

*Original Research Article*

# Sources for increasing academic motivation of students in National Security “Specialty”

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Abstract

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Academic motivation is defined as the common motivational state brought about and related with the training provided in a given specialty. 290 students took part, 60 of whom study “National Security” as their major course of study. The aim of the research is to bring to the fore the significant personality traits and emotions that affect academic motivation. Three types of psychological tools have been applied adapted by Velichkov, Radoslavova and Petkov. The data have been processed with SPSS-21. The results show that personality traits and emotions do affect academic motivation. Significant correlations have been found between personality traits and academic motivation in cases of lowered self-esteem, spontaneous aggression, irritability and openness. The basic conclusions are that the combination of certain personality traits lowers academic motivation. It also turns out that the trend to establishing friendly terms raises academic motivation. Academic motivation stimulates the search of additional information on the studied subjects and is a crucial factor for the formation of better specialists.

**Keywords:** Academic motivation, personality traits, emotions

## INTRODUCTION

One of the main issues to be solved in the management of any activity is connected with the determination of adequate motives that would push the subject of activity to provide resources and implement a certain set of actions and operations to realize the activity, preferably in optimal forms, because:

- Motives are an instigating organizing and controlling factor of human activity.
- Motivation reveals mental content and regulation of the activity.
- Motivation is internal mental determination of activity without which there is no activity. Each activity is internally and mentally motivated.
- Motivation mediates the external objective determination of human activity through the psychological or, as Rubinstein points out, motivation is the realized through psyche determination.

“Motivation is the internal subjective evaluative attitude of a person to his/her activities to the tasks they set themselves, to other people and to society” (Brandstatter, 1994). Motivation refers to the internal periodically activated causes of the behavior. Motivated behavior is purposeful, organized in a certain sequence and has a random nature, i.e. subject to conscious control. The motivational regulation of behavior is related to the implementation of several functions:

- *Inducement function.* The most important feature of motivation is the ability to incite and to energize behavior. The motivating factors act as inducement reasons, namely by this function;
- *Directing function.* Motivated behavior is oriented towards the mastery of certain subjects or a specified condition. Through motivation, of the whole diversity of external reality, only those objects which can satisfy the

specific needs of the body are separated. They acquire a subjective significance and behavior is oriented towards them.

- *Organizing function.* Motivated behavior is not a messy set of motored acts, but has some organization and consistency.

Considering the motivation both as an internal reason and a justification for behavior attention should be paid to the fact that to outside observers it is not always clear and possible to identify the actual reasons for performing an action such as consent to participate in an activity, for example.

First of all, it is necessary to provide an even vague idea of motivation. Motivation is a central issue in the field of psychology as it is at the heart of biological, cognitive and social regulation. In the real world, motivation is highly valued because of its effects on the efficient functioning of people in different social environments.

Although in science motivation is often treated as a separate construct, even a superficial glance shows that people are driven to act by very different types of factors with high ranging experiences and consequences. People can be motivated because they appreciate the activity or because they are subjected to strong external coercion. They can be spurred to action because of sustained interest or a prize. They may behave as a result of a sense of personal commitment or for fear of being monitored. These contrasts between cases of intrinsic motivation against external pressures are obvious and well known. Whether behavior is motivated by their own interests and values, or causes that are external to the self, it is very important and at the same time represents a basic dimension in which people evaluate their behavior or the behavior of others.

Comparisons between people whose motivation is authentic intrinsic and those that are mainly externally controlled, usually indicate that the former as opposed to the latter, have more interest, excitement and confidence, which in turn is reflected in improved performance, perseverance and creativity, increased vitality, self-esteem (Deci and Ryan, 1985) and general wellbeing (Emmons, 1986). This is so even when people have similar levels of perceived competence or self-efficacy of the activity. Because of functional and experiential differences between self-motivation and external regulation, an important task of the theory of self-determination it is to provide a differentiated approach to motivation by putting the question what kind of motivation is demonstrated at some point. To review the perceived forces that move people to act, the theory of self-determination identifies several different types of motivation, each of which has specific implications for learning, performance, personal experience and well-being.

The report considers two types of motivation, as both are related to academic activity, in determining the basic motive for applications in the high school and one at a later

stage in development of the reasons for the acquisition of disciplines.

*Intrinsic motivation.* Perhaps no other phenomenon reflects the positive potential of human nature more than intrinsic motivation, the intrinsic tendency to seek the new and the challenging to expand and pursue opportunities to explore and learn. It is from birth that healthy children are active, inquisitive, curious and playful, even in the absence of special awards for such behaviors. The construct of intrinsic motivation describes this natural inclination towards assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest and research, which are essential for cognitive and social development, which are the main source of enjoyment and vitality throughout life. But despite the fact that people are generously granted with inner motivational tendencies, it is clear that maintaining and increasing this innate predisposition requires supportive conditions and can be completely destroyed by various unsupportive ones. The cited above theory of intrinsic motivation does not relate to what causes motivation, but rather examines the conditions that support it against conditions that suppress and decrease it.

The theory argues that the first social contextual events (e.g. feedback, communication, rewards) that contribute to maintaining and enhancing the feeling of competence during the activity can increase intrinsic motivation for this activity. Therefore, the optimal challenges, effective feedback and lack of humiliating assessments do support intrinsic motivation. Several studies show that positive feedback on performance enhances intrinsic motivation, while the negative one decreases it.

The explanatory framework of the theory suggests that social environments can support or undermine intrinsic motivation through support or thwart of human inner psychological needs. Clearly are demonstrated the strong links between intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of the needs of autonomy and competence and some works show that satisfying the need for connectivity can also be important. It is important to remember, however, that people will be intrinsically motivated only for activities they are intrinsically interested in, activities that tempt with their novelty, challenge or value. For activities that do not have these characteristics, the principles of the theory are not applicable.

*Self-regulation of extrinsic motivation.* Although intrinsic motivation is a very important type of motivation, it is not the only type of motivation and not even the only type of self-determining motivation (Emmons, 1986). Indeed, much of what people do is not internally motivated, especially after early childhood, when the freedom to be internally motivated diminishes due to the social pressure to do activities that are not interesting, and to accept new responsibilities.

The real issue in terms of behaviors that are not internally motivated is how individuals acquire the motivation to do so and how this motivation affects the perseverance, quality of behavior and wellbeing.

The term “extrinsic motivation” refers to the performance of any activity which aims to achieve a result and thus be distinguished from intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity because of the inner satisfaction from it. Contrary to some authors who regard externally motivated behaviors as never autonomous, the self-determination theory argues that extrinsic motivation can vary widely in its relative autonomy (Gradev, 1976). For example, students who do their homework because they have personally adopted its relevance to their chosen careers are externally motivated as are those who do the work because they obey the control of their parents. Both examples include instrumentality rather than enjoyment of the activity itself, but the first case of extrinsic motivation requires personal approval, acceptance and a sense of choice, while the second involves obedience to external regulation. Both cases represent directed behavior (Levin, 2000), but vary in their relative autonomy. The first type is extrinsic motivation that is being sought by the socializing agents, regardless of the field of application.

In the theory of self-determination Deci and Ryan bring to the fore a sub-theory called Theory of organismic integration to differentiate and present in detail the various forms of extrinsic motivation and contextual factors that help or hinder the internalization and integration of the regulation of these behaviors. “Studies of the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation suggest that there are a number of options for their harmonious combination and transformation of socially significant activities into tools for self-development and expression of ourselves” (Muzbaybaev, 1983). This further enriches the arsenal of the manager with practices for impacting employees and in the case of academic motivation where teachers have the means to influence students.

When people internalize regulations and assimilate them into the Self, they experience greater autonomy in their operations. This process may occur in certain periods or at all times. The range of behaviors that can be assimilated into the Self grows over time with the growth of the cognitive capacity and the development of the Self. There is evidence that the overall regulatory style tends to become more and more internalized or self-regulated over time.

The so far mentioned here and theoretically clarified opportunities for transition of the motivations of each other in the direction from the extrinsic to the intrinsic raise questions about the practical opportunities to catalyze the process, i.e. to support the integration of extrinsic motivation. This question stems from the fact that became evident as a result of the theoretical analysis that it is virtually impossible for all activities to be motivated intrinsically.

The above-said would be the perfect case for the functioning of the student in a particular specialty, who has accepted the values of their teachers, processed them cognitively and they have become their own, which will no longer need special effects to convince him/her of the

necessity of learning of disciplines, but social support from teachers and academic leadership in the process of training.

Again, research results support those arguments. For example Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, and Leone (1994) have demonstrated in laboratory experiments that providing a meaningful rationale of some uninteresting behavior along with the support of autonomy and relatedness supports its internalization and integration. Controlling contexts contribute less to the overall internalization and internalization that occurs in these contexts tends to be only introjected (Levin, 2000).

Since the term autonomy is often used in this paper, it needs a terminological clarification. And it is that autonomy is often used as antagonistic to connectivity or a feeling of community. Moreover, in some theories it is equated with individualism and independence, but they suggest lower connectivity. In the theory of self-determination autonomy represents not what it is to be independent, attached or selfish, but rather the sense of free will, which can accompany any action. Some recent studies have found a more positive relationship between autonomy and collectivist attitudes than between autonomy and individualistic attitudes. From this it is clear that autonomy could not be equated to the independence and individualism.

In light of the above considerations, the question arises how academic leadership should strengthen the relationship with the students and make it more attractive and desirable so as to ensure a fruitful collaboration in order to improve the learning outcomes. It is the self-determination theory that is directed to specific factors that promote, respectively demote human potential for growth, integration and prosperity and studies the processes and conditions that are conducive to the healthy development and effective functioning of the individual. It is this theory that gives adequate answers to the above question and is able to help optimize the educational activity. It is important in this process to suggest to learners that education in the university should be made the ultimate aim. Even if the choice of destination is made, the motivational process and motivational regulation of behavior do not end. The proposed by H. Hekhausen model of motivational regulation suggests that people appreciate the actions to achieve the aims, the situation in which it should happen, the outcome and consequences. Correlations between these estimates produce a whole set of subjective expectations that are included in the regulation of behavior. The following figure 1 illustrates the model:

Expectations of the relationship between action and result direct the individual to the appropriate behavioral programs. Expectations of the relationship between action and situation show which behaviors are appropriate in the given circumstances, and the relationship between situation and result orient the individual whether this result is attainable in the given conditions, and the relationship

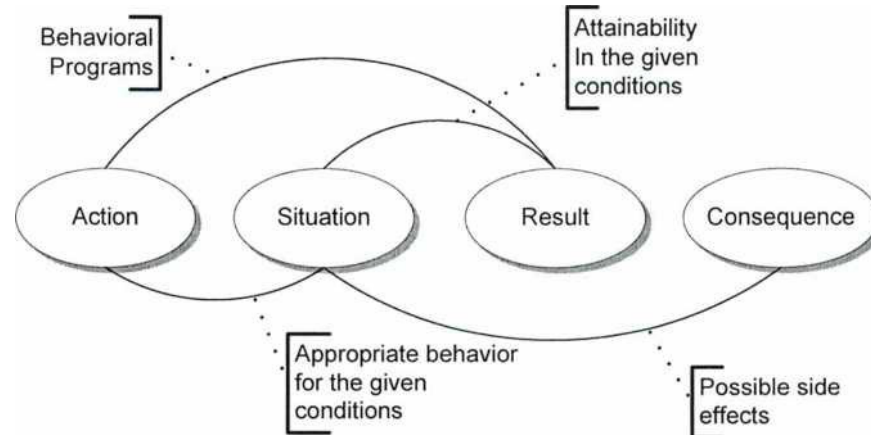


Figure 1. A model of the motivational process

between the situation and the consequences indicate the possible side effects, the relationship between result and consequences allowing the behavior to be assessed in the broader context of a person's own activity.

All these expectations dynamically change over time and at any point in a different way are included in the regulation of behavior. Usually people do not make detailed preliminary plans and outline only general intentions. During the execution of motivated behavior, depending on changes in the situation, they form new expectations and based on them adjust their current actions. This is an economical strategy to regulate their own behavior, but in most cases, the choice of one or another behavior is not fully recognized. Therefore, it is difficult to clarify the true reasons of their own behavior. This task is even more difficult for an outside observer and very rarely is he or she able to fully clarify the true motivational basis of behavior.

Clarifying the nature of emotions and their effects on current behavior of the students and the traits of personality are an important and essential element in analyzing the problem. Occurring in different experiences, intensity and force, emotions reflect the personal importance and subjective assessment of situations in which an individual falls and these participate in the regulation of vital activity. Emotions are included in the regulation of behavior due to their ability to interact with other regulatory processes and modify them in a specific way.

## METHODS

Psychological tools are applied developed by Bulgarian scientists (Petkov, 2008; Ryan et al., 1995). A questionnaire has been used to estimate the level of academic motivation. It provides the opportunity to study the intrinsic readiness of university students to actively participate in the learning process. Academic motivation is

a construct that describes the general motivational condition associated with training in a specialty. The overall positive motivational readiness is an indicator of the quality of teaching in a particular specialty, but also a predictor of academic success. Academic motivation stimulates the demand for more information on studied disciplines and is an essential factor in the development of university graduates. Estimates of the level of academic motivation are also important in the management of teaching and planning and introduction of new forms of teaching.

A multidimensional personality questionnaire has been used in order to obtain a more complete picture of the personality of the respondents. Personality traits are measured in scales: neuroticism - anxiety can be caused by various factors, e.g. low self-esteem, insecurity, suspicion and individual internal conflicts unseen by the individual; spontaneous aggression - reveals an increased level of psychopathic and impulsive behavior, proneness to easy excitability; reduced self-esteem - depression, pessimism, higher values on this scale are not yet a basis for assessing clinical forms of depression, but can focus on additional studies with other methods; irritability - a tendency to react angrily and demonstrating instability, blaming external factors for the emerging difficulties, low resistance to stress, the use of physical force, easily subsiding angry moods ignored by individuals themselves; sociability - making friends, higher values on this scale indicate a need for communication, responsiveness; balance - measures individual effects of the resistance to stress; stress impact presence makes people susceptible to developing sustainable stress reactions and related health complications; reactive aggression - high scale performance outlines striving to impose themselves at any cost consciously seeking conflict situations; shyness - higher values indicate social anxiety, uncertainty, numbness, inability to self-presentation; openness - low values in results indicate a proneness to secrecy, concealment of the true thoughts and feelings, and high

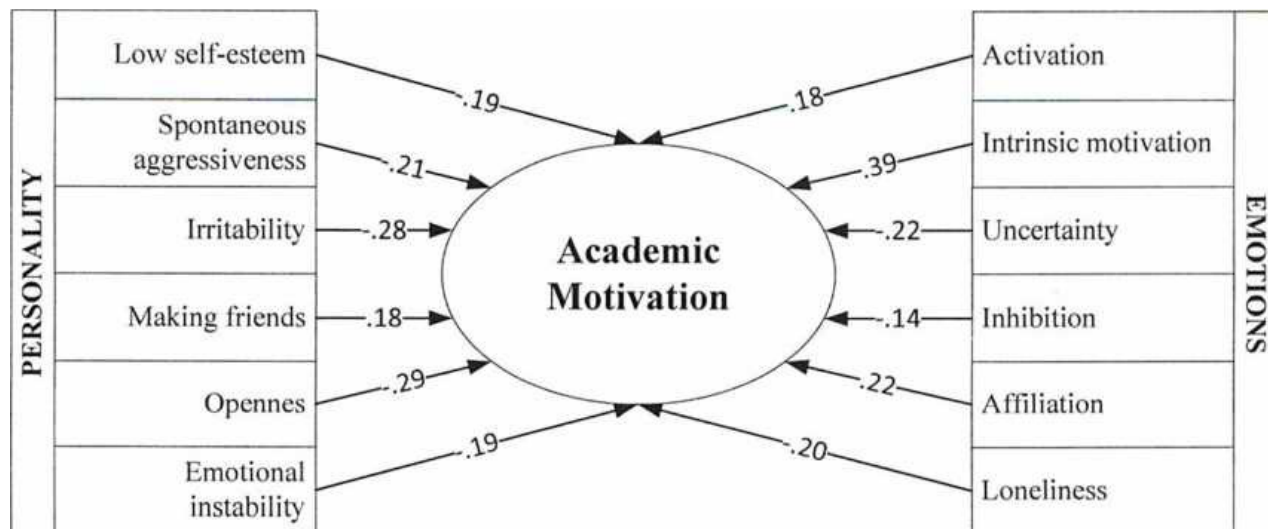


Figure 2. Interrelations of personality and emotions with academic motivation

values in results respectively indicate honesty and self-criticism; extroversion / introversion - respectively active and balanced, patient; emotional instability - high values in results characterize individuals who are trapped in their emotions with frequent mood swings; masculinity / femininity - characterize the degree of mastery of culturally conditioned patterns of behavior associated with gender roles.

“Emotional State Scale.” is used to assess the emotional state and dynamics of emotions. Its psychometric characteristics justify its application in such studies. The method contains the following scales: activation - measures the level of experienced vigor and emotional mobilization as those with high scores on the scale are filled with vitality and desire to work; deactivation - measures the level of lethargy and emotional exhaustion; the intrinsic interest scale is designed to assess the experiences of infatuation, activity and interest; nervousness - measures the emotional experiences of anxiety and inner tension: the data on this scale are indicative of having experienced mental stress; fear - measures fearful experiences; uncertainty - measures emotional experiences of insecurity and uncertainty caused by vagueness or lack of personal resources for action; depression - the scale measures experiences of sadness, despair and other similar emotions of depressive nature; friendliness - the scale measures the emotional attitude to sociability and openness towards others; 1 loneliness - measures emotional experiences associated with subjectively perceived social isolation; shyness - includes emotional experiences associated with communication difficulties; hostility - measures the degree of hostile and unfriendly attitude towards others.

Methods used include only scales that have demonstrated significant correlations with each other.

## Aims, objectives and hypothesis of the research

The aim of this research is to find out whether and how psychological factors such as personality traits and emotions affect the nature and level of academic motivation and ultimately catalyze the success of students. The aim is achieved by solving several research objectives: to identify the traits of personality that affect the motivation significantly; to assess the level of experienced emotions and the state of academic motivation of students; to determine the set of emotions that affect the emotional status of students; to investigate the relationship between traits of personality, emotional status of students and their academic motivation. The main hypothesis of this research is that there is a link between a combination of emotions that build the emotional status of individuals as well as an outward constellation of personality traits and the degree and nature of academic motivation of students.

## RESULTS

### Individuals who have been studied

240 people participated in the research. They are as follows: by gender: men - 121; 50.4 %; women - 119; 49.6 %; by specialty: 1 - 181; 75.4 %; 2-19; 7.9 %; 3-26-10.8 %; 4 - 14; 5.8 %; average age of people in the research: 31. Data has been processed with IBM SPSS Statistics 21.

Using regression analysis are examined the impact of the traits of personality, emotions and academic motivation in students. Figure 2 above

As can be seen, a part of the positive emotions such as activation, internal interests and affiliations, as well as insecurity, depression and loneliness show low to

moderate correlations with motivation. The correlation coefficients are negative, meaning that the absence of depressive experiences, greater self-confidence, overcoming loneliness and lack of oppression generate a greater interest in the learning process and strengthen academic motivation.

The results show that personality traits affect academic motivation. Significant correlations between traits of personality and academic motivation are detected in lowered self-esteem, spontaneous aggressiveness, irritability, openness. The tendency to make friends only increases academic motivation, and the rest of the features decrease it.

## DISCUSSION

The study showed that personality traits and emotional status of individuals are key factors in the formation and operation of academic motivation of students. It turned out that individuals who are more sociable, with higher self-esteem and emotionally stable have higher levels of motivation. Emotionally unstable people with low self-esteem and high aggressiveness are less motivated. The conclusion is that the features that are in the negative part of the continuum affect negatively the motivational elements thus lowering academic motivation and academic performance. Naturally positive and functioning features catalyze academic processes and help improve the performance of students. Similarly works the emotional status of students as a set of positive emotions stimulate academic motivation, while others referred to in the analysis hinder it.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of the obtained results confirm some of the theoretical assumptions. Although reviewed fragmentarily, these personal characteristics more clearly and unequivocally demonstrate the influence of personality on academic motivation. The level of self-assessment is subjective and depends on how high or low our aspirations are. The same success in one case will lead to low self-esteem, and in the other - to a high one. Maintaining low self-esteem has adverse effects on the planning of behavior because it indicates that the individual does not have enough resources for its successful implementation.

Participation of fractions of emotions in the construction of academic motivation is essential. At the same time this issue reveals opportunities for academic leaders affecting the emotions and maintaining a favorable emotional status

influencing student motivation for more active involvement in the learning process and achieving higher academic results. In other words, the process is manageable, but it requires commitment and dedication to student issues and maintaining a continuous positive emotional tone in academic daily life.

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