

The School Dropout: Causes and Effects in University Education

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The objective of the research is to review the most recent topics about the associated determining factors related to university dropout. University abandonment is considered, by most university institutions, as a phenomenon that threatens the prospecting of education and society in general. The research is qualitative and descriptive. Based on the hermeneutics of recent works, with the determination to review what is currently being done with the main theme of the study. The type of article is for review, which, without being original, collects a series of relevant and current information on the thematic axes. The results of the study allowed us to know, identify and analyze the different causes by which the phenomenon of university dropout is activated and even, take into consideration positions from other countries which allowed us to reach relevant dissertations. The conclusions of the research, in addition to knowing the determining factors associated with attrition, also allow us to issue some recommendations to university institutions, to reduce the dropout rate and be able to counteract the social consequences that it entails.

Keywords: university dropout, associated determinants of dropout, higher education, comprehensive social system

INTRODUCTION

The cosmopolitan nature of the university student dropout issue is directly and collaterally affecting productive growth rates in some countries, particularly in South America (Romero-Sánchez et al., 2020). It seems improbable that even external factors such as social, labor, and political, in some way affect the acceleration type of educational phenomenon (Méndez & Cerezo, 2018). University dropout is a disruptive element that does not allow for effective educational development. Each time, there are new factors that are activated spontaneously as a result of the lack of attention that universities themselves are incurring.

Rizo & Hernández (2019), claim to know that the dropout phenomenon, due to its complex nature, can be defined from several perspectives. A view of educational exclusion or from a sociological view. The authors emphasize that dropout is to be understood as a pitiful, unexpected, and unfortunate event. We can affirm that student dropout is a phenomenon associated with negative connotations for the student and society in general. The method used in the study is qualitative and descriptive. Taken into consideration hermeneutics, to review what is currently being done with the study's main topic. It should be noted that the article is of a review type, where selective and critical studies that consolidate the thematic axes of the research can be identified.

Finally, what we intend to highlight are the causes and effects that generate the associated determinants of university dropout. Analyzing the weaknesses and strengths of certain higher institutions, formulate certain corrective measures to stop the phenomenon of dropout, becoming resilient and able to understand that if this situation continues sooner or later the university education system will be affected in its entirety.

Student Dropout and Its Reality in the University System

Student dropout at the university level is a complex issue since the criteria used for its analysis, understanding, and measurement vary from one criterion to another. For Poveda et al. (2020), university dropout is a complex situation that has been developing exponentially, where the voluntary or induced abandonment of the student from the chosen university career stands out. Rosario (2020) states that dropout is the end of a personal stage, surrounded by internal or external conflicts. Rueda et al. (2020) state that it is the consequence of a personal decision, which is the result of determining factors related to the student's perceptions and feelings.

Regarding the above, the university education system in Ecuador does not escape from these realities. In a study conducted by Sinchi & Gómez (2018) about student dropout in 3 Ecuadorian universities in the city of Cuenca (University of Cuenca-U Cuenca, UPS University, and the University of Azuay-UDA), quite significant percentages are observed regarding the phenomenon of student dropout.

**TABLE 1
DROPOUT PERCENTAGE**

University	Career	Dropout
UCuenca	Systems Engineering	65.45%
	Electronics & Telecommunications Engineering	55.36%
	Industrial Engineering	57.14%
UPS	Electrical Engineering	14.38%
	Mechatronics Engineering	21.14%
	Medicine, Veterinary, and Animal Science	26.09%
UDA	System and Telematics Engineering	39.66%
	Bachelor's Degree in Theater Arts	35.29%
	Electronics Engineering	34.09%

Source: Sinchi, E. and Gómez, G. (2018).

The data provided by the research of Sinchi & Gómez (2018) show that the percentage regarding the financial factor that affects university dropout reaches 69.27%, although there is great support in most cases, by the parents of the students. The percentage regarding the socio-family factor is 42.57%, which is quite significant, even leading the researchers to suggest social reviews of the students.

TABLE 2
STUDENT DROPOUT PREVALENCE

Academic Year	No. of Enrollments	Dropouts	%
March 2017 - August 2017	217	27	12.44
Sept 2017 – Feb 2018	290	15	7.89
March 2018 - August 2018	168	13	7.73
Sept 2018 – Feb 2019	118	4	3.39
Total	693	59	8.51

Source: Márquez, A. and Narváez, S. (2019).

One of the highlights of this research presented by Márquez & Narváez (2019) is that most of the students who drop out are in the first semester of their degree program. The following are some of the determining factors of dropout: economic situation and academic environment. In addition, sociodemographic characteristics are presented, determining that the average age of the dropouts ranges between 20 and 24 years old, with the highest percentage being 21 years old, which reflects a percentage of 26.4% of the dropouts. About the prevailing gender in student dropout, the majority corresponds to the female gender, representing 88.7%, due to the idiosyncrasy of the Ecuadorian population.

The main source of economic financing comes from parents (71.7%). Most of them had access to student scholarships. The main determinant of university dropout is the social factor, where approximately 50% of the students have an affinity for other careers in the health area, given that 64% of the population is currently studying another career within the same area. These figures show that great caution must be exercised in confusing terms between dropping out and undergoing a career change.

Causes and Effects that Produce University Student Dropout

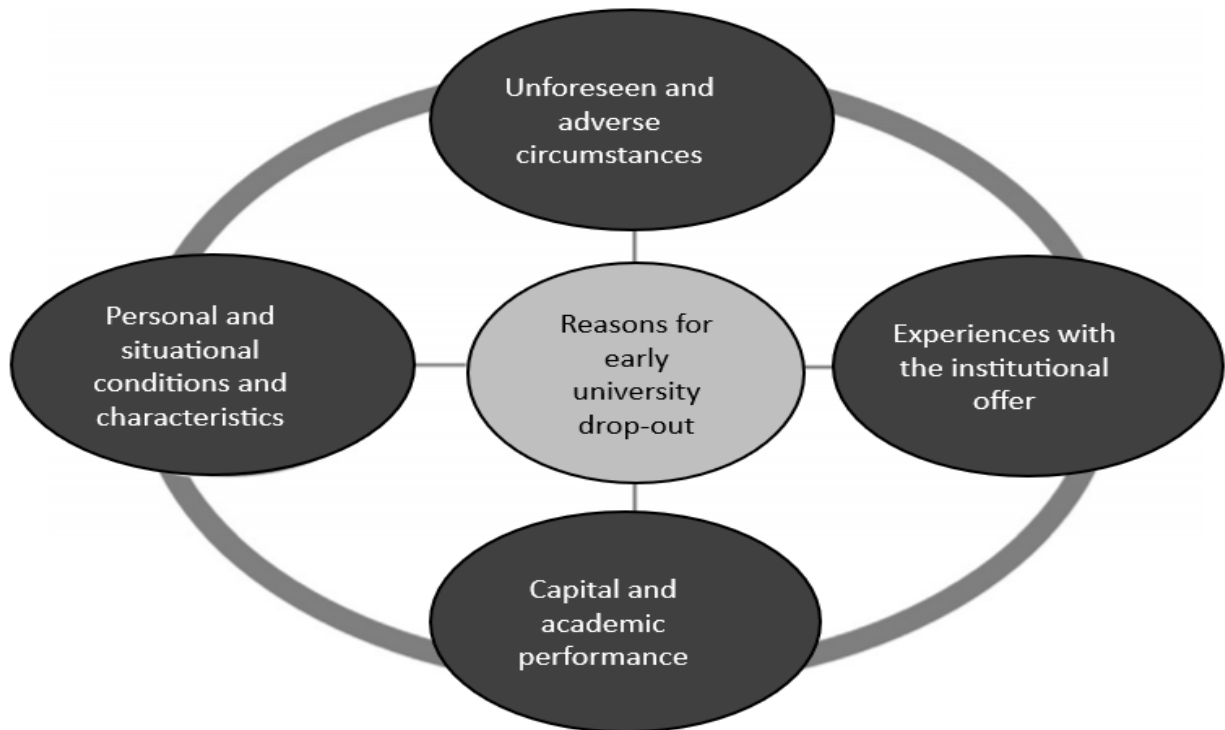
University dropout is considered an adverse situation established in the academic system worldwide nowadays (Saborido, 2019). In this regard, Ritacco & Amores, (2016) argue that desertion devolves some different causes depending on the student's environment, highlighting that: "due to learning difficulties or personal problems related to their family environment, but also crash against an educational system that has not been able to provide adequate responses to their needs" (p. 138). Additionally, (González et al., 2012), report that taking into consideration the situations that influence students' emotions and their scope or variables of family success or failure.

The study conducted by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018) highlights that at the Latin American level, there is a recurrent type of problem, especially at the university level, where half of the students enrolled have been able to obtain a professional degree at the age between 25 and 29 years old. The research indicates that half of the students who decide to drop out do so in the first year of their studies.

The tendency of the results is directed to unveil the behaviors that originate their desire not to remain in the institution and relate it to the concept of school failure and not being able to achieve goals in the short and medium term, to establish measures to stop the growth of dropout under consistent strategies that could be framed in the so-called systemic perspective (Faubert, 2012; Rojas, 2022; Kochen, 2020; Martínez, 2011; Sabando, 2016; Sellman et al., 2023).

In Ecuador, the latest studies were carried out consistently with figures shown between the periods 2010 and 2015. They are used in a dispersed manner in the country's universities. However, a study conducted at the Technical University of Manabí, in the School of Nursing conducted by (Pérez et al., 2018), points out several determining factors that coincide with those denoted above.

FIGURE 1
EMERGING FACTORS OF EVENING COLLEGE DROPOUTS



Source: Arancibia and Trigueros (2018).

In Peru, according to Fernandez & Díaz (2016) the Polytechnic Amazon University (UPA by its Spanish acronym), has among its enrollment, students from different Peruvian regions, and is recognized for the incorporation into their careers; of native Amazonian communities, also presents problems associated with the phenomenon of university dropout. To such an extent that the university has implemented an emergency device, they have a social program that allows them to be in direct contact with them, to find out their acceptance level and if the institution is meeting the minimum requirements that the student expects to become a professional.

Taking into consideration all these approaches or studies presented, a comparative table is shown below, where the associated determining factors in each country or organization where the phenomenon of university dropout is present can be summarized. In this way, the relevant decisions can be taken, to prepare the necessary corrective measures to curb its growth.

These factors associated with university dropout led to a series of research objectives, to combine a series of common and uncommon situations, which allowed us to reach specific conclusions to determine the real effects and causes that are providing the phenomenon of university dropout. The research by Martínez-Seijo et al. (2017), indicates that dropouts are usually of a multicausal type, however, (Casquero, 2010; Vega, 2020) lean towards the behavior of the family environment which mostly becomes a predictive element, thus becoming one of the most influential.

Hoekel (2014) thinks that there should be effective communication between universities and employers, to closely know certain needs that the labor market lacks and reinforce through internship programs that students can collaborate and that at the same time, the organizations contribute economically so that the same can remedy certain shortcomings and discard the idea of academic dropout. It is important to highlight that in a socioeconomic environment where certain strategies can be synchronized between the market and education, and where the basic premise is learning about the need for skills, knowledge, and abilities in

certain business areas, elements that help to reduce the effect of dropout would be combated (Eichhorst & Rinne, 2017; O’Higgins, 2017).

TABLE 3
ASSOCIATED DETERMINANTS OF UNIVERSITY DROPOUT

Country or Agency	Factors
Spain	<i>Multidimensional factors:</i> extra-academic factors (labor conflicts), intra-academic factors (lack of motivation), and the existence of an inadequate profile for access to degree programs.
UNESCO	Recurring type at the university level. Dropout occurs in the first year of the career. <i>Recurring factors:</i> vocational, disagreement between curricular and institutional requirements.
Mexico	<i>Associated factors:</i> financial, psychological, student curriculum, lack of updating of teaching staff, vocations, inadequate distribution of benefits (scholarships), poor nutrition, transportation, and inconsistent schedules.
Ecuador	<i>Determining factors:</i> Repetition, transportation, work responsibilities, and incompetence in the quality of education.
Argentina	Associated factors affect students who are just beginning their university studies. <i>Factors:</i> institutional, society, culture, and labor.
Chile	<i>Associated factors:</i> psychological, financial, and institutional.
Peru	UPN: the age at the beginning of studies, psychological, uncertainty, vocation, anxiety, the curriculum, student schedules, and the grading system.
	UPA: associated factors are linked to the grading process or evaluation systems, the student-teacher relationship, motivation, the university environment, and financial, social, and work-related factors.

Source: developed by the author.

METHODOLOGY

Type and Research Instruments

For the development of this research, and taking into consideration the type of review article, the methodology employed is qualitative and descriptive (Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018). Based on the hermeneutics of recent works, with the determination to review what is currently being done with the main study topic, and what the scientific trends are being addressed about the issue of university dropout.

It should be noted that the objective of a review article is to identify detailed studies (what is known about the topic), selective and critical, which, without being original, compiles a series of relevant and current information on a specific topic to discover what is being talked about and what topics are so far unknown (Hernández et al., 2017). The purpose is to review the relevant and published references to place them in perspective and update knowledge towards the thematic axis or axes of the research (deepening).

This type of study provides the reader with an update on useful concepts in educational areas that are constantly evolving. This type of study is very useful in the field of science, since it gets many people interested in its content, due to the updating of its topics of general interest (Baena, 2017; Parra, 2018).

The methodology is based on the search of primary and secondary sources (analysis of variability, reliability, and validity of the information) mainly in current studies in scientific journals with original publications (bibliographic search and selection criteria), degree theses, compilations (recovery of information in documentary sources), abstracts (evaluation of the quality of the selected articles) and list of references (electronic databases) in the thematic axes of the research (Fuster Guillen, 2019; Hernández et al., 2014).

Primary sources were used to locate bibliographic documents. Descriptors such as scientific writing, conceptual maps, mind maps, comparability of similar information, and critical reading of documents were used. The keywords of the study were essential in order not to distract attention from the research objectives. Internet searches in the search engine "google academic" under the same scientific terms were also used.

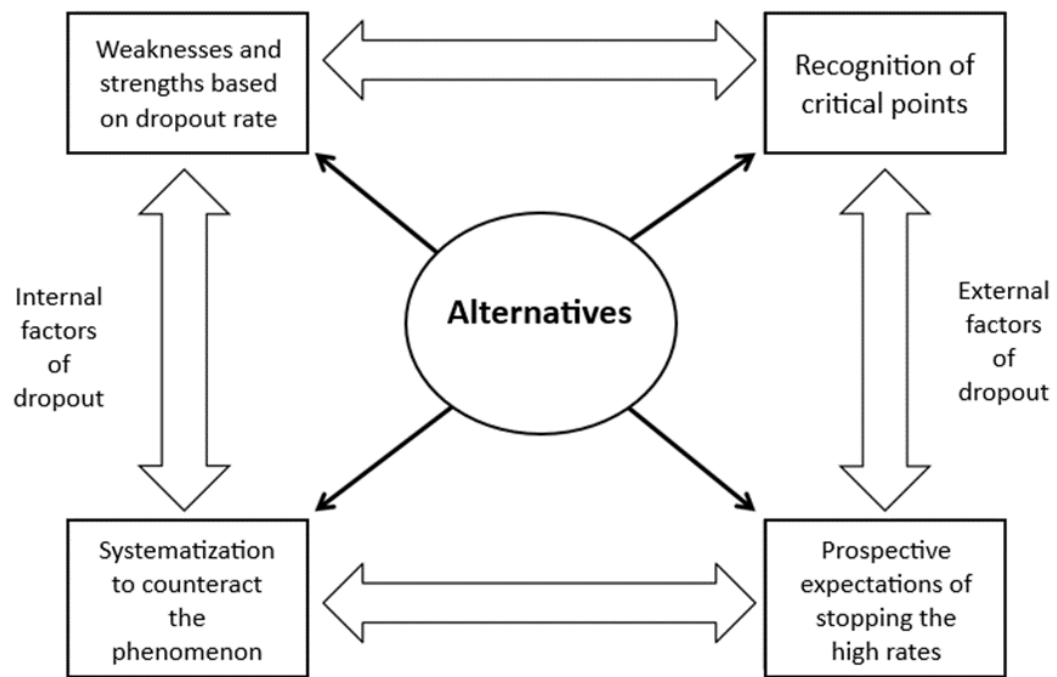
Results

Despite the existence of different regions where education has its particularity, the existence of university dropouts represents a common denominator that determines the projection of professionals and the growth of knowledge in general. It should be noted that the different studies analyzed in this review article provide information on the so-called determining factors that directly influence the student's decision to leave the classroom.

According to the data collected using the method that allows the review of articles, it is stated, the existence of factors that influence the university dropout, where the internal and external incidences that encourage the activation of the investigated phenomenon. Taking into consideration the factor type, we obtain variables that revolve around the student or the university. University dropout is considered a phenomenon that is due to psychological, economic, sociological, and institutional factors (internal and external); linked to personal, motivational, social, labor, and family factors.

Once the different findings of the research were analyzed, a series of alternatives were gathered to organize the ideas to break down each one of the associated factors of university dropout, applying the necessary corrective measures to counteract its negative function on the institutions.

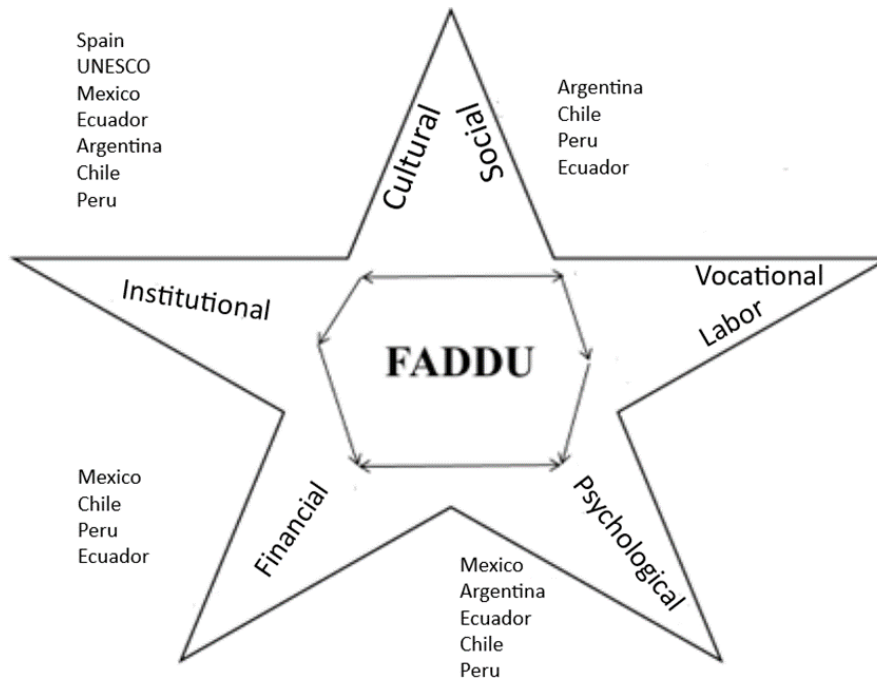
**FIGURE 2
ALTERNATIVES TO BE EVALUATED TO PREVENT UNIVERSITY DROPOUT**



Source: developed by the author.

This model presented in Figure 2 reveals the general purpose of the research, which is no more than to analyze and determine the associated factors that influence university dropout (*prospective expectations of stopping the high rates*) and to know how it operates within the higher academic system, to understand the reasons that generate it.

FIGURE 3
ASSOCIATED DETERMINANTS OF UNIVERSITY DROPOUT
(FADDU BY ITS SPANISH ACRONYM)



Source: developed by the author

Each analyzed country has FADDU that, being common or not, directly affects the dropout phenomenon. It is defined as the *recognition of critical points*, necessary to subsequently identify *weaknesses and strengths* and to assume responsibly and systematically, the necessary procedures to prevent the high rates related to university dropout.

All this analysis made it possible to group all these series of associated factors in these four turning points, which go from the recognition of the internal and external factors of the determinants that affect the university in terms of dropout, towards a prospective inclination to determine the percentage of decrease on the uncertainty prevailing in the universities studied, recognizing the critical weaknesses and strengths, to achieve the systematization of a model according to the environment and the tools presented by the institutions or higher organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of university dropout is one of the real situations that is experienced, due to its high occurrence in the different areas (internal and external) that these institutions must go through. The dropout problem has manifested itself to a great extent due to different social, political, labor, and individual aspects that intervene in the educational and cultural development of the countries investigated.

The determining factors that have been most frequently presented in the different cases are: sources of financing, poor family economic bases and labor conflicts, low motivation to study or loss of interest in the chosen program, emotional problems or low self-esteem, psychological causes that destabilize the permanence of students in their professional careers and at the same time generate uncertainty, demotivation and lack of willingness to seek solutions.

These factors are not the only variables that have been generating an increase in the number of dropouts, both in public and private universities. There is evidence of adverse situations related to academics, such as the limited time dedicated to educational activities or loss of semesters, which are some of the main

causes that have coincided with other research in the educational field, particularly in the first years of the career. It is suggested that both state and private entities implement socioeconomic, psychological, institutional, and academic strategies to reduce the phenomenon of university dropout.

These are some of the alternatives proposed in this research; however, it is recommended that other economic strategies be designed and implemented since, according to the results, they have a highly significant relationship with dropouts. Despite this, it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to deal with dropouts due to the economic variable. In this sense, the strategies proposed are more easily accessible from each faculty and teacher. For this reason, it is suggested to carry them out and, at the same time, carry out studies to investigate their effectiveness in reducing university dropouts.

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