

MOTIVATIONAL PROFILES OF EMPLOYEES IN UNDERTAKING LEARNING

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Abstract: The study was aimed at analysing employees' motivation to continue formal education. The study determined the motivational profiles for learning among 94 non-traditional students, i.e. studying and professionally active, in groups separated by gender, age, cycle of studies and the position held. This article is an extension of research on motivation to learn using the assumptions of self-determination theory (SDT). The learning self-regulation questionnaire (SRQ-L) was used to diagnose the type of motivation and motivational profiles. Students declared in their grades that they were motivated to study primarily by autonomous regulation. The high impact of this regulation was pointed out by the respondents in the group of women studying at the first cycle of studies and not being managers. A low strength of motivation dominated among the diagnosed motivational profiles, represented by 30% of all the respondents. Good quality motivation was observed only among 19% of students.


Keywords: adult students, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, motivational profiles, non-traditional students

JEL Classification: M54, M54, J53, I23


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Introduction

Understanding adult learning theory in vocational education programs is important for many reasons. Most of all, it can help educators choose the best instructional strategies, assessment modalities, and integrate the students' learning theory, subject matter, and understanding to enhance their learning (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). In education, there is a distinction between andragogy, the teaching of adults, and pedagogy, the art of teaching children. Adults exhibit different characteristics than children, which is related to: (1) the change in the adult from a dependent personality to a self-directed personality, (2) adult learners are mostly autonomous and self-directed, (3) they have accumulated rich life experiences that become resources for their learning, (4) they are mostly goal-oriented and ready to learn (Song, 2012).

Adult learners are defined as those who value their experience as a resource for further learning or that experience is valued by others. Adult learners, or non-traditional students, are people older than traditional students (18-24 years old) and those who, in addition to participating in post-secondary education, have additional responsibilities, i.e. work, family and community (Thohir, 2017). It can be said that age is one of the basic dimensions defining who an adult learner is. There is a considerable amount of research on the motivation of traditional students (i.e. students under 25). The adult motivation to learn is a rarely explored topic within current theories of motivation, such as self-determination theory (SDT) (Rothes et al., 2017). The motivation to study of people working full-time, studying in a blended learning system during the working week is studied even less frequently. Determining the motivation profile of students may allow teachers to use appropriate instruments to influence adult students in order to stimulate them to acquire knowledge and skills in the course of learning. This is an important area of research because tailoring the preferences of adult learners to their needs not only supports their lifelong learning process, but also pleases their employers (Afip, 2014).

Theoretical framework: motivation for learning in self-determination theory

Issues related to motivation are widely discussed in the literature related to management sciences, as well as in psychology, pedagogy and sociology. The study of work motivation has been one of the most enduring and persuasive topics in industrial and organizational psychology over the past 100 years (Kanfer et al., 2017). The concept of motivation comes from the Latin word "movere", which means "to move". Therefore, motivation is what moves employees from boredom to interest (Mohsan et al., 2011). It is an internal state that stimulates action and helps maintain focus on the end goal (Ormrod, 2016), i.e. it is the psychological force that guides behaviour (Jones & George, 2017). On the other hand, Bushi (2021) relates motivation to the process by which a person's efforts are energies, directed and sustained with the intention of achieving a goal. This definition includes three key elements: energy, direction and perseverance. Motivation is understood by Robbins and Judge

(2017) in a similar manner, as processes that are responsible for the intensity, direction and perseverance of an individual's effort to achieve a goal.

People constantly learn throughout their lives; from birth to death they encounter new experiences and acquire new skills and knowledge. It is necessary to develop and maintain one's value on the labour market (Pool et al., 2015). Employees must seek information to identify gaps in their skills, identify areas where current performance can be improved, keep pace with advances in their profession, and anticipate how changes in the company and industry may affect job and skill requirements (London & Smither, 1999). Continuing professional development has become essential for employees, organizations and society in general (Billett, 2010), and societies increasingly emphasize the importance of lifelong learning (OECD, 2012).

Adult learning theories have been divided in the literature into the following categories: instrumental, humanistic, transformative, social, motivational, reflective, and constructivist learning theories (Mukhalalati & Taylor, 2019). Basically, motivation can be categorized as intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation (Yardimci et al., 2017).

The theory of organic integration distinguishes intrinsic motivation at one extreme (highly productive and spontaneous), amotivation at the other extreme (total lack of will, no action, or just doing tasks perfunctorily) and extrinsic motivation in between (actions triggered by an external force or regulation) (Cook & Artino, 2016; Gopalan et al., 2017). Figure 1 presents the quantitative (size) and qualitative (type and direction) differences in motivation according to self-determination theory (SDT).

Intrinsic motivation is defined as performing an activity because of its inherent satisfaction, rather than because of its identifiable consequences. When a person is intrinsically motivated, he or she is willing to act because of the fun or challenge it presents (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Activities that are accompanied by exploration and curiosity are examples of intrinsically motivated behaviour because they are not dependent on external stimuli or pressure, but rather provide their own satisfaction and joy. Intrinsic motivation is probably responsible for the prevalence of human learning throughout the lifespan, as opposed to externally mandated learning and instruction (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Employees who are intrinsically motivated will enjoy work that enables them to use their creativity and innovation, work with a high degree of autonomy and do not require strict control (Evianti et al., 2020). Intrinsic motivation is an individual drive to learn and work.

The category of extrinsic motivation is often contrasted with intrinsic motivation, which deals with behaviours undertaken for reasons other than their inherent satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation determines behaviour that is the result of external factors, e.g. rewards (Anwar et al., 2018). Instrumental motivations can vary greatly in content and nature. Cook and Artino (2016) distinguish four main levels of extrinsic motivation, which differ in the degree of internalization (the adoption of values or regulations) and integration (further transformation of this regulation into one's own "self"). The lowest level of motivation is extrinsic regulation, which consists in acting in order to gain a reward or avoid punishment. The next level is introjection regulation, which is characterized by acting to avoid feelings of guilt or anxiety,

or to increase pride or self-esteem. This regulation was partly internalized but not accepted as a personal goal. The basis of identification regulation is external pressure, which has become a personally important, self-desirable goal, but this goal is valued for its usefulness rather than because it is inherently desirable. The last level of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation, where external influences are integrated with internal interests, becoming part of personal identity and aspirations. Regulatory forces in identifiable and integrated regulation reflect an internal placement of causation (control), and behaviours are perceived as largely autonomous or self-direction, while both extrinsic and introjected regulation reflect an external placement of causality.

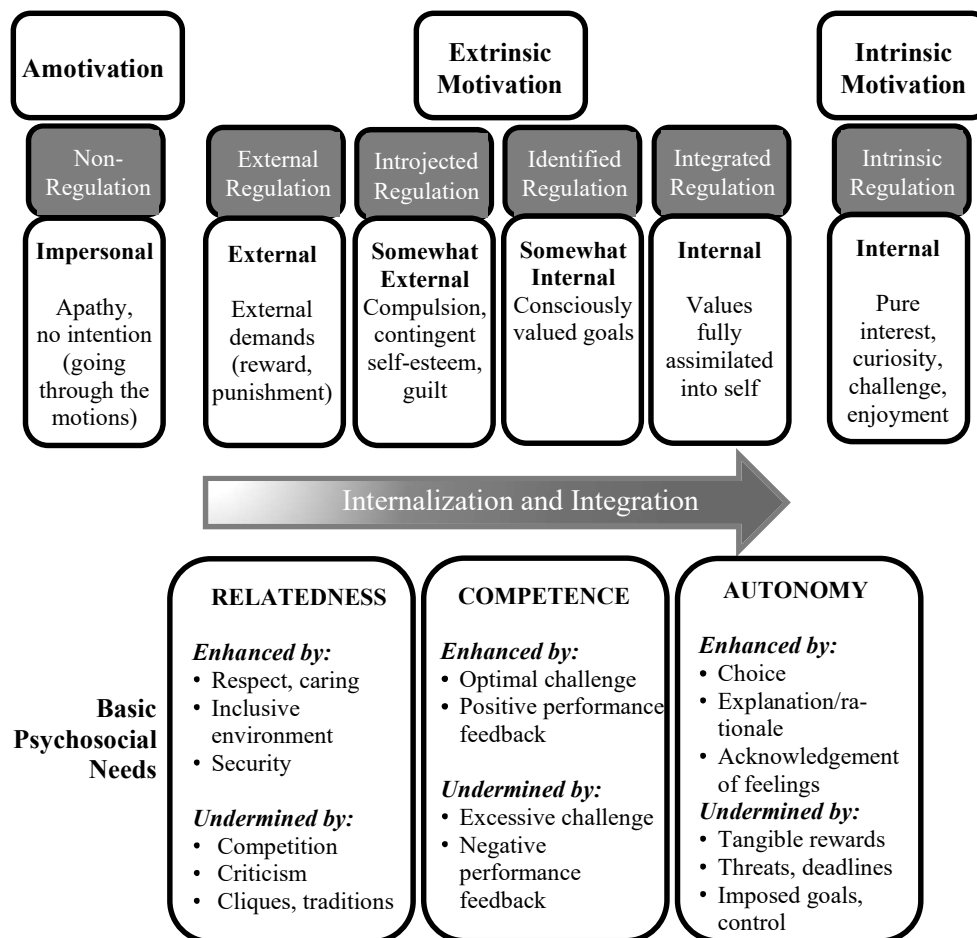


Figure 1. Self-determination theory according to Ryan and Deci in adaptation of Cook and Artino

Source: (Cook & Artino, 2016)

Research suggests that psychological needs, as indicated in Figure 1, favour the internalization and integration of extrinsic motivations, with relationships and competence being particularly important for internalization, and autonomy being crucial for integration (Cook & Artino, 2016)

Amotivation is what distinguishes SDT from other theories of motivation (Wigfield & Koenka, 2020). This is a fundamentally different concept from “negative” motivation. Amotivation is a state in which there is a lack of intention to initiate an action or devote effort to accomplish a task or activity (Howard et al., 2016). The quality of motivation is lowest when the individual is amotivated, which is the result of a lack of value or interest in the work (i.e. simply doing tasks perfunctorily) or a lack of self-efficacy of ability to do one’s job. Not surprisingly, amotivational states are associated with poorer well-being and performance (Rigby & Ryan, 2018)

Researchers note that intrinsic motivation has often been inappropriately glorified, seen as somehow superior (even morally superior), whereas extrinsic motivation, specifically wanting to make money, has often been inappropriately demonized in the popular and scientific literature. They suggest that all three types of motivation are independent, yet related concepts (all are sources of pleasure) that can mutually facilitate, compensate, or be in conflict with one another (Locke & Schattke, 2019).

The concept of incentive in management and economics was developed from behavioural research in psychology to analyse and explain what motivates people in organizations, what forces energize, direct and sustain their behaviour. Stimuli can be divided into: internal and external stimuli, which have different characteristics and generate different effects (Coccia, 2019). The results of the conducted research show that intrinsic motivation and identified regulations bring more positive results, such as productivity and retention in the company, than introjection and external regulations (Gagné et al., 2015). However, motivation is multidimensional in nature and employees may have many reasons to act. People can be motivated for both autonomous and controlled reasons. The complexity of the interactions required to fully describe motivation (i.e. involving interacting types of motivation) has led researchers to adopt a person-centred approach (Howard et al., 2016). One of the main advantages of this approach is that it allows the study of naturally occurring combinations of motivation dimensions at the individual level, which can be referred to as “motivation profiles” (Rothes et al., 2017). Motivation profiling is largely limited by the dichotomy of motivation into categories of autonomous and controlled regulation. Among studies using profiling in the field of education, the observed motivation profiles were relatively well replicated and revealed profiles characterized by high autonomous and low controlled motivation, high autonomous and high controlled motivation, low autonomous and high controlled motivation, and low autonomous and low controlled motivation (Howard et al., 2016). Quantitative theories of motivation claim that students characterized by a high quantity of motivation, regardless of its quality and type (i.e. autonomous or controlled), show more optimal learning than groups of students with less motivation. In contrast, based on qualitative theories of motivation, such as SDT, it can be concluded that the presence of more motivation is not necessarily beneficial. This is because when the additional amount

of motivation is of low quality (i.e., controlled), optimal learning is likely to be hindered rather than facilitated (Vansteenkiste et al., 2009).

Motivating working people to study formally at university has not been extensively researched. The purpose of this study was to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the motivation of working people to study formally?
2. Are there inter-individual differences in the assessment of motivation depending on gender, age, cycle of studies and the position in the organizational structure?
3. How is the classification of respondents into different categories of profiles of autonomous and controlled motivation, and more precisely into four motivational profiles according to SDT shaped?
4. How do respondents with different basic characteristics (such as gender, age, cycle of studies and the position in the organizational structure) form part of the motivational profiles?

Data sources and method

The research was conducted in January 2022 (end of the winter term) among students of the State Academy of Applied Sciences, in Włocławek (Poland). The research group consisted only of professionally active people, i.e. non-traditional students who, in addition to studying, worked in various types of organizations located in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian province in Poland. Didactic classes with students took place in the afternoon during the working week and on weekends in a hybrid system, i.e. classes developing practical skills were held mainly on site, and classes shaping knowledge were conducted remotely.

Purposive sampling was used in this research to ensure that the widest possible share of responses was obtained from the working students. The participants of the study were 94 adult working students, mostly women (73%). Respondents in a comparable age range of up to 30 (49%) and over 30 (51%) took part. At the time of the survey, the respondents mainly held non-managerial positions (71%). A common feature of the study participants was studying on a practical profile, i.e. focused on acquiring skills and competences with the participation of practitioners conducting didactic classes. These studies were conducted both in the first cycle (24% of the respondents), ending with the professional title of engineer or bachelor, and in the second cycle leading to the title of master (76% of the surveyed students). The studies were carried out in the fields of finance and accounting, mechanics and mechanical engineering, management engineering as well as managerial studies in finance and law. Participation in the research study was voluntary and guaranteed anonymity.

The learning self-regulation questionnaire SRQ-L (Williams & Deci, 1996) was utilised to diagnose the motivational profiles. The questionnaire was developed as part of SDT. It measures two factors: autonomous regulation and controlled regulation. It contains three groups of items (A, B, C), four items each (a total of 12), and the participants rated them on a 4-point scale (where 1 means “not at all true”, 2 – “not true”, 3 – “true” and 4 – “very true”). Like Rothes et al. (2017), the original scale was adapted while retaining its original sense, i.e. the items of autonomous

regulation included statements such as: “I enrolled in this field of study because it is a way to broaden my knowledge in various subjects” and “I intend to devote myself to studying in this field because it is important to me to do well”, while controlled regulation items included, among others, statements like: “I am going to study this course because it is a way to get higher grades” and “I am going to commit to this course because I would feel guilty if I didn’t”.

Based on the average assessments of external and internal regulation, the respondents were classified into four groups of motivational profiles: (1) high-quantity motivation, with high values of autonomous motivation and high values of controlled motivation; (2) poor-quality motivation – low values of autonomous motivation and high values of controlled motivation; (3) good-quality motivation, with high values of autonomous motivation and low values of controlled motivation; (4) low-quantity motivation, with low values of autonomous motivation and low values of controlled motivation.

Results

In response to the first research question, the working students were mainly intrinsically motivated to study (Table 1). They assessed this motivation at an average of 3.24 points (on a scale of 1 to 4 points). The study found that there were interpersonal differences in the assessment of motivation depending on the specific characteristics of the respondents. Autonomous regulation was declared to a higher degree by women, first-cycle students and employees holding managerial positions in organizations. The controlled regulation among the respondents was of much lower importance; its average score in the group was 2.24 points. In the group of students guided by controlled regulation, the grades were characterized not only by a lower level, but also by a greater dispersion of values. People studying in the cycle level of studies and aged 30 or below were the most externally motivated.

Table 1. Types of regulation in motivation to learn among respondents

Types of regulation	Descriptive statistics	Respondents (n = 94)	Gender*		Age		Study cycle		Position*	
			f	m	≤30	>30	1 st	2 nd	M	N-M
Autonomous control	Mean	3.24	3.33	3.21	3.23	3.25	3.46	3.17	3.33	3.21
	SD*	0.51	0.48	0.51	0.48	0.53	0.35	0.53	0.48	0.51
	CV* (%)	16	14.41	15.89	14.86	16.31	10.12	16.72	14.41	15.89
Controlled regulation	Mean	2.24	2.22	2.25	2.34	2.14	2.38	2.19	2.22	2.25
	SD*	0.53	0.61	0.5	0.52	0.52	0.47	0.54	0.61	0.5
	CV* (%)	24	27.48	22.22	22.22	24.30	19.75	24.66	27.48	22.22

* f – female, m – male, M – managerial, N-M – non-managerial, SD – standard deviation, CV – coefficient of variation

Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on research results

The classification of the respondents into different categories of motivational profiles and their basic characteristics are presented in Table 2. In the entire group of respondents, the profile with low motivation was the most numerous, which means that almost one in three students was characterized by a low value of internal and external motivation to learn. This feature was particularly visible among the students over 30 years old, applying for a master's degree and holding a non-managerial position in the organization. Students in the first cycle of studies were the least numerous in this motivational profile. The profile of a student with a high motivation to learn, i.e. high internal and external motivation, was characteristic of 27% of the respondents. It concerned mainly male respondents (40%), more than half of the undergraduate students and people holding non-managerial positions (40.74%). In the conducted study, for almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the respondents, the profile of motivation was of low quality, i.e. internal motivation was of low strength and extrinsic motivation was high. Among the selected subgroups of respondents, this profile concerned men to the least extent, as well as people aged 30 or less, and those holding non-managerial positions. Only one in five respondents assessed their internal motivation as high and external motivation as low. The good quality of motivation concerned mainly women, people over 30 years old and employees holding a managerial position.

Table 2. Motivation profiles in different groups of respondents distinguished according to their socio-demographic characteristics

Motivation profiles	Respondents (n = 94)	Gender*		Age		Study cycle		Position*	
		f	m	≤30	>30	1 st	2 nd	M	N-M
good-quality motivation (%)	19.15	23.19	8.00	13.04	25.00	17.39	19.72	11.11	22.39
high-quantity motivation (%)	26.60	26.09	40.00	30.43	29.17	52.17	22.54	40.74	25.37
poor-quality motivation (%)	24.47	24.64	24.00	34.78	14.58	26.09	23.94	14.81	28.36
low-quantity motivation (%)	29.79	26.09	28.00	21.74	31.25	4.35	33.80	33.33	23.88

* f – female, m – male, M – managerial, N-M – non-managerial

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on research results

Discussion

The results of the study provided valuable information on the motivation of working people to study.

The primary result of the research is that working students showed greater autonomous motivation for academic learning along a continuum of motivational styles. These results are consistent with studies conducted by other researchers (Lin & Sandmann, 2012; Song, 2012). This can be explained by the cognitive and personality development that occurs with aging, which allows adults to assimilate non-internal parts of themselves into a more coherent whole and make more

self-appropriate, autonomous choices (Sheldon et al., 2006). Autonomous motivation was represented primarily by women, which is consistent with the results of Rothes et al. (2017), Daehlen and Ure (2009) and Bonneville-Roussy et al. (2017). Considering the distribution of students in the four groups of profiles, it can be seen that each group was represented by a significant percentage of students, which ranged from 19% to 30%. Most of the students belonged to the group with low motivation (qualitatively and quantitatively), and a smaller percentage of students belonged to the group with good motivation. Similar results in terms of the distribution of the study participants in the four types of motivational profiles were obtained by Vansteenkiste et al. (2009).

Regarding the results of the distribution of respondents by gender, this study differs slightly from previous research, where women mainly represented high-quality motivation (Rothes et al., 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009). In this study, the share of women in each of the presented motivational profiles was comparable. On the other hand, men were the least likely to associate studying with high-quality motivation, and most of them belonged to the group with poor-quality motivation. However, as in most of the studies cited above, men were also underrepresented here.

In the studies, there was no difference in the assessment of autonomous motivation in groups separated according to the age of the respondents. However, from the perspective of motivational profiles, it was evident that students over 30 years of age had a better quality of motivation than their younger colleagues. According to Song (2012), the extrinsic motivation of students decreases with increasing age, which indicates that the older a student is, the less focused s/he is on pragmatic rewards. For the group under the age of 30, they may struggle with material needs. Their most basic needs are related to physical and mental survival. Therefore, this age group has a strong expectation of high-paying salaries and prestigious positions. Older students, on the other hand, are more likely to have their basic needs met, which makes it easier for them to develop their higher-level needs and achieve personal fulfilment in the master's program (Lu & Lambright, 2010).

Leadership positions that give individuals more freedom and choice (e.g. encouraging initiative, providing a certain choice of tasks) are likely to increase the extent to which individuals believe they can act in accordance with their selves, thus facilitating the partially internal (identity) and intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). In this study, autonomous regulation among managers was assessed lower in relation to people not working in managerial positions. In a study by Deal et al. (2013) it was proven that the level of a managerial position in an organization has a strong relationship with motivation to work. Senior managers show partly extrinsic (introjective) motivation. The authors explain that these managers are motivated by the need to see themselves as "winners" or by self-esteem. Another explanation could be that top managers need to care more about maintaining their reputation or be seen as a winner than lower level managers. Top managers are highly visible, so the social consequences of failure are likely to be much greater than at lower levels. In turn, Graves et al. (2015) demonstrated that members of more autonomously motivated profiles tended to occupy hierarchically higher positions.

The results of this analysis are not free of limitations. One of the primary ones is the number of participants in the study. The sample lacks representativeness, which limits the interpretation and generalization of the results. It is also unclear how the survey results are related to academic performance, student well-being or teachers' adaptation of teaching tools.

Conclusions

This study was aimed at characterizing the motivation of working students to study and identifying their different motivation profiles in groups separated by age, gender, the cycle of undertaken studies and the position held in the organization.

The results of the conducted research revealed that the majority of working students undertake the effort of further education mainly because they consider it interesting and important (autonomous motivation). Nevertheless, the established motivational profiles indicated that good quality and strong motivation applied to a minority of the respondents. Among the majority of respondents, there was regulated motivation, resulting from various types of pressure, the need to keep a job, the desire to be promoted, or even a sense of guilt and shame if they do not get involved (controlled motivation).

The study found that having autonomous reasons to participate in learning activities is critical to learning. These results have implications for creating attractive study programs that will support non-traditional students. Appropriately built-in tools in study programs, such as scholarships or career prospects, can motivate students to stimulate the development of an intrinsic interest in their academic learning. By using appropriate pedagogical initiatives and recognizing different types of knowledge, more voluntary and autonomous types of motivation can be fostered in higher education.

In further research, it would be important to examine the relationship of motivational profiles to commitment, self-efficacy or climate in the organizations where the respondents are employed. Advanced methods of statistical analysis (e.g. classification trees) would be worthwhile for analysis. From the point of view of teachers of working people, it would be an interesting line of research to determine the motivational profiles of students and examine their academic performance.

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PROFILE MOTYWACYJNE PRACOWNIKÓW W PODEJMOWANIU NAUKI

Streszczenie: Badanie miało na celu analizę motywacji pracowników do kontynuowania formalnego kształcenia. W pracy określono występujące profile motywacyjne do nauki wśród 94 studentów nietradycyjnych, tj. studiujących i czynnych zawodowo, w grupach wydzielonych ze względu na płeć, wiek, poziom studiów oraz poziom zajmowanego stanowiska. Niniejszy artykuł stanowi rozwinięcie badań nad motywacją do nauki z wykorzystaniem założeń Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Do diagnozy rodzaju motywacji oraz profili motywacyjnych wykorzystano kwestionariusz samoregulacji uczenia się SRQ-L. Studenci deklarowali w ocenach, że do podjęcia studiów byli motywowani przede wszystkim przez regulację autonomiczną. Na wysoki wpływ tej regulacji zwrócili uwagę respondenci w grupie kobiet, studiujących na pierwszym poziomie studiów oraz niebędących kierownikami. Wśród zdiagnozowanych profili motywacyjnych dominowała niska siła motywacji, którą reprezentowało 30% wszystkich respondentów. Motywacja dobrej jakości była zaobserwowana jedynie wśród 19% studentów.

Słowa kluczowe: dorośli uczniowie, regulacja wewnętrzna i zewnętrzna, profile motywacyjne, studenci nietradycyjni

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