

**MOTIVATION FOR ENROLMENT
IN THE GERMAN STUDIES PROGRAMME:
A CASE STUDY AT THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY IN NIŠ**

UDC 811.112.2 (497.11 Niš); 378:159.947.5; 811.112.2 :: 378.6

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Abstract. *The purpose of the study is to investigate the motivation for enrolment in the German studies programme at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš by using the adjusted and simplified Academic Motivation Scale. The German studies programme is one of the newest programmes offered at this institution. In 2022, when research was conducted, the first generation of students was in the process of successfully obtaining the bachelor's degree after four years of studying; therefore it was an important step in self-assessment to inquire into the reasons for their choosing this programme. The language and literature studies are facing funding difficulties worldwide and the number of applicants for enrolment is an important funding factor, which determines the sustainability of the programme. Understanding the motivation for enrolment in the German studies could help determine the future development of the programme as well as the direction of the Department's promotional activities. The research sample consists of 50 students of BA German Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, aged 19 to 45, and the results show that their primary motivation is intrinsic and stems from the striving for accomplishment and competency. They are also driven by a desire for knowledge and – externally – through identified regulation, that is, through internalization of extrinsic motives, by valuing the possibilities of successfully entering the labour market and finding a good job as a German studies graduate.*

Key words: *German studies, higher education, motivation for enrolment, student motivation, Faculty of Philosophy in Niš*

Received September 02, 2022/Accepted December 12, 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

The German studies programme is one of the newest study programmes at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš and the first generation of students is currently, as of summer 2022, in the process of finishing their studies. The institution is oriented towards social science and humanities, offering education in the fields of Communication and PR, History, Journalism, Pedagogy, Philosophy, Psychology, Social Policy and Social Work, Sociology, as well as five language and literature study programmes in Serbian, English, French, German, and Russian studies. The shortage of German language teachers and specialists in Serbia has been an issue since the World War II and although it was possible between 1954 and 1971 to obtain an associate degree after a two-year course of German language and literature at the College of Pedagogy in Niš (Viša pedagoška škola u Nišu), it wasn't until 2018 that a full German studies programme was established in Southeast Serbia (Momčilović & Ognjanović, 2021).

The accreditation of the German studies programme was planned in accordance with the demands of the local job market, however, many external factors, such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, have in the last couple of years influenced the academic world and the employment opportunities and expectations. The language, culture, and literature studies have also been experiencing general funding issues worldwide, as they are perceived to be low-value courses in light of modern capitalist utilitarian demands. Pancrazio (2016, p. 52) writes that „a number of institutions of higher education were considering closing programs in German and Latin“, which is motivated by problems with financial resources linked to enrolments, but also by the political and economic trends which influence both the student choices and the changes in the way higher education is oriented and perceived. Schulz and Lucido (2011, p. 15) state that “the public virtues of higher education are surrendering to the view of higher education as industry” and that “concurrently, efforts to deregulate and commercialize public entities, along with reductions in state support for higher education, have encouraged institutions and their internal actors to pursue external revenue streams, leading to a more competitive market”. They also name further evidence for academic capitalism, including “the propensity for universities to view students as consumers” (Schulz & Lucido, 2011, p. 15).

Since the survival and sustainability of a programme under contemporary circumstances depends largely upon the numbers of enrolling students, the question inevitably arises: what motivates students to choose to enroll in the German studies programme? This question has been posed before in other countries, for instance, in Turkey there has been an on-going crisis of German studies (Germanistik/DaF-Studium), which has been explained as a consequence of the developing trends in the job market, as well as the fact that it is not enough to merely speak a language, one also needs specific professional expertise in other fields in order to successfully obtain a job (Balçı, 1997, p. 621). A different study shows that the number of German Studies students has sunk by 38 per cent between 2008 and 2013, judging by a sample from Poland (Jakosz, 2019, p. 310). The conclusions of the foreign and previous national research regarding the motives of the students are similar and show that they are motivated by:

- a general interest in languages, with an emphasis on the importance of the factors that maintain the motivation throughout the studies: the context of the studies, the perception of self-growth, the development of more specific interests within the

field of study, travelling to the countries where the language is spoken (Kursiša, Huhtala, Vesalainen, 2017, pp. 48-52);

- an interest in the German language, whereby there is a possible discrepancy between student expectations (German studies as an extended German language course) and the reality of the university study plans (Fuchs, 1998, pp. 681-682);
- an intrinsic motivation, that is, an internal interest in learning the German language, which contributes to the development of a habitual motivation, thirst for knowledge and curiosity (Jakosz, 2019, p. 319);
- a passion for languages, an interest in German literature, the desire to become a German language teacher, good occupational outlook, but also the quality and the reputation of the studies (Glovacki-Bernardi, 2015, pp. 116-120);
- the economic importance of the German language, the existence of companies which use German as a language of communication, the status of German as a language of science and technology in Europe, which all contribute to a better occupational outlook, possibilities for exchange and/or for a continuation of studies abroad and for working on international projects (Cosma & Koch, 2015, p. 139);
- love for the German language, good chances to quickly find a job as a German language teacher in local schools, hope for a well-paid position in the geographically relatively close job markets of the German-speaking countries, and plenty of scholarships and exchange opportunities (Ninković, 2015, p. 152).

The following research aims to explore this question in the context of the German studies students at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, with the goal of determining whether the student motivation comes from internal or external factors, in order to be able to maintain a stable interest in enrolment, organize promotional activities and determine possible directions for the development of the learning plans that would indeed attract people according to their motives.

The study is based upon the adjusted and simplified Academic Motivation Scale, which examines three types of intrinsic motivation, three types of extrinsic motivation, and amotivation (Vallerand et al., 1993, pp. 1992-1993). The intrinsic motivation is defined as „doing the activity for itself, and the pleasure and satisfaction derived from participation“, in this case, enrolling in the German studies for the enjoyment of language learning and participating in relevant activities; the extrinsic motivation „pertains to a wide variety of behaviours which are engaged in as a means to an end and not for their own sake“, such as good job prospects, quality of life after studies or proving something to one's self or others; and amotivation is when individuals are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated, that is, they „do not perceive contingencies between outcomes and their own actions“ (Vallerand et al., 1992, pp. 1004-1007).

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The starting point of the study is the need to examine student motivation for enrolment in the German studies programme. In Serbia, there are currently four state universities where one can study German language and literature: in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, and Niš. The one in Niš, which is in focus of the study, accepts 30 students to the programme per year since 2018.

Table 1 The number of applicants for the German studies programme at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of Applicants	32 (June)	56 (June)	48 (June)	28 (June, Sept)	31 (June)

The table 1 shows that, while the initial interest in matriculation was high, the year 2021 was marked by an unusually low number of applicants, but this year the number has somewhat improved in June and the reasons have so far remained unclear because the external factors, such as job prospects with a German studies degree in Southeast Serbia, haven't changed drastically, despite the global financial and political crisis.

The instrument used to determine student motivation is the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; by Vallerand et al.), which has a total of 28 questions and is divided into seven subscales: (1) amotivation, (2) internalization of extrinsic motives, (3) introjected regulation, (4) extrinsic motivation through rewards and constraints, (5) intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation and engagement, (6) intrinsic motivation towards achievement and accomplishment and (7) intrinsic motivation to know and learn. The subscales consist of four claims each.

The sample consists of 50 students of German studies at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš. The study was conducted in June 2022 via printed questionnaires as part of the research project *An Analysis of the Motivation for the Enrolment in the German Studies programme at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš*. The students were enrolled in the first (17), second (13), third (15), and fourth (5) year of studies and were willing participants (there were more students who were enrolled, but were not participating in the study), both male and female, aged 19 to 45, as there was a small percentage of older students who had already finished their education in a different field and had chosen later to obtain a German studies degree as well. The results are presented through a simplified quantitative and descriptive analysis, which might be relevant and of interest for the German (and/or language and literature) studies researchers.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There were few students who were not motivated, as most seemed to know why they had chosen German Studies, that is, what internal or external reasons attracted them to this programme. The first statement – *I do not know why I enrolled in the German studies programme and why I am still here, I feel like I am losing my time* – was marked as true by 2 students (4%), mostly true by 3 students (6%), mostly untrue by 5 students (10%), and untrue by 40 students (80%). The second statement – *I had a good reason to choose the German studies, but now I wonder whether it is better to keep studying or to give up* – was marked as true by 3 students (6%), mostly true by 2 students (4%), mostly untrue by 7 students (14%) and untrue by 38 students (76%). The third statement – *I do not know why I enrolled in German studies and, honestly, I am indifferent* – was marked as mostly untrue by 1 student (2%), and as untrue by 49 students (98%). The fourth statement – *I do not know why I enrolled in German studies and I do not understand why I am still here* – was marked as mostly untrue by 2 students (4%), and as untrue by 48 students (96%).

The statements regarding the extrinsic motivation – external regulation, which is defined as “behavior regulated through external means such as rewards and constraints” (Vallerand et al., 1992, 1006), show the following results: the first statement – *I enrolled*

in German studies because I think that without a university degree I could not find a well-paid job – was marked as true by 15 students (30%), as mostly true by 12 students (24%), as mostly untrue by 11 students (22%), and as untrue by 12 students (24%). The second statement – *I enrolled in German studies so that I could later find a prestigious job* – was marked as true by 10 students (20%), as mostly true by 21 students (42%), as mostly untrue by 12 students (24%), and as untrue by 7 students (14%). The third statement – *I enrolled in German Studies because I want to have good life quality when I finish the studies* – was marked as true by 18 students (36%), as mostly true by 19 students (38%), as mostly untrue by 6 students (12%), and as untrue by 7 students (14%). The fourth statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I want to have a well-paid job when I finish studies* – was marked as true by 20 students (40%), as mostly true by 18 students (36%), as mostly untrue by 7 students (14%), and as untrue by 5 students (10%).

External motivation – introjected regulation is a form of internalization of past external contingencies (Vallerand et al., 1992, p. 1006). The first statement – *I enrolled in German studies to prove to myself that I am capable of completing a bachelor's degree* – was marked as true by 20 students (40%), as mostly true by 7 students (14%), as mostly untrue by 11 students (22%), and as untrue by 12 students (24%). The second statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I feel important when I am a successful student* – was marked as true by 15 students (30%), as mostly true by 8 students (16%), as mostly untrue by 12 students (24%), and as untrue by 15 students (30%). The third statement – *I enrolled in German studies to prove to myself that I am an intelligent person* – was marked as true by 10 students (20%), as mostly true by 5 students (10%), as mostly untrue by 12 students (24%), and as untrue by 23 students (46%). The fourth statement – *I enrolled in German studies to prove to myself that I can be a good student* – was marked as true by 11 students (22%), as mostly true by 14 students (28%), as mostly untrue by 9 students (18%), and as untrue by 16 students (32%).

The external motivation – identified regulation is a form of internalization of extrinsic motives, whereby the behavior is valued and is perceived as chosen by oneself (Vallerand et al., 1992, 1007). The first statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I think that they will prepare me for the career I want to pursue* – was marked as true by 34 students (68%), as mostly true by 10 students (20%), as mostly untrue by 3 students (6%), and as untrue by 3 students (6%). The second statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I think that they will enable me to successfully enter the job market in the field that interests me* – was marked as true by 38 students (76%), as mostly true by 10 students (20%), as mostly untrue by 1 student (2%), and as untrue by 1 student (2%). The third statement – *I enrolled German studies because I think that it will help me with my career orientation* – was marked as true by 31 student (62%), as mostly true by 13 students (26%), as mostly untrue by 4 students (8%), and as untrue by 2 students (4%). The fourth statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I think that additional several years of education will improve my professional competencies* – was marked as true by 38 students (76%), as mostly true by 8 students (16%), as mostly untrue by 2 students (4%), and as untrue by 2 students (4%).

The intrinsic motivation to attain knowledge is related to “exploration, curiosity, learning goals, intrinsic intellectuality, and the intrinsic motivation to learn” (Vallerant et al., 1992, 1005). The first statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I feel pleasure and satisfaction while I learn new things related to the German language and literature* – was marked as true by 27 students (54%), as mostly true by 14 students

(28%), and as mostly untrue by 9 students (18%). The second statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I feel pleasure when I discover new things about the German language and literature* – was marked as true by 40 students (80%), as mostly true by 9 students (18%), and as untrue by 1 student (2%). The third statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I feel pleasure when I expand my knowledge about the subjects related to the studies* – was marked as true by 36 students (72%), as mostly true by 11 students (22%), as mostly untrue by 2 students (4%), and as untrue by 1 student (2%). The fourth statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I can learn about things that appeal to me* – was marked as true by 28 students (56%), as mostly true by 17 students (34%), as mostly untrue by 4 students (8%), and as untrue by 1 student (2%).

The intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments was defined in terms of individuals interacting “with the environment in order to feel competent, and to create unique accomplishments” (Vallerand et al., 1992, p. 1005). The first statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I enjoy it when I surpass myself in my studies* – was marked as true by 35 students (70%), as mostly true by 13 students (26%), and as mostly untrue by 2 students (4%). The second statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I enjoy it when I surpass myself in one of my personal accomplishments* – was marked as true by 40 students (80%), as mostly true by 9 students (8%), and as mostly untrue by 1 student (2%). The third statement – *I enrolled German studies because I feel satisfaction when I am in the process of accomplishing difficult academic activities in the field of German studies* – was marked as true by 32 students (64%), as mostly true by 15 students (30%), as mostly untrue by 2 students (4%), and as untrue by 1 student (2%). The fourth statement – *I enrolled in German studies because they allow me to experience personal satisfaction in my quest for excellence in my studies* – was marked as true by 24 students (48%), as mostly true by 20 students (40%), and as mostly untrue by 6 students (12%).

Finally, the intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation “is operative when someone engages in an activity in order to experience stimulating sensations (e.g., sensory pleasure, aesthetic experiences, as well as fun and excitement) derived from one's engagement in the activity” (Vallerand et al., 1992, p. 1006). The first statement – *I enrolled in German studies because of the intense feelings I experience when I am communicating my own ideas in the field of these studies to others* – was marked as true by 31 students (62%), as mostly true by 13 students (26%), as mostly untrue by 4 students (8%), and as untrue by 2 students (4%). The second statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I experience pleasure when I read interesting German-speaking authors* – was marked as true by 28 students (56%), as mostly true by 12 students (24%), as mostly untrue by 4 students (8%), and as untrue by 6 students (12%). The third statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I feel completely absorbed by what certain German-speaking authors have written* – was marked as true by 14 students (28%), as mostly true by 16 students (32%), as mostly untrue by 14 students (28%), and as untrue by 6 students (12%). The last statement – *I enrolled in German studies because I feel enthusiastic while I read about various interesting subjects in the field* – was marked as true by 19 students (38%), as mostly true by 16 students (32%), as mostly untrue by 13 students (26%), and as untrue by 2 students (4%).

Table 2 A Summary of Results by Motivation Types

	True	Mostly true	Σ	Mostly untrue	Untrue	Σ
Amotivation	2.5%	2.5%	5.0%	7.5%	87.5%	95.0%
External regulation	31.5%	35.0%	66.5%	18.0%	15.5%	33.5%
Introjected regulation	28.0%	17.0%	45.0%	22.0%	33.0%	55.0%
Identified regulation	70.5%	20.5%	91.0%	5.0%	4.0%	9.0%
Intrinsic motivation – knowledge	65.5%	25.5%	91.0%	7.5%	1.5%	9.0%
Intrinsic motivation – accomplishment	65.5%	28.5%	94.0%	5.5%	0.5%	6.0%
Intrinsic motivation – stimulation	46.0%	28.5%	74.5%	17.5%	8.0%	25.5%

Table 2 shows a summary of the study results sorted by seven subscales of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as amotivation. The results from this study reveal that the students are mostly motivated intrinsically, as they seek accomplishment and competency through their studies (94%). Apart from accomplishment, they are also motivated intrinsically by a search for knowledge (91%), whereas a smaller percentage of students appear to be intrinsically motivated by stimulation (74.5%). A large percentage of students (91%) are driven by extrinsic motivation – identified regulation. They have internalized extrinsic motives, that is, they chose and value the German studies programme because they think the studies will prepare them for a career they want, for success in the job market, and help them improve their professional competencies. The other forms of extrinsic motivation are less represented in the students' perception of their own motives, so over half of the participants in the study (55%) are not motivated extrinsically through introjected regulation and only two thirds of them (66.5%) are motivated by external regulation. A significant portion of the study participants do not feel the need to prove to themselves or to others that they can be good students and, while they do believe that the German studies degree can to a certain level be useful for finding a good and well-paid job and/or improving life quality, they perceive this as only one of their motives and appear to be mostly genuinely interested in the German language and literature.

4. CONCLUSION

The study shows that there are three main areas, that is, sources of motivations: accomplishment/competency in the field of German studies; knowledge seeking related to the German language and literature; and the sense that the students are *choosing* what is good for their position in the job market and their life quality once they have graduated from the German studies programme.

The motivation to achieve is highly dependent upon the students' self-concept and their ability to recognize and set their goals and values, which practically means that one should talk to the potential candidates about their visions for the future and about the way the studies fit into their self-image. It is important to note where it was that they had contact with the German language and literature: if it was throughout their schooling, if they have relatives and/or acquaintances in the German-speaking countries, if they spent some time in these countries etc. This is a possible direction for another study to be conducted among high school students before they enroll in university (and is also a part of the plan of the same research project). The proscribed study goals are presented to

students before the enrolment, at the beginning of their studies, and at the beginning of each separate course, but apart from exams and (self-)assessments at the end of each course, one could find ways to more explicitly and publicly promote the best examples of students' course achievements, such as through exhibiting and/or publishing their exemplary methodological/didactic lesson plans when they visit schools as part of their professional training; through helping them publish their translations and promoting these publications, which might even be included in their portfolio and be a starting point for a job search etc.

The motivation to know, to explore and satisfy curiosity is a common type of motivation among university students and even though it supports the students' goals by itself, that is, drives them to learn new things in their chosen field of study and to fill the gaps in their existing knowledge, it could also be further supported by promoting a positive learning atmosphere, emphasizing their previous knowledge as a starting point, and by offering realistic encouragement.

And finally, when it comes to students' professional future, one should have in mind what kinds of jobs are available for German studies graduates. The German language, along with French, happens to be one of the most taught second foreign languages in European primary and secondary schools (Eichinger, 2015, 14), however, in Southeast Serbia in particular, there are schools where previously German could not be offered to pupils as there were no qualified teachers available. Modern job market offers different opportunities, plenty of which include remote and/or freelance work as the COVID-19 crisis has made it easier to work from home, so, along with obtaining some additional qualifications in the field of business, project management, psychology etc. (cf. Lewicki, 2015, pp. 159-160) the chances of finding a good job with a German Studies degree remain decent. Language, culture, and literature degrees do in fact offer competencies and (soft) skills which are needed in the contemporary society and should, instead of being closed, simply be widened by offering the possibility to combine them with other (non-philological) skills and interests in order to maintain and improve the student motivation to enroll.

Acknowledgement: *The paper is a part of the research done within the project An Analysis of the Motivation for the Enrolment in the German Studies programme at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, No. 455/1-1-4-01, funded by the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš.*

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MOTIVACIJA ZA UPIS NA STUDIJE GERMANISTIKE: STUDIJA SLUČAJA NA FILOZOFSKOM FAKULTETU U NIŠU

Cilj rada je analiza motivacije za upis na studije germanistike na Filozofskom fakultetu Univerziteta u Nišu, pri čemu je korišćena prilagođena i uprošćena Skala akademske motivacije. Osnovne akademske studije germanistike su jedan od najnovijih studijskih programa koje nudi ova institucija. Godine 2022, tokom koje je obavljeno istraživanje, prva generacija studenata je bila u procesu završavanja četvorogodišnjih osnovnih studija, te je važan korak prilikom samevaluacije rada na programu predstavljalo i ispitivanje motivacije za izbor germanistike. Studije jezika i književnosti se širom sveta suočavaju s finansijskim problemima, a broj kandidata za upis predstavlja bitan faktor u kontekstu finansiranja i utiče na održivost programa. Razumevanje motivacije za odabir germanistike bi moglo biti od pomoći prilikom određivanja budućeg razvoja programa, kao i usmeravanja promotivnih aktivnosti Departmana. Uzorak čini 50 studenata Osnovnih akademskih studija nemačkog jezika i književnosti na Filozofskom fakultetu u Nišu, starosti od 19 do 45 godina, a rezultati pokazuju da je primarna motivacija za upis intrinzična. Najveći broj studenata motivisan je sticanjem kompetencija i postignućima, zatim unutrašnjom željom za sticanjem i/ili produbljivanjem znanja, a potom i ekstrinzično identifikovanom regulacijom, tj. internalizacijom ekstrinzičnih motiva kao što su uspešnost na tržištu rada i pronalazak dobrog zaposlenja u svojstvu diplomiranog germaniste.

Ključne reči: *germanistika, visoko obrazovanje, motivacija za upis, studentska motivacija, Filozofski fakultet u Nišu*