

Abstract

A Control Theory Perspective on Attrition in Military Training

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The attrition of recruits from military training is a major problem for the Armed Services. A significant percentage of attrition occurs during recruits' first six months of service, either during basic or follow-on training. Researchers have not yet examined the problem of basic training attrition from a Control Theory perspective. Control Theory describes the cognitive-affective processes underlying the self-regulation of behavior. Furthermore, research focusing on control processes in self-regulation contains almost no reference to locus of control (LOC). Individual difference factors like LOC may influence how a recruit will respond differently to performance discrepancy information. In this way, LOC can be seen as a factor that is related to attrition. This proposal develops an evaluation utilizing existing screening measures *and* the Shapiro Control Inventory (SCI) with a consideration of control construct and attrition construct cofactors. Based on this evaluation and the determination of an optimal control profile, a program involving control theory-based group therapy is proposed to help reduce a recruit's likelihood of attrition from basic training. The development of this evaluation and program should help to clarify the control construct as it is related to attrition and should provide explanations for seemingly contradictory past research findings.