2005) [3]. For the literature research, we searched platforms *PsychInfo*, *PubMed*, *PubPsych*, *Web of Science* and *Scopus*. We searched for empirical studies using the terms “*flow/optimal experience/challenge-skill balance*” and “*Csikszentmihalyi*” and excluded “*cerebral blood flow*” and “*work-flow centrality*”. We included only empirical studies that were published between 2000 and 2016. Overall, we found 239 publications that were rated by the authors with respect to the relevance of that publication for our scoping review. Publications were included if they contained original data on flow experience. From the 239 publications, 177 articles were finally included in the review. Experts of each topic charted the information and then summarized results of the selected studies. Finally, experts discussed the results and implications for future research.

Results: To structure and review the empirical research regarding flow experiences, we developed a framework. The framework consists of three circles lying within each other, containing categories of flow-research: The inner circle represents individual factors. On this individual level, we distinguish between the categories personality, motivation, physiology, emotion, cognition and behaviour. The middle circle – the contextual level, represents the categories context and interindividual factors and the outer circle represents the cultural level. Within our framework, all categories contain preconditions or consequences of flow, and all categories can influence each other. Results of each category is reported in the contributions of this symposium. As a general result, we found a need for longitudinal and experimental studies in flow research.

Conclusions: Flow research in the new millennium has made huge progress in understanding the preconditions, components and consequence of flow on different levels. Our review provides a framework to cluster flow research and gives a systematic overview about existing studies and their findings in the field.

References

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