

# LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH RECEIVING AWARDS AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** The article presents a research on learning motivation and its relationship with receiving awards and better students' performance in an academic environment. The article includes an analysis of the results of a research conducted at the National Military University of the Republic of Bulgaria. It develops more thoroughly the author's previous studies on the motivation of civilian and military students, focusing on the influence of positive reinforcements on motivation for education and military training and the influence of positive reinforcements on the motivation of cadets in the training process and its relation with performance at the university. The object of the study is cadets in the last year of their education in the Military Science professional field, specialising in Organisation and Management of Military Units at a Tactical Level at the National Military University in Bulgaria, as well students and cadets in the first year of education are included as control groups for comparison.

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł prezentuje badania nad motywacją do nauki i jej związkiem z otrzymaniem nagród oraz lepszymi wynikami studentów. Artykuł zawiera analizę rezultatów badań przeprowadzonych na Narodowym Wojskowym Uniwersytecie Republiki Bułgarii. Badaniem objęto kadetów ostatniego roku edukacji nauk wojskowych ze specjalizacją w organizacji i zarządzaniu jednostkami wojskowymi na poziomie taktycznym, a także studentów i kadetów pierwszego roku jako grupę kontrolną, dla porównania wyników.

**Keywords:** learning motivation, positive reinforcements, performance, academic environment.

**Słowa kluczowe:** motywacja do nauki, pozytywne wsparcie, wyniki, środowisko akademickie.

## Introduction

The main management function is to meet the wide range of interests of different stakeholders. It is usually associated with making a profit for the shareholders,

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creating valued products at a reasonable cost for customers, and to provide remuneration to the employees. If we need to determine the term “stakeholders”, we should bear in mind that it includes not only the shareholders, customers and employees. It includes all individuals and legal entities that are relevant to an organization and are interested in its prosperous development and in receipt by it of any benefit (value, price, service, quality, revenue, profit, care, social empathy, and social responsibility).<sup>2</sup>

In general, management is a process of intervention directed to subjects and different objects to driving them in order to achieve pre-defined objectives, and thereby align the joint activities of people. In particular, it represents a conscious impact of control from managing subject (person) to the managed objects (people, resources, nature, etc.) in connection with the directing and coordinating of the ongoing processes in order to achieve the predicted and planned results, as soon as it is possible, with the least deviations and with minimum resources.

Therefore, as one of the basic management functions can be pointed motivation and it is obvious that it is oriented towards achieving the goals of the individual and the organization in line with the organization’s management policy.

## 1. The theoretical basis of needs, motivation and motivational process

Human existence is impossible without the satisfaction of human needs. The range of needs grows with the development of technology, science and culture, which provoke personality. The need is a relatively stable mental state of the individual, which is characterized by an affinity for objects and experienced as a necessary condition for the existence of personality.<sup>3</sup> It is desire or aspiration for what is substantial important for personality.

The phenomenon need has a complex structure, including social, psychological and economical elements. Caused by objective factors, need becomes subjective necessity of the individual, so that the needs of individuals are different. Psychology and Economics make difference between necessity and needs. The necessity is a necessary objective that a person cannot realize himself, and the need is first prerequisite for the behaviour of every person. The presence of needs in the subject is a fundamental condition of its existence... In its basic form; a biological need is a state of the organism, resulting in an objective necessity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For more related information see: D. Pavlov, A. Nizamov, J. Rudawska. 2016. *Public – private partnerships and other financing models for research and innovation // Development and Delivery of the Training Programme – Towards the Modernization of High Education Institutions in Uzbekistan (MATcHES project)*, PRIMAX, Bulgaria pp. 108-165, [http://www.matches-project.eu/shared/DEV\\_21\\_trainings\\_en.pdf](http://www.matches-project.eu/shared/DEV_21_trainings_en.pdf); D. Pavlov, 2014. *Academic production of entrepreneurs – myth or reality // Annals of “Eftimie Murgu” University Reșița, Romania, Fascicle II. Economic Studies, No XXI*, pp. 256–271, [http://www.analefseauem.ro/upload/arhiva-revista/2014/Volum\\_2014.pdf](http://www.analefseauem.ro/upload/arhiva-revista/2014/Volum_2014.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> M. Andreeva, *Organizational Behavior*, Galaxy, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> A. Leontiev, *Selected Psychological Works, Activity. Consciousness. Personality*, 2, – M.: “Education”, 1983, pp. 1, 13–20, 23–28, 35–39.

Emerging needs encourage individuals to seek ways actively to meet them, and turn the inner instigators in motives. Needs creates a prerequisite for action, but itself alone they cannot still give the direction of the actions. The tangible or intangible subject of needs is defined as a motive of the action.<sup>5</sup> Motive is an occasion inducement urges to do something.<sup>6</sup> Behind every motive stands a necessity. It is a source of purposeful behaviour which excites the internal engine and is activated to satisfy certain needs.

The motivational process can be described in a few steps. First. Individual recognizes as a necessity current initial impulses. Second. The internal tension increases in the individual. Third. The energy hidden in this tension determines the behaviour of people whose goal is to reduce or satisfy the need. The choice of behaviour and actual behaviour interfere with the ability, because the individual may not have the necessary foundation and capabilities to meet his needs. Fourth. Individuals are under less pressure having satisfied needs. Fifth. New need arises, and then the cycle repeats.

## **2. A brief study on the relation receiving awards – learning motivation – students’ performance**

This study began in 2012 as a joint work of two scientific supervisors (from the Land Forces Academy in Sibiu, Romania and the National Military University in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria) in support of their graduate student. Subsequently, in 2013, according to the decision of the rector of the National Military University in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, it was modified according to the needs of the university and acquired a big importance. This article presents a part of it.

The paper presents a research on learning motivation and its relationship with receiving awards and better students’ performance in an academic environment. The paper includes an analysis of the results of a research conducted at the National Military University of the Republic of Bulgaria. It develops more thoroughly the author’s previous studies on the motivation of civilian and military students, focusing on the influence of positive reinforcements on motivation for education and training and their relation with the rewards given by the superiors for getting better performance at the university.<sup>7</sup> The object of the study is cadets in the last year of their education in the Military Science professional field, specialising in Organisation and Management of Military Units at a Tactical Level at the National Military University in Bulgaria, as well students and cadets in the first year of education are included as control groups for comparison.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> Bulgarian dictionary, S., 1993, p. 447.

<sup>7</sup> N. Nichev, E. Petrova, Professional Training of Future Logistic Officers at the National Military University of Bulgaria, Sibiu, Romania, The 21st International Conference The Knowledge-Based Organization, Nicolae Balcescu Land Forces Academy, 11–13 June 2015, pp. 259–263.

Specific focus is placed on the question – “Does motivation by rewards lead to a better performance at the university?/To what extent does your motivation derive from the superior rewards to get a better performance at the university?”

Table 1. Comparison between the levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance (all studied groups of respondents)

| Respondents                          | Consent, % | Indifference, % | Dissent, % |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Cadets 1st academic year 2013/2014   | 66         | 13              | 21         |
| Students 1st academic year 2013/2014 | 81         | 10              | 9          |
| Alumni Cadets 2013/14                | 60         | 21              | 19         |
| Alumni Cadets 2014/15                | 67         | 21              | 12         |
| Alumni Cadets 2015/16                | 58         | 18              | 24         |
| Alumni Cadets 2016/17                | 61         | 23              | 16         |

Source: own research work

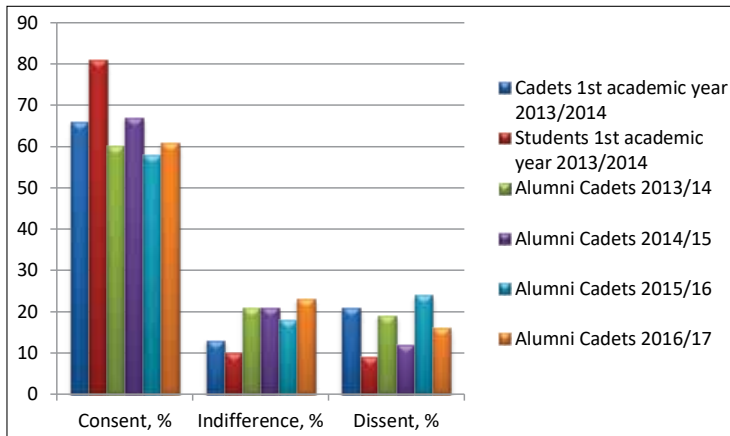


Fig. 1. Comparison between the levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance (all studied groups of respondents 2013-2017)

Source: own research work

The comparison between the levels of consent with the statement that motivation through rewards leads to better results is shown on the first figure. It can be pointed that the highest level of consent with the statement is expressed by students 1st academic year 2013/2014 of their training. The second position is for alumni cadets who graduated in 2014/2015. The third position is for cadets 1st academic year 2013/2014. The fourth position is for alumni cadets who graduated in 2016/2017, the fifth position is for alumni cadets who graduated in 2013/2014 and the last position is for alumni cadets who graduated in 2015/2016. The analysis of the results shows that at the leading positions are the control groups of students and cadets. They are at the beginning

of their training and determine the importance of the awards and positive incentives for much greater than the importance given by the alumni to the positive incentives.

Undoubtedly, all theories of motivation support the relationship between award-motivation-result. Typically, it is described in the following dependence – we increase the positive reinforcement – we assure the motivation for human activity – we increase the result. This, of course, cannot be an endless process, but it has its own natural end, ie. from a certain level onwards, even increasing the awards/stimulus/positive reinforcement would not lead to improvement in the end result, as human mental and physical abilities have their limitations. For the purposes of our research, it is more important here that our learners consider that positive motivation is the way that will lead to positive results rather than coercive measures imposed on them by academic or command staff.<sup>8</sup>

A detailed description and comparison between the levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance only for the cadets is presented below.

Table 2. Comparison between the levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance (all studied groups of cadets 2013-2017)

| Respondents                        | Consent, % | Indifference, % | Dissent, % |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Cadets 1st academic year 2013/2014 | 66         | 13              | 21         |
| Alumni Cadets 2013/14              | 60         | 21              | 19         |
| Alumni Cadets 2014/15              | 67         | 21              | 12         |
| Alumni Cadets 2015/16              | 58         | 18              | 24         |
| Alumni Cadets 2016/17              | 61         | 23              | 16         |

Source: own research work

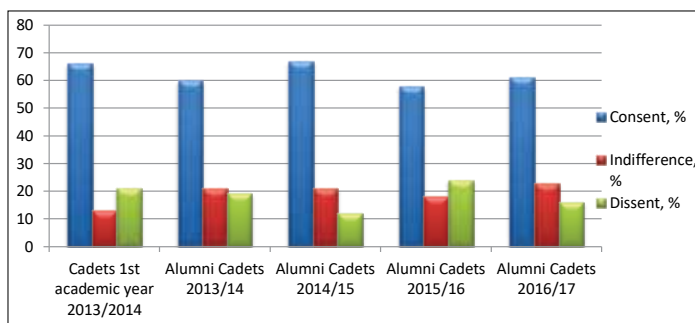


Fig. 2. Comparison between the levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance (all studied groups of cadets 2013-2017)

Source: own research work

<sup>8</sup> E. Petrova, *The influence of positive reinforcements on motivation for education and training activities*, "Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People", Volume 6, Issue 3, 2017, pp. 6–15; E. Petrova, *Students' Motivation in the Training Process and its Relation to the Rewards from Superiors for Getting Better Performance*, "The Annals of Spiru Haret University", Romania, issue 3, 2017, pp. 75–85.

When we conduct a detailed study of the levels of consent and dissent with the statement only in respect of the cadets, it can be found that the levels of consent are significant. The data analysis shows that the very big part of the participants are strongly agree with the statement that positive reinforcements lead to positive motivation and better performance at the university and better educational results.

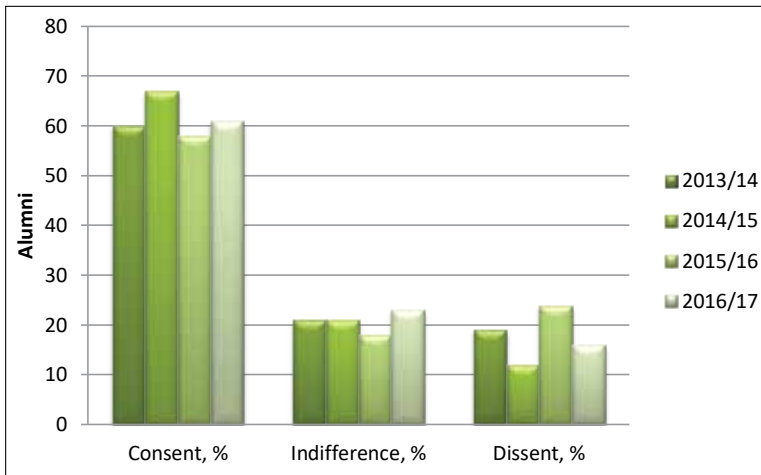


Fig. 3. Levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance (2013-2017 alumni cadets only)

Source: own research work

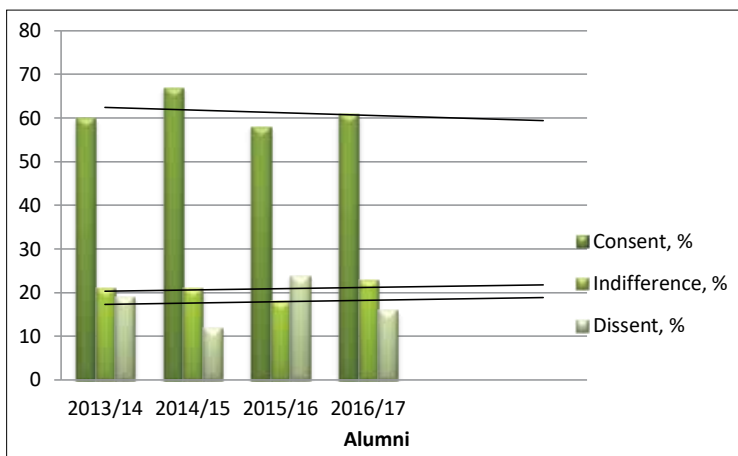


Fig. 4. Trend line for linear prognostication levels of consent that rewards lead to better performance (2013-2017 alumni cadets only)

Source: own research work

All groups of respondent have answered positively that the positive reinforcements have immense importance. It also can be found indifference to opinion as well as negative answers, but to a much lesser extent. The highest level of consent with the statement is shown by 2014/2015 alumni group and the lowest level of consent is shown by 2015/2016 alumni group. The indifference is kept relatively constant over the years while the negative responses vary. The trend line for predicting future results shows an almost constant trend in terms of consensus with euthanasia reduction and steady tendencies in terms of indifference and disagreement. (figures 2, 3 and 4.)

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the positive reinforcements from the administrative, academic and command staff are positively accepted by the learners. According to the trainees, the positive reinforcements lead to higher levels of individual motivation and higher levels of academic performance. Of course, the areas of indifference and disagreement show that there is a lot of unused resources in the terms of increasing motivation for training and daily military activities. The methods which are addressed to the individual needs and achieving organizational goals should also be applied. These can be moral reinforcements; improving communication between academics, command staff and trainees; maintaining organizational culture with the inherent military values; improving working conditions, and conditions for training and rest; improving the lecture fund; improving the material base for conducting training; providing more practice in military formations; participation in various international forums and all that would contribute to improve the academic conditions in a whole and form the personality of a cadet as a professional in its future military activity.

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