

Social origin and reasons for undergraduate dropout: an analysis of the interrupted paths of students of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais

*Origem social e razões da evasão em cursos superiores: uma análise dos
percursos interrompidos de estudantes da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*

*Origen social y razones del abandono en carreras universitarias: un análisis de los
caminos interrumpidos de los estudiantes de la Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*

Gustavo Bruno de Paula^I

Cláudio Marques Martins Nogueira^{II}

ABSTRACT

Based on interviews with undergraduate students who dropped out of courses at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), this article assesses, from a sociological perspective, how these students' socioeconomic characteristics influenced the processes and reasons for their course dropouts. By grouping the students according to their socioeconomic characteristics, we identified that social background shapes the motivations for dropping out differently. Students from higher social backgrounds dropped out due to changes in academic or professional preferences, and interpret the process more positively, while students from intermediate and lower social backgrounds left their courses due to academic or financial difficulties, and experienced the process more negatively, in some cases interpreting it as a failure. The results indicate that, under the same dropout indicator, there are clearly disparate motivations, which are connected to social background.

Keywords: Educational Inequalities. Higher Education Dropout. Dropout.

RESUMO

Baseando-se em entrevistas com universitários que evadiram de cursos da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), investigamos, de uma perspectiva sociológica, como suas características socioeconômicas influenciaram os processos e as razões da saída de seus cursos. Agrupando os estudantes pelas suas características socioeconômicas, identificamos que a origem social configura de modos diferentes as motivações da evasão. Estudantes de origem social alta evadiram por mudanças nas preferências acadêmicas ou profissionais e interpretam a evasão de modo mais positivo, enquanto os estudantes de origem social intermediária e baixa saíram dos cursos por dificuldades acadêmicas ou financeiras e vivenciaram a evasão de maneira mais negativa, em alguns

^IUniversidade de São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil. Email: gustavobrp@usp.br  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6531-0865>

^{II}Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil. Email: cmmn@uol.com.br  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7913-5669>

casos interpretando-a como fracasso. Os resultados demonstram que, sob um mesmo indicador de evasão, escondem-se motivações muito díspares, e que estas se conectam à origem social.

Palavras-chave: Desigualdades Escolares. Evasão do Ensino Superior. Evasão.

RESUMEN

Basándonos en entrevistas con universitarios que abandonaron cursos de la UFMG, en este artículo evaluamos cómo sus características socioeconómicas influyeron en los procesos y razones de la salida de estos estudiantes desde un enfoque sociológico. Al agrupar a los estudiantes por sus características socioeconómicas, identificamos que el origen social configura de manera diferente las motivaciones del abandono. Los estudiantes de alto origen social abandonaron debido a cambios en las preferencias académicas o profesionales e interpretan el proceso de manera más positiva, mientras que los estudiantes de origen social intermedio y bajo abandonaron sus cursos debido a dificultades académicas o financieras, además de experimentar el proceso de manera más negativa, en algunos casos interpretándolo como fracaso. Los resultados indican que bajo un mismo indicador se esconden motivaciones muy dispares para el abandono y que se conectan con el origen social.

Palabras-clave: Desigualdades en la Educación. Abandono de la Educación Superior. Evasión.

INTRODUCTION

With the expansion of courses and institutions and the adoption of affirmative action policies, the Brazilian higher education system has become more diversified and inclusive over the last two decades, as indicated by recent research (Marteleto, Marschner and Carvalhaes, 2016; Salata, 2018; Silva, 2020; Costa *et al.*, 2021; Senkevics, 2021). Although inequalities in access patterns persist, as evidenced, for instance, by the fact that public school education graduates still tend to enroll in undergraduate programs that offer lower economic returns (Carvalhaes and Ribeiro, 2019), the fact remains that access to higher education has become less socially restricted in Brazil.

With these changes in the sociodemographic profile of higher education students, it has become increasingly relevant for sociological and educational research to investigate whether groups with fewer cultural or economic resources who have gained access to higher education have the same chances of completing their degrees or are more vulnerable to dropout. Given that the effects of social inequalities on educational trajectories may not end with access to higher education, it is important to verify whether and how they manifest in terms of inequalities in persistence.

In general, recent national studies have reached inconclusive results regarding the associations between socioeconomic disadvantages and dropout rates or likelihood. Lima Júnior, Ostermann and Rezende (2012), in their analysis of dropout rates in the Physics program at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), did not identify significant associations between dropout and socioeconomic variables such as family income, educational attainment, and parental occupation. Durso and Cunha (2018) found that the probability of dropping out of the accounting program at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) was associated with higher levels of parental education, contradicting the researchers' initial expectations.

Institution-level research has also yielded similar results. Braga, Peixoto and Bogutchi (2003) did not observe a strong association between family income and dropout likelihood among UFMG undergraduates. They noted, however, that parental education levels and school background had

effects that varied depending on the programs. Costa and Picanço (2020), in a case study at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), did not identify significant differences in dropout rates between white and black students — an important dimension in the production of social and educational inequalities in the country. However, they found that higher socioeconomic status was associated with a greater likelihood of completion. Paula (2021) analyzed the associations between dropouts and characteristics related to the social and educational background of university students in the country's federal system. In the first part of his research, which covered all federal higher education institutions, he found that although the probability of public school graduates leaving higher education was higher compared to those from private schools, the difference was small and less relevant than other variables related to program characteristics, such as study shift and academic degree. This result was also observed in previous work (Paula and Nogueira, 2020). In the second part of the study, considering only information from UFMG students, no significant associations were observed between socioeconomic disadvantages and institutional dropout.

In sum, at least among studies focused on the public sector, results indicate that students who would in principle face greater difficulties in persisting in higher education do not necessarily show a higher propensity to drop out, compared to their peers who would be better positioned to adapt to university life. Thus, inequalities that have historically been significant in explaining dropout in basic education (Salata, 2019; Simões, 2019) apparently do not have the same relevance in the university context.

One possible explanation for these results, which should be considered in advance by all research on dropout at the tertiary level, is that there is significant mobility between higher education programs and institutions (Ristoff, 1997; Marques, 2020). Part of what is classified as dropout is, from the students' perspective, a transfer or a change (Tinto, 1982; Nogueira, Paula and Ariovaldo, 2021). It is therefore important to pay attention to the type or level of the dropout indicator being investigated (Vitelli and Fritsch, 2016): whether at the program, institution or system level. Particularly in the first two forms of dropout, part of what administrators or researchers record as dropout (correctly, as long as they account for its different types) are, in reality, changes or transfers between programs or institutions. These student movements are not so much associated with academic, financial, or other difficulties, but rather with changes in the educational and professional preferences of undergraduates (Bueno, 1993). In many of these cases, although the departure implies a loss of investments or resources for the institutions, it may be perceived positively by the student, serving as an adjustment or redirection toward an opportunity more aligned with their preferences (Tinto, 1987).

In this article, we argue that although program- or institution-level dropout rates may be similar among students of different socioeconomic profiles and educational backgrounds, the reasons for dropping out (whether academic and/or economic difficulties or the desire to pursue more appealing programs or institutions) and the forms of dropout they engage in (whether leaving the higher education system altogether or just from a program or institution) may differ. Students from lower social backgrounds are more vulnerable to dropping out due to academic or socioeconomic difficulties, temporarily or permanently interrupting their studies. Meanwhile, students with more favorable social and educational profiles are more likely to drop out of programs and/or institutions due to the desire to reenter the system in search of institutions or programs considered more satisfactory.

Few studies have specifically sought to understand the reasons behind students leaving their programs and, particularly, how different motives interact with different socioeconomic or demographic characteristics of individuals. In research conducted in the physics program at a federal institution, Lima Júnior (2013) found that although the likelihood of dropping out did not differ

according to characteristics related to social origin, the number of course failures was higher among students with greater socioeconomic disadvantages, indicating a higher risk of dropout due to academic difficulties. Recent international research, with larger samples, supports this assumption. In France, Herbaut (2021) observed that students from less privileged backgrounds were more likely to leave the program due to first-year failures, which was not the case among their peers with better socioeconomic conditions. Similarly, in research conducted in Germany, Behr *et al.* (2021), in addition to finding that dropout was linked to multiple motivations rather than just one isolated reason, found that immigrant students were more likely to report having left for financial reasons.

More national studies in this direction are important for understanding how social inequalities among students influence the dropout process. General dropout indicators may encompass highly distinct phenomena that require differentiated sociological explanations. One cannot ignore the differences between leaving a program or institution due to academic or socioeconomic difficulties — which may lead students to permanently abandon their studies — and leaving due to an interest in enrolling in another program or institution. This article investigates the heterogeneity of students' socioeconomic characteristics and dropout motives using a qualitative approach. Based on 12 interviews with students who left programs at UFMG between 2016 and 2018, we seek to understand the reasons and meanings they attribute to dropout and how it relates to their social origin and educational trajectory in basic education, as well as their initial experience in undergraduate programs and at the university.

UFMG is one of the largest and most traditional public universities in the country. Over the last two decades, the institution has undergone significant changes in its student profile, driven by affirmative action policies, which expanded access for students from public schools, Black students, and those with low incomes (Paula, Nonato and Nogueira, 2023), and by the adoption, in 2014, of the Unified Selection System (SiSU) as the selection mechanism for undergraduate programs (Nogueira *et al.*, 2017). This context of profound institutional transformations, in which the university's student body has become progressively more heterogeneous, offers an ideal scenario for analyzing how the meanings and reasons for dropout relate to students' social origins.

The article is organized as follows: after this introduction, in the second section, we discuss the difficulties of investigating the relationship between inequalities and dropout in higher education, outlining our argument about the importance of examining the possible variation in the reasons for leaving higher education based on students' social origins. The third section presents our research design and the theoretical foundations that supported its construction. In the fourth section, we analyze the dropout patterns that we identified through the academic trajectories of the interviewed students. Finally, we present the concluding remarks.

DROPOUT IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ORIGIN: A COMPLEX ASSOCIATION

Higher education has specific characteristics that distinguish it from basic education and make it difficult to establish program- or institution-level dropout as a necessarily negative event, as it is understood in elementary or secondary education. This level of education consists, after all, of a non-mandatory stage of education (although undoubtedly crucial for career prospects and, for this reason, increasingly essential for access to good jobs) and one whose pedagogical logic is more grounded in autonomy (Coulon, 2008; 2017), being designed for young adults or adults. Furthermore, it offers students different paths through knowledge areas, institutions, programs, academic degrees, and teaching modalities. Partly due to these characteristics, much of what is recorded as dropout does not constitute a permanent interruption and, sometimes, not even a temporary one, but rather a change of program or institution within the higher education system

itself. Marques' study (2020) on dropout, using data from the Higher Education Census from 2009 to 2017, identifies a trend of reentry for more than 55% of students who left a program or institution during the period. Paula's analysis (2021), with data from a cohort of federal university students from 2016, found that 62% of those who dropped out returned the following year. Therefore, there is significant movement between higher education programs and institutions in the country.

Considering the extent of these movements, some dropouts may not be caused by academic difficulties, financial constraints, or failure to adapt to academic demands, but rather by uncertainties or changes in professional objectives, which are common among many young entrants (Tinto, 1982). As Tinto (1987) rightly observes, it would be unexpected for most young entrants to be fully confident about their academic or professional choices. Many enter higher education without precise information about program characteristics and the professional careers to which they lead. Even students who are more informed about the educational system, mostly from the middle or upper classes (Nogueira, Romanelli and Zago, 2000; Resende, Nogueira and Nogueira, 2011), will only fully grasp the realities of their initially chosen field after the first few weeks of classes.

It is also necessary to consider that some newly admitted students do not enter the undergraduate program they originally desired or that was among their top choices. Far from being free to choose what they want, and from being on equal footing in selecting their academic destinations (Reay *et al.*, 2001; Nogueira, 2012; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2014), many candidates adjust their decisions based on a practical assessment of their financial, cultural, and educational conditions. Elements such as their level of academic preparation, whether they combine studies with work, and the distance between the institution and their residence, among others, influence their choice possibilities in the selection processes for admission into public institutions.

It is clear, therefore, that dropout may not necessarily result from academic failure or the socioeconomic difficulties that cause students to temporarily or permanently interrupt their studies. It may signify a redirection toward undergraduate options that are more desirable or compatible with their tastes, competencies, and personal and professional projects. In these cases, students may not experience it as something necessarily negative and/or associated with academic problems related to preparation in basic education or a lack of the economic resources necessary for persistence.

These challenges related to entering higher education, common to many university students (Coulon, 2017), should not, however, lead us to overlook the fact that socioeconomic inequalities can influence the form or meanings of how these students experience higher education. Behind the same indicator, there may be heterogeneous associations between the meanings and causes of dropout, depending on social origin. It is necessary to consider, therefore, the different types of dropout (from the higher education system or just from a program or institution, followed by reentry) and their causes (difficulties in persisting versus the desire to reenter another program or institution) to fully understand the relationship between this event and students' social origins. In this article, our objective is to contribute to research in this direction by analyzing the reasons and meanings attributed to dropout by a specific group of students, investigating how and to what extent advantages or disadvantages associated with social origin influenced the process of dropping out of programs.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Based on a semi-structured interview guide¹, we conducted 12 interviews with students from different social backgrounds who dropped out of UFMG programs between 2016 and 2017. In these

1 Certificate of Ethical Review (CAAE): 87256318.1.0000.5149. The names presented in this work are fictitious in order to preserve participants' anonymity.

interviews, we analyzed the extent to which the interviewees' reasons for dropout, how it occurred, and the meanings they attribute to it relate to their social origin. Was dropout among students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds more motivated by financial or academic difficulties (e.g., income constraints, difficulty balancing studies with work, transportation issues, etc.)? Conversely, did students with better socioeconomic conditions drop out for reasons more related to changes in academic or professional preferences?

To answer these questions, we compared academic trajectories using two categories and nine subcategories, constructed based on the literature on the topic, as shown in Table 1.

The first category, "Social and educational background and program choice process," encompasses questions that reconstruct the interviewee's social origin and educational background. Previous academic performance can be a significant predictor of undergraduate academic outcomes. We investigated the weight of this aspect through questions about students' perceptions of their performance, subjects they enjoyed or found easier, and whether they experienced academic failure and, if so, in which areas.

Within this category, we also included questions about parental educational expectations and students' aspirations. Numerous studies indicate an association between parental expectations and both educational longevity and achievement, as well as between young people's expectations and their academic outcomes (Morgan, 2005; Nogueira *et al.*, 2009; Alves *et al.*, 2013).

Program selection can have a significant impact on undergraduates' academic engagement. A large proportion of higher education students adjust their original preferences for various reasons: financial constraints, geographical factors, and, primarily, their ability to meet the minimum score requirements for their desired program. To a large extent, this adjustment to what is feasible is gradually constructed through students' objective and symbolic conditions of existence (Bourdieu, 1998; Nogueira, 2004), but it can also occur more abruptly when selecting undergraduate options through SiSU, a phenomenon that has likely increased since the implementation of this system, as

Table 1 – Analysis Categories for Interview Comparison.

Categories	Categories Description	
Social and Educational Background and Program Choice Process	Academic experience and performance in high school	• Perception of academic performance in high school • Whether they experienced grade retention • Subjects liked or disliked
	Individual and parental expectations and aspirations regarding higher education	• Whether the interviewee and/or parents had expectations of entering higher education • Student's and family members' professional expectations and aspirations
	External responsibilities or financial issues before entering higher education	• Whether they were employed • Family or other responsibilities • Economic difficulties
	Process of choosing program and institution	• Whether or not they planned program and institution choices in advance • How they chose a program/institution during SiSU

Continue...

Table 1 – Continuation.

Categories	Categories Description	
College Entry and Experience	Transition to higher education	• Whether or not they entered their preferred program • Whether they experienced difficulties adapting to the study routine in program and institution • Whether or not they had difficulties organizing studies • Whether or not they had difficulties organizing curriculum credits
	External responsibilities or financial issues after entering higher education	• Whether they were employed or not • Family or other responsibilities • Economic difficulties
	Social integration	• Ease or difficulty in forming friendships in the program • Whether they participated in parties, usually went out with colleagues or had other forms of social interaction • Whether they participated in extra-academic activities (recreational, physical, etc.)
	Academic integration	• Whether they participated in extracurricular activities (undergraduate research, extension programs, study groups, etc.) • Whether they experienced academic difficulties (learning difficulties, course failure, etc.) • Whether they liked/were interested in the program's content • Whether they interacted with faculty • Perception of faculty
	Dropout process	• Whether they perceived it as failure or not • What they felt when leaving program/institution • Their assessment of their current situation compared to the program experience • The reasons given for their decision to leave the program • Destination after the dropout

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

recent studies have indicated (Nogueira *et al.*, 2017). Thus, we examined how closely aligned or divergent the program from which they dropped out was compared to their original preferences, to understand how this might have influenced their interest in persisting in it.

We also asked students whether they had external responsibilities beyond schooling, either familial or work-related, before entering UFMG, and whether these responsibilities continued after they began their studies at the institution. Research findings indicate, for instance, that employment is strongly associated with the likelihood of educational dropout, both in basic education (Salata, 2019) and higher education (Triventi, 2014; Paula and Nogueira, 2020; Aina *et al.*, 2022). One of the primary reasons is that these responsibilities reduce the time available for studying and engaging in institutional academic activities, which can negatively impact program persistence.

For the second broader category, “College entry and experience,” we developed questions about the interviewee’s trajectory in the program from which they withdrew. For this category, our analysis draws heavily from the sociological works of Vincent Tinto (1987) and Alain Coulon (2008).

Tinto’s integration model² has become established in American literature as a dominant paradigm among higher education attrition studies, inspiring numerous works dedicated to testing its explanatory power (Terenzini and Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella and Chapman, 1983; Nora and Cabrera, 1993; Berger and Braxton, 1998; Brunson *et al.*, 2000; Melguizo, 2011). In his model, dropout (or persistence and completion) would be an event resulting from the student’s level of integration into the university environment. This integration, in turn, develops over time and derives from the interaction between aspects related to student characteristics (family socioeconomic status, individual attributes, and educational background), their commitments (academic and professional goals, and institutional commitment), and the university community, the latter being constituted by what he terms academic and social systems. The academic system involves the formal activities of the university (classes, seminars, academic performance, understanding of curricular content, participation in extracurricular activities, etc.), while the social system is linked to interaction or sociability with peers and faculty in informal institutional spaces (parties, social gatherings, sports activities, support or religious groups, etc.).

Although not specifically directed at the issue of dropout, Coulon’s work (2008; 2017) on students’ social dilemmas upon entering university life offers valuable contributions to understanding this phenomenon. He employs the ethnomethodological concept of affiliation (similar to Tinto’s sociological approach) to investigate the primary challenges of higher education entry, which include understanding and adapting to social and academic rules and the pedagogical logic of the university community. In essence, the affiliated student is one who adjusts to the routines, pedagogical practices, and demands of academic work after overcoming the social, cultural, and pedagogical ruptures that insertion into this space entails.

Still, within the second category, we analyzed the actual withdrawal process experienced by students. We inquired about their feelings regarding their departure from the program or UFMG, the reaction of parents, program peers or friends, and what reasons they attributed to their decision — without necessarily taking the responses to this last question as the actual cause of attrition, since individuals tend to rationalize their choices.

Our analytical approach is grounded in a comparative logic (Palmberger and Gingrich, 2014). Through analytical categories, we reconstructed academic trajectories and compared individual dropout processes within and between student groups according to their socioeconomic characteristics. Based on responses obtained in the first part of the interview, we classified their social origins into three categories: high, intermediate, and low. This classification served analytical purposes, indicating

2 It is important to note that Tinto’s work on higher education dropout was developed from works elaborated by William Spady (1971).

socioeconomic differences within the limited set of research participants, without claiming to faithfully correspond to broader categorizations representative of Brazilian society. Nevertheless, it is supported by sociological theories that posit the relevance of educational factors (such as parents' educational attainment or type of school attended) in defining individuals' social origin and highlight its importance in the production and reproduction of inequalities across different social spaces (Santos, 2005; Bertonecelo, 2016; Ribeiro and Carvalhaes, 2020). Based on participants' social and educational attributes, we classified as having a high social origin those who attended private schools throughout basic education and whose parents had both completed higher education. The intermediate group included students for whom only one parent having completed higher education and students having attended most of their primary and secondary education in public schools. In the third and final group, neither parent graduated from college, and they were educated in the public sector.

We selected students who entered UFMG programs between 2016 and 2017. This allowed us to compare academic trajectories that occurred at a time when policies such as the Program to Support Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI) and the Quota Law (Law No. 12,711/2012) were already fully implemented at the institution. Since one of our objectives was to compare student pathways across different programs and within the university, we interviewed only those who completed at least one semester of the program from which they dropped out. Invitations to participate in the research were made through student groups on social media. The interviews were conducted between the second semester of 2018 and the first semester of 2019; all were recorded and fully transcribed. For the comparative analysis of the interviews, we used ATLAS.ti Web software.

RESULTS: SOCIAL ORIGIN AND DROPOUT PATTERNS IN COURSES AT THE UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE MINAS GERAIS

The analysis of interviews revealed that most dropout processes are not driven by isolated factors but result from the combination of different elements that affect academic trajectories. We identified four elements that were fundamental to both the forms of entry and experience in the program, as well as to the dropout decision, which are linked to the students' social origin:

- change of plans regarding the program area;
- low interest in the entry program;
- academic performance difficulties;
- work-related responsibilities.

Table 2 presents the names of interviewees with their trajectories and indicates, with asterisks, the factors associated with the dropout process.

Based on comparisons between interviews, we analyzed two patterns of academic trajectories and dropout processes, demonstrating how they are linked to respondents' socioeconomic and educational conditions. The first pattern consists of cases in which individuals decided to leave after entering their desired programs without experiencing academic or socioeconomic difficulties that would have prevented their continuation. These students experience dropout more positively, redirecting themselves toward programs that are more satisfactory. The second pattern comprises cases in which the decision to drop out was associated with academic and financial problems, or difficulties in reconciling work and studies, resulting in a more negative perception of both their program experience and the dropout process. As we shall see, there is no direct relationship between social and educational background and the dropout pattern experienced; however, there is a predominance of students from more advantaged social origins among those who experience dropout as a form of mobility, and a concentration of those with greater disadvantages among those who view it as exclusion.

Table 2 – Dropout Trajectories and Factors Influencing the Dropout Process.

		Entry program	Destination after dropout	Factors that influenced dropout			
				(i) Change of plans regarding program area	(ii) Low interest in entry program	(iii) Academic performance difficulties	(iv) Work-related responsibilities
High Social Origin	Carina	Architecture & Urban Planning	Music (other institution)	*			
	Rafael	Control & Automation Engineering	Economics (other institution)	*			
	Júlia	Control & Automation Engineering	Medicine (UFMG)	*			
Intermediate Social Origin	Eduardo	Mathematics	History (UFMG)	*		*	
	Márcio	Chemistry	Mathematics (UFMG)		*	*	
	Marcela	Statistics	System dropout		*	*	*
Low Social Origin	Stephane	International Relations	System dropout	*			*
	João	Language and Literature	System dropout		*	*	*
	Carlos	Language and Literature	Nursing (UFMG)	*	*		*
	Felipe	Statistics	Business Administration (UFMG)		*	*	
	Viviane	Control & Automation Engineering	Medicine (UFMG)	*			
	Ana Paula	Chemistry	Physical Education (UFMG)		*	*	

UFMG: Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

DROPOUT AS MOBILITY: THE CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

Four cases constitute the first pattern of dropout that we reconstructed from student narratives: Carina, Rafael, and Júlia, classified as having high social origins, and Viviane, from a low social background. These students, among the factors we observed, decided to drop out mainly because they lost interest or changed their preferences regarding their initial field of study at

UFMG. Disappointed, they began considering other fields or institutions better aligned with their expectations. As we intend to demonstrate, the success of this reorientation within the higher education system depends heavily on favorable economic, cultural, or educational conditions.

The three students of high social origin attended, during high school, three of the most prestigious private schools in Belo Horizonte. All of their parents had completed at least one higher education degree. Regarding the highest occupational status, Carina's and Rafael's fathers are entrepreneurs, and Júlia's father retired as an economics professor at another federal university also located in Minas Gerais. Indeed, these are students whose families possess high economic or cultural capital. One expression of these students' socioeconomic advantages is their high educational expectations, understanding higher education as not merely a desired destination but a certainty. Another is the way they chose their programs. Despite uncertainties about which fields they wished to pursue, common among many interviewees, they were all admitted to programs that most closely aligned with their preferences upon completing high school or during the SiSU admission period.

"I was already thinking about architecture, I started high school already wanting to study architecture." [Carina]

"When my SiSU score came out, I was already thinking about doing engineering there [UFMG]; then the score was high enough, I could easily get into chemical engineering, so I had no doubts or anything." [Rafael]

"I put it as my first choice, I really thought I wanted chemical engineering at the time; I did very well on the Enem [Brazilian High School Exam], so I was able to choose my program completely freely; if I had wanted medicine at that time, I would have been able to get in." [Júlia]

The three students did not experience major difficulties adapting to the university, but for different reasons, they gradually observed that the field did not correspond to what they had envisioned. These changes did not occur due to academic or financial difficulties, as they all enjoyed favorable economic conditions. In Rafael's case, it was fundamentally due to the more academic or theoretical nature of the program, causing profound disinterest in the subjects. This led him to engage inadequately with the coursework, which negatively impacted his grades. However, it is important to note that this did not occur because he failed to understand the content, but rather because he could not see the practical application of what he was learning in the classroom. As for Carina and Julia, they realized they were not as interested in the field as they had initially thought. During the first semesters, they tried to participate in different specialized undergraduate activities, but this was not sufficient to stimulate their interests.

I think the program itself is one that doesn't make you very happy while studying. [...] You don't see much practical application in the things you learn. It's tedious, tedious. That raw physics, chemistry, and math. Just theoretical. It drives you crazy. You just keep doing exercises, numbers, letters, integrals, symbols, and you... I hated that. [Rafael]

I enrolled in architecture; I was very much like, what am I going to do? I got into architecture, into the restoration of old buildings, because it was very connected to history, and I liked history. Then, when I got into architecture, I saw urban planning and liked urban planning; I still do, I think it's a very interesting field. [...] I kept switching from one thing to another and realized I didn't want it. Then I took an acoustics course to see if it had anything to do with music... I didn't like that either. [Carina]

So, I thought there would be all these options, but when I went to check, talked to people in the field, I realized it wasn't quite like that. You could work in all these areas, but you'd end up doing more or less the same thing. I realized that none of it really appealed to me. I realized I didn't think I'd be happy in that field of work. The program itself was very smooth, I even liked it. Like I said, I liked calculus, I liked the subjects [...], but the field just didn't click, you know? [Júlia]

Before analyzing these students' dropout processes, it is important to address Viviane's academic trajectory, who is classified as having a low socioeconomic background. Viviane's parents only completed elementary education; her mother was a homemaker, and her father owned a small business; both are now retired. Thus, her parents' economic and cultural conditions differ significantly from those of students with high socioeconomic backgrounds. Viviane attended only public schools throughout her basic education. However, despite completing elementary education at a small municipal school, during high school she attended a higher-quality public institution, the Technical College of UFMG (Coltec).

Information regarding the educational trajectories of her three older sisters also helps us understand Viviane's pathway, as it indicates an experience in a family environment that, despite belonging to working-class strata, fostered socialization practices that generated high educational expectations (Viana, 1998; Piotto, 2008). All three sisters completed higher education, with the eldest finishing a doctorate in dentistry, a field in which she works professionally. The middle sister graduated in biological sciences and teaches at one of the city's most sought-after college preparatory courses. Finally, the third sister completed physical education and owns a Pilates studio. Like Viviane, the two older sisters also attended federal public schools, specifically the Federal Center for Technological Education of Minas Gerais (Cefet-MG).

After completing high school, Viviane aspired to gain admission to the chemical engineering program at UFMG. To achieve this, she studied for two years in a college preparatory course — a factor that distinguishes her from students of high socioeconomic background, who enrolled immediately after completing high school. However, after years of preparation to achieve the necessary score for her desired program, during the opening of SiSU, where candidates must select their first and second choice programs, she realized, while evaluating her admission possibilities, that her score allowed her to consider medical school. Understanding the "rules of the game" of SiSU, she selected medicine as her first choice and chemical engineering as her second.

I put medicine as my first option and chemical engineering as my second option in SiSU [Unified Selection System]. But what I really wanted was engineering; I left medicine there because I thought: "if something happens, who knows?" But I was almost certain that, even if I were called, I would stay in engineering. I left it there just to stay on the waiting list, and I went to study engineering, since I had already been called for my second option. [Viviane]

Viviane remained in the program for one semester and, according to her, immediately noticed a significant gap between what she had anticipated, based on her experience at Coltec, and the program's pedagogical approach. Like Rafael, she did not engage with the program content, which she perceived as insufficiently practical. Similarly, her problem did not stem from academic challenges, such as comprehending the content, but rather from the theoretical nature of the program, particularly in the foundational courses.

I got there thinking that it would indeed be a better technical course; you know, with more stuff (laughs). And I hated ICEx [Institute of Exact Sciences]. [...] The basic

cycle is all there, and there was one course that was in the engineering department, but I didn't really like it. What I really enjoyed was the practical part in the lab, which was in the chemistry department. The rest I hated (laughs). [Viviane]

Viviane's case is noteworthy because, as we observed, she had listed medicine as her first choice. After completing the semester, she was admitted from the waiting list for the program. Dissatisfied with chemical engineering, she transferred to a field undoubtedly associated with expectations of greater symbolic and professional returns.

In these first four cases, the dropout process was accompanied by some uncertainties and insecurities. However, ultimately, these students interpret their decision positively, feeling satisfied with the field toward which they redirected themselves.

Then I found out I had passed [into the music program], and the feeling was amazing.... I think dropping out was like a weight off my shoulders [...] after the music course started, and I saw what it was like, I thought: "I'm glad I left." [Carina]

I kind of went piece by piece, it was hard, there were a lot of things I had to consider, and I only really accepted that I had left the course when I finished the Enem exam. Only then did I feel a huge relief. I thought, "I did well on the Enem, I got a good score, now I'll be able to get into the program I want." [Júlia]

I was scared, you know? Since I had dreamed so much about it, I thought: "Am I being too hasty, leaving after just one semester?" I was scared, but in the first semester here, I already saw such a difference that in the same year [...] I became even more sure it was a good choice for me. [Viviane]

This first group of students possesses cultural, economic, and educational resources that enable them to actively shape their educational trajectory. Just as they were admitted to the programs they originally desired when they were younger, they were also accepted into programs that aligned with their new plans. We will see how this distinguishes them from most interviewees, whose expectations are more constrained due to less advantageous economic or cultural conditions, as well as a more precarious academic preparation.

DROPOUT AS EXCLUSION: ACADEMIC AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES, AND RESTRICTED EXPECTATIONS

The disrupted pathways of the remaining interviewed students align with the second pattern of dropout that we reconstructed based on the collected narratives. As in the previously discussed cases, some of these interviewees also left their programs after changing their expectations or preferences, but these adjustments were accompanied by academic or financial difficulties. These cases also exemplify our argument that different reasons for this event converge under the same dropout indicator. Program changes may be triggered by academic, financial, social, or other difficulties, and thus the entire process can be painful for the students — as some indeed revealed in the interviews.

As we previously highlighted, in the intermediate and low-socioeconomic-origin groups, secondary education was completed entirely in public schools — in most cases, so was their entire basic education. Students from these groups are also characterized by parents employed in lower-income and lower-status occupations. Some of them — Felipe and João — began working at a younger age, during high school. We thus observe less favorable economic, cultural, and educational conditions, which resulted in more limited educational expectations constraining both their program choices, and, subsequently, their dropout from the programs.

Among these interviewees, parental expectations for college enrollment were uncertain or nonexistent. Many mentioned the lack of encouragement and support offered in the schools they attended. This is reflected, for example, in the older age at which some of them had when entering undergraduate education.

They [her parents] always focused on “look, study, go to college, because in this country, it’s only through studying, only through education that you’ll be able to increase your income.” But there was never that demand: “Look, you have to get in.” They always let me choose my focus, my path. [Marcela]

I decided to take the Enem for the first time in my life at 19; I hadn’t taken it before, not even as a test; my school had never encouraged it. [...] There wasn’t this whole Enem thing, it was never really talked about with us: “You have to take the Enem.” [João]

A recurring element in these students’ trajectories was their inability to gain admission to their originally desired program due to insufficient test scores for acceptance. These cases clearly demonstrate the effect of SISU’s institutional design in prompting strategic choice-making among students (Nogueira *et al.*, 2017; Cabello *et al.*, 2021). For instance, Felipe, who initially aspired to study psychology, opted for statistics without much deliberation, influenced by peers during his ENEM preparation course who suggested the field offered good income prospects. Similarly, Marcela, who also left the statistics program, had selected it after realizing that admission to economics would not be possible for her.

I stopped considering what I really wanted; my goal was to have more security to get into university and also to graduate quickly, which I realized wouldn’t happen when I got into statistics (laughs), and to leave [graduate] with a decent salary. The intention was strictly professional when choosing this course. [Felipe]

I took the Enem, and based on my score, I saw that statistics was an option; I was going to try economics again, but I would have been on the waiting list [...]. So I researched, I always looked into fields related to exact sciences, but I was never a fan of engineering, never really liked the mathematics course itself. So I looked into fields that mixed a bit of exact sciences [...]. I saw that economics wasn’t an option, and the other option I saw that matched my score was statistics. I did a little research, applied, and got in. [Marcela]

Some interviewees readjusted their choices even more strategically, planning to enter undergraduate programs that, from their perspective, were similar to their desired to transfer in the future to the program they actually wanted. Márcio, for example, aspired to study chemical engineering but through SiSU found that his score was insufficient for admission. For this reason, he chose the chemistry program as a way to gain experience in the field. Ana Paula followed a similar logic. Her case is an even clearer example of strategic choices because, although we interviewed her about dropping out of the chemistry program, we found that she had also dropped out of the philosophy program. In both areas, her selections resulted from readjustments during the SiSU opening period. Ana aspired to enter the psychology program at UFMG, but she was unsuccessful in all her attempts. She chose philosophy as a strategy to advance credits for the psychology course, planning to later transfer to the area she dreamed of.

My first choice was always [chemical] engineering. [...] But when I graduated and took the Enem, I didn’t do a prep course or anything, and my score wasn’t enough to get into chemical engineering. So I went for chemistry, kind of to get an idea [...].

I enrolled in chemistry more for that reason, kind of because my score was enough for chemistry but not for chemical engineering. [Márcio]

There's the option to switch majors here, so I'm going to study philosophy, learn what I need to learn, and then switch to psychology. [...] There was pressure about that; I couldn't put college first because it wasn't the program I was going to graduate from. I always intended to switch from philosophy to psychology. [Ana Paula]

One of the main barriers these students faced was the presence of academic difficulties. Most interviewees encountered problems keeping up with course content, understanding their professors' language in classes, communicating and expressing their ideas in assignments, and succeeding in evaluations. The problem was more evident among students who entered the field of the exact sciences, but we also identified similar challenges in João's account, who dropped out of the language and literature program.

Speaking specifically about calculus, I didn't know anything about pre-calculus, didn't know what a function was, or an equation, didn't know anything. And I completely failed; I didn't understand what the professor was saying up there. That created a lot of panic because I wasn't understanding what the professor was saying. I was trying to find material to understand what he was talking about. That overwhelmed me, caused a lot of stress, a lot of panic, I wasn't learning anything. [Felipe]

When you go to enroll [...] there's that big screen showing what UFMG is like, and you leave there feeling happy, right? Thinking it's top-notch. But in the first semester, you already take calculus I, to the dismay of the exact sciences students who came from public schools. Calculus I is like, right in your face, a punch, it's Maguila, Mike Tyson beating you up (laughs). [Marcela]

When I got here, my friends already knew how to do various types of assignments. [...] And they were like: "Every week I presented a PowerPoint assignment"; man, I didn't even know how to use PowerPoint. [...] for me, it was like I was a baby crawling, while they were already 5-year-old kids. [João]

Upon starting a university program, many students become aware of the mismatch between the academic preparation they obtained in high school and that required by curricula and teaching practices. The following excerpt, from Marcela's speech, refers to her experience in the initial semesters of the economics program at a private institution, from which she dropped out a few years before enrolling in statistics at UFMG.

When I first got in, the first shock was realizing [...] where I came from and you realize, wow, I don't have a very solid foundation. So that was the first shock. In the first semester, I wasn't amazing, but I also wasn't terrible, but it was the first time I really started having difficulties; I thought: "Wow, I'm going to have to study, I'm going to have to catch up on a lot of things from way back." [Marcela]

I was decent at math in high school, but when I got here... there were a lot of things I hadn't seen in high school, completely different, because of public school education. It wasn't teaching us for college, it was just teaching us what it was in the curriculum. [Ana Paula]

Since these students' families faced more unfavorable economic conditions, many of them were also working students. The demands of work further exacerbate academic difficulties, restricting time for studies and interaction with colleagues and professors, thus reducing opportunities for familiarizing themselves with the rules, logic, and social practices that constitute the university space. These issues are completely absent among students from higher social backgrounds, who, besides having greater proximity to academic culture, have more free time to reinforce this connection and resolve the dilemmas that emerge in the transition from high school to higher education.

Marcela, after completing high school, began working in her father's small electrical supplies store. Between attempts to complete her degree, she took on greater responsibilities in the business to help her father and, at the same time, have greater financial independence. Thus, both in the statistics program and in the economics program from which she dropped out at another institution, the time needed for studies was one of the main barriers to continuing her education.

I had from 8 to 10 [PM] to study, which is impossible... You get home, your mind is... Your mind is boiling, like melted magma (laughs). It didn't work. Getting home, taking a shower, having a snack. Trying to do two calculus assignments, Gaal assignments, which are analytic geometry and linear algebra, it just didn't work. My brain couldn't process two times two, it just wouldn't compute. You'd stop. [...] I couldn't focus, so I ended up not studying. [Marcela]

In João's case, the need to continue working during his undergraduate studies motivated him to transfer to the evening program. This change hindered his persistence in the program because, beyond academic problems, he began to feel increasingly isolated at the university, partly due to the different profiles of his new classmates, who were generally older. With daytime work, João gradually lost contact with the friends he had established in the first semesters.

A lot of things got worse when I switched to the evening [program], because I needed to work, and I knew it would be harder to manage since I was here during the day. But that's when things really fell apart; I didn't know anyone in the evening classes. It was a crowd that was more... more mature, older. I couldn't connect with them; I was very alone. I didn't have anyone to pair up with, I had to keep looking for whoever was left. [João]

Without access to higher educational, cultural, or economic conditions, the dropout experiences among students in this group were considerably more challenging. Given their academic and financial hardships, as well as work-related constraints, their educational experience was perceived as negative, to the extent that some developed mental health issues during their academic trajectory.

I started having anxiety attacks, I started feeling very incapable, even if I sat down to study, I had already convinced myself that I wouldn't be able to handle it. It didn't flow. I started, I don't know, because I didn't go to the doctor for it, but I'd say I started getting depressed because of it. So I couldn't study, even if I wanted to. It was really hard. [Márcio]

For example, when I had anxiety attacks, I would get really depressed, sometimes I wouldn't go to class. My mom would ask: "Why aren't you going?" "Because it's hard for me, it's being difficult." She'd say: "But you just sit there and study." It's not like that, it's not that simple. It's a huge burden. Especially studying here. You need to stand out all the time. Especially if you come from a reality that's not the same as most people here. [João]

I had a lot of difficulty, a lot of difficulty with physics; with calculus, even worse. It was more than a headache; literally, I started having migraines, insomnia. It was really bad. [...] I would stay up all night trying to understand the material. Dealing with chronic headaches. [Ana Paula]

Unlike the students in the first group, who perceive their program transfer as positive, for those in this group, the dropout process carries a more negative perspective. Felipe and Marcela reflect on their withdrawal from the statistics program in the following way (in Marcela's case, there is the added disappointment of dropping out from a second undergraduate program):

(Pauses before responding). I think it was a mix of... frustration, relief, and disappointment with myself. Because even though I thought it was a good idea to leave, to do what I wanted, I felt disappointed with myself for not being able to handle it, and also for not thinking it through before getting into it, for not realizing what I would need to do well there. I also felt frustrated with myself for what I was leaving behind, for the people I had met, and a bit for not succeeding. Raw frustration, really, for having failed. [Felipe]

That feeling, like defeat, you know? My God, I didn't make it again. [...] it was that defeat of leaving, because I want to finish my degree. For myself, you know, I love studying, but I never gave it time. That thing, I never valued my dream, it's always about others, so it was this feeling of disappointment. Of incompetence, you know? It went wrong once again. [Marcela]

As shown in Felipe's response, some interviewees also reported feeling relieved upon leaving the program. While this might suggest that withdrawal in these cases was also positive for them, as they could redirect themselves toward fields or activities more aligned with their interests or academic preparation, the sense of relief takes on a different meaning, as it was motivated by deeply problematic academic experiences in the programs they were leaving behind.

In a way, I felt like I had failed, you know? Because I had convinced myself that I could do it, and then suddenly I couldn't anymore. Everything had gone wrong, I proved everyone who said they were right. And relief, because continuing was really hurting me. It was a feeling of taking a weight lifted off my shoulders, I won't go through that struggle anymore, because I'm going to change programs and follow something else. [Ana Paula]

The first feeling I had was relief. Huge relief. Then, the weight of being a nobody in the academic world. "There goes João, 22 years old, dropping out of the program, starting from scratch." I had the expectation that I would graduate at 25, but now it's going to be 28. I'm three years behind what I planned when I started. So it was relief and frustration. I'm still frustrated, to be honest. Super frustrated, but at the same time optimistic. I think a lot of good things are going to happen. [João]

Wow, it was the best thing I ever did (laughs). It felt like a huge burden was lifted off my shoulders, like... wow! Coming here, I started to hate UFMG, I started to hate UFMG because I felt stupid all the time. I felt like I couldn't handle it, you know? [Márcio]

CONCLUSION

Part of the dropout rates observed in higher education systems reflect student movements between programs and institutions. According to scholars such as Tinto (1982; 1987), many of

these cases are not caused by academic or financial difficulties and are not perceived negatively from the student's perspective. However, are these cases more common among students with better socioeconomic or academic backgrounds, while situations that align more closely with the conventional view of dropout as failure would be more frequent among socioeconomically underprivileged students? In this work, we sought to contribute to answering these questions by investigating whether different social origins are particularly associated with different reasons for or meanings of withdrawal.

Based on a comparative approach to the academic trajectories of 12 students from different social backgrounds, our findings indicate that social origin shapes the reasons for and meanings attributed to the dropout process. The interviewed students with greater educational, economic, and cultural advantages withdrew after becoming disillusioned with their field of study and modifying their professional preferences. In all cases, their disillusionment with the program did not stem from academic difficulties but from a lack of interest in the content of their initially chosen field. The motivations and the entire withdrawal process were markedly different for the other interviewees, who came from social backgrounds with fewer socioeconomic and educational advantages. Although uncertainties and changes in plans were also present in their trajectories, these were accompanied by academic or work-related difficulties, which are linked to more precarious academic preparation and lower family income. For this reason, most of these students perceive their experience in the programs they left in a more negative way and view the dropout process as problematic, as a failure.

The accounts analyzed here help us understand how social inequalities influence the different reasons for and meanings of dropout in higher education. Although we focused on undergraduate withdrawal, our analysis may also help understand whether different types of dropout (from a program, institution, or the higher education system) are heterogeneously associated with students' socioeconomic and educational characteristics. Students from public schools, with low income or lower parental education may be more prone to leaving, not only due to academic or financial problems but also because they decide to permanently leave the higher education system.

The findings also reinforce our initial observation that behind the same dropout indicator lie very different motivations, linked to students' social origins. It is important that future research on this topic recognizes this fact and seeks ways to differentiate the reasons that lead university students to leave their program, institution, or the higher education system; otherwise, they may not only ignore an important part of the phenomenon's reality but also overlook the weight of social inequalities on it.

REFERENCES

- AINA, Carmen; BAICI, Eliana; CASALONE, Giorgia; PASTORE, Francesco. The determinants of university dropout: A review of the socio-economic literature. **Socio-Economic Planning Sciences**, v. 79, p. 101102, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2021.101102>
- ALVES, Maria Teresa Gonzaga; NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins; RESENDE, Tânia de Freitas. Fatores familiares e desempenho escolar: uma abordagem multidimensional. **Dados**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 56, n. 3, p. 571-603, Sep. 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0011-52582013000300004>
- BEHR, Andreas; GIESE, Marco; KAMDJOU, Herve Teguim; THEUNE, Katja. Motives for dropping out from higher education — An analysis of bachelor's degree students in Germany. **European Journal of Education**, v. 56, n. 2, p. 325-343, June 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12433>

BERGER, Joseph B.; BRAXTON, John M. Revising Tinto's interactionist theory of student departure through theory elaboration: Examining the role of organizational attributes in the persistence process. **Research in Higher Education**, v. 39, n. 2, p. 103-119, 1998.

BERTONCELO, Edison Ricardo. O espaço das classes sociais no Brasil. **Tempo Social**, São Paulo, v. 28, n. 2, p. 73, Sep. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2016.110534>

BOURDIEU, Pierre. Futuro de classe e causalidade do provável. **Escritos de Educação**, v. 10, p. 81-126, 1998.

BOURDIEU, Pierre; PASSERON, Jean-Claude. **Os herdeiros**. Florianópolis: Editora UFSC, 2014.

BRAGA, Mauro Mendes; PEIXOTO, Maria do Carmo L.; BOGUTCHI, Tânia F. A evasão no ensino superior brasileiro: o caso da UFMG. **Avaliação: Revista da Avaliação da Educação Superior**, Campinas, v. 8, n. 3, p. 161-189, 2003.

BRUNSDEN, Vivienne; DAVIES, Mark; SHEVLIN, Mark; BRACKEN, Maeve. Why do HE students drop out? A test of Tinto's model. **Journal of further and Higher Education**, v. 24, n. 3, p. 301-310, 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1080/030987700750022244>

BUENO, José Lino Oliveira. A evasão de alunos. **Paidéia**, Ribeirão Preto, n. 5, p. 9-16, 1993. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-863X1993000200002>

CABELLO, Andrea; IMBROISI, Denise; ALVAREZ, Guilherme; FERREIRA, Guilherme Viana; ARRUDA, June; FREITAS, Sérgio de. Formas de ingresso em perspectiva comparada: por que o SISU aumenta a evasão? O caso da UnB. **Avaliação: Revista da Avaliação da Educação Superior**, Campinas, v. 26, n. 2, p. 446-460, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1414-40772021000200006>

CARVALHAES, Flavio; RIBEIRO, Carlos Antônio Costa. Estratificação horizontal da educação superior no Brasil: desigualdades de classe, gênero e raça em um contexto de expansão educacional. **Tempo Social**, São Paulo, v. 31, n. 1, p. 195-233, Apr. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2019.135035>

COSTA, Andréa Lopes da; PICANÇO, Felícia. Para além do acesso e da inclusão: Impactos da raça sobre a evasão e a conclusão no ensino superior. **Novos Estudos Cebrap**, São Paulo, v. 39, n. 2, p. 281-306, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.25091/s01013300202000020003>

COSTA, Joana Simões; SILVEIRA, Fernando Gaiger Silveira; COSTA, Roberta; WALTEMBERG, Fabio Domingues. Expansão da educação superior e progressividade do investimento público. **Texto para Discussão 2631**, Brasília, p. 1-38, 2021.

COULON, Alain. **A condição de estudante: a entrada na vida universitária**. Salvador: Edufba, 2008.

COULON, Alain. O ofício de estudante: a entrada na vida universitária. **Educação e Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 43, n. 4, p. 1239-1250, Dec. 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1517-9702201710167954>

DURSO, Samuel de Oliveira; CUNHA, Jacqueline Veneroso Alves da. Fatores determinantes da evasão dos estudantes de Ciências Contábeis de uma universidade pública brasileira. **Educação em Revista**, Belo Horizonte, v. 34, 2018.

HERBAUT, Estelle. Overcoming failure in higher education: Social inequalities and compensatory advantage in dropout patterns. **Acta Sociologica**, v. 64, n. 4, p. 383-402, Nov. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699320920916>

LIMA JÚNIOR, Paulo. **Evasão do ensino superior de Física segundo a tradição disposicionalista em sociologia da educação**. Thesis (Doctorate) – Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2013.

LIMA JÚNIOR, Paulo; OSTERMANN, Fernanda; REZENDE, Flavia. Análise dos condicionantes sociais da evasão e retenção em cursos de graduação em Física à luz da sociologia de Bourdieu. **Revista Brasileira de Pesquisa em Educação em Ciências**, Belo Horizonte, v. 12, n. 1, p. 37-60, 2012.

MARQUES, Felipe Tumenas. A volta aos estudos dos alunos evadidos do ensino superior brasileiro. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 50, n. 178, p. 1061-1077, Oct. 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053147158>

MARTELETO, Letícia; MARSCHNER, Murillo; CARVALHAES, Flávia. Educational stratification after a decade of reforms on higher education access in Brazil. **Research in Social Stratification and Mobility**, v. 46, parte B, p. 99-111, Dec. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2016.08.004>

MELGUIZO, Tatiana. A review of the theories developed to describe the process of college persistence and attainment. **Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research**, v. 26, p. 395-424, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0702-3_10

MORGAN, Stephen L. **On the edge of commitment: Educational attainment and race in the United States**. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2005.

NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins. **Dilemas na análise sociológica de um momento crucial das trajetórias escolares: o processo de escolha do curso superior**. Thesis (Doctorate) – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 2004.

NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins. Escolha racional ou disposições incorporadas: Diferentes referenciais teóricos na análise sociológica do processo de escolha dos estudos superiores. **Estudos de Sociologia**, Recife, v. 2, n. 18, 2012.

NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins; CUNHA, Maria Amália de Almeida; VIANA, Maria José Braga; RESENDE, Tânia de Freitas. A influência da família no desempenho escolar: estudo de dados da geração escolar 2005. **Revista Contemporânea de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 4, n. 8, p. 384-401, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.20500/rce.v4i8.1591>

NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins; NONATO, Bréscia França; RIBEIRO, Gustavo Meirelles; FLONTINO, Sandra Regina Dantas. Promessas e limites: o SisU e sua implementação na Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. **Educação em Revista**, Belo Horizonte, v. 33, e161036, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-4698161036>

NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins; PAULA, Gustavo Bruno de; ARIIVALDO, Thainara Cristina de Castro. Permanência e evasão: desafios conceituais e estratégias de intervenção prática. In: VARGAS, Hustana; ZUCCARELLI, Carolina; WALTENBERG, Fabio (org.). **Educação superior e os desafios da permanência estudantil em tempos de crise política e econômica**. Rio de Janeiro: CRV, 2021. p. 139-156.

NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; ROMANELLI, Geraldo; ZAGO, Nadir. A construção da excelência escolar: um estudo de trajetórias feito com estudantes universitários provenientes das camadas médias intelectualizadas. In: NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; ROMANELLI, Geraldo; ZAGO, Nadir (org.). **Família & escola: trajetórias de escolarização em camadas médias e populares**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000. v. 2. p. 125-154.

NORA, Amaury; CABRERA, Alberto F. The construct validity of institutional commitment: A confirmatory factor analysis. **Research in Higher Education**, v. 34, n. 2, p. 243-262, 1993.

PALMBERGER, Monika; GINGRICH, Andre. Qualitative comparative practices: Dimensions, cases and strategies. In: FLICK, Uwe (org.). **The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis**. [s.l.]: Sage, 2014. p. 94-118.

PASCARELLA, Ernest T.; CHAPMAN, David W. A multiinstitutional, path analytic validation of Tinto's model of college withdrawal. **American Educational Research Journal**, v. 20, n. 1, p. 87-102, 1983. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1162676>

PAULA, Gustavo Bruno de. **Desigualdades sociais e evasão no ensino superior**: uma análise em diferentes níveis do setor federal brasileiro. Thesis (Doctorate) – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 2021.

PAULA, Gustavo Bruno de; NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins. Evasão de curso no ensino superior federal: Análise de coorte dos ingressantes de 2012. In: BARBOSA, Maria Ligia de Oliveira (org.). **A expansão desigual do ensino superior no Brasil**. Curitiba: Appris, 2020. p. 153-169.

PAULA, Gustavo Bruno de; NONATO, Brésia França; NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins. Ações afirmativas e estratificação horizontal: comparação entre bônus e Lei de Cotas na UFMG. **Educação em Revista**, Belo Horizonte, v. 39, e37918, 2023.

PIOTTO, Débora Cristina. Trajetórias escolares prolongadas nas camadas populares. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 38, n. 135, p. 701-707, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0100-15742008000300008>

REAY, Diane; DAVIES, Jacqueline; DAVID, Miriam; BALL, Stephen J. Choices of degree or degrees of choice? Class, 'race' and the higher education choice process. **Sociology**, v. 35, n. 4, p. 855-874, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038501035004004>

RESENDE, Tania de Freitas; NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins; NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice. Escolha do estabelecimento de ensino e perfis familiares: uma faceta a mais das desigualdades escolares. **Educação & Sociedade**, Campinas, v. 32, n. 117, p. 953-970, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0101-73302011000400004>

RIBEIRO, Carlos Antonio Costa; CARVALHAES, Flávia. Estratificação e mobilidade social no Brasil: uma revisão da literatura na sociologia de 2000 a 2018. **Revista Brasileira de Informação Bibliográfica em Ciências Sociais**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 92, p. 1-46, 2020.

RISTOFF, Dilvo. Considerações sobre evasão. In: BORDAS, Merion (org.). **Expressão sobre a graduação**. Maringá: Fórum Regional de Pró-Reitores de Graduação das Universidades Brasileiras, 1997. p. 9-32.

SALATA, André. Ensino superior no Brasil das últimas décadas: redução nas desigualdades de acesso? **Tempo Social**, São Paulo, v. 30, n. 2, p. 219-253, July 2018. <https://doi.org/10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2018.125482>

SALATA, André. Razões da evasão: abandono escolar entre jovens no Brasil. **Interseções Revista de Estudos Interdisciplinares**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 21, n. 1, p. 27, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.12957/irei.2019.42305>

SANTOS, José Alcides Figueiredo. Uma classificação socioeconômica para o Brasil. **Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais**, São Paulo, v. 20, n. 58, p. 27-45, June 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69092005000200002>

SENKEVICS, Adriano Souza. A expansão recente do ensino superior. **Cadernos de Estudos e Pesquisas em Políticas Educacionais**, Brasília, v. 3, n. 4, p. 48, Apr. 2021. <https://doi.org/10.24109/27635139.ceppe.v3i4.4892>

SILVA, Tatiana Dias. Ação afirmativa e população negra na educação superior: acesso e perfil discente. **Texto para Discussão 2569**, Brasília, 2020.

SIMÕES, Armando Amorim. Acesso à educação básica e sua universalização: missão ainda a ser cumprida. **Cadernos de Estudos e Pesquisas em Políticas Educacionais**, Brasília, p. 17-72, Nov. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.24109/9786581041076.ceppe.v2a1>

SPADY, William G. Dropouts from higher education: Toward an empirical model. **Interchange**, v. 2, n. 3, p. 38-62, 1971. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02282469>

TERENZINI, Patrick T.; PASCARELLA, Ernest T. Toward the validation of Tinto's model of college student attrition: A review of recent studies. **Research in Higher Education**, v. 12, n. 3, p. 271-282, 1980.

TINTO, Vincent. Defining dropout: A matter of perspective. **New Directions for Institutional Research**, v. 1982, n. 36, p. 3-15, Dec. 1982. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.37019823603>

TINTO, Vincent. **Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

TRIVENTI, Moris. Does working during higher education affect students' academic progression? **Economics of Education Review**, v. 41, p. 1-13, Aug. 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2014.03.006>

VIANA, Maria José Braga. **Longevidade escolar em famílias de camadas populares: algumas condições de possibilidade**. Thesis (Doctorate) – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 1998.

VITELLI, Ricardo Ferreira; FRITSCH, Rosangela. Evasão escolar na educação superior: de que indicador estamos falando? **Estudos em Avaliação Educacional**, São Paulo, v. 27, n. 66, p. 908-937, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.18222/eae.v27i66.4009>

How to cite this article: PAULA, Gustavo Bruno de; NOGUEIRA, Cláudio Marques Martins. Social origin and reasons for undergraduate dropout: an analysis of the interrupted paths of students of the Federal University of Minas Gerais. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, v. 30, e300117, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782025300118>

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no commercial or associative interests that represent a conflict of interest regarding the manuscript.

Funding: The study was funded in part by the Minas Gerais Research Support Foundation (FAPEMIG) under grant number 164 and by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel — Brazil (CAPES) — Project number: 88887.364566/2019-00. 88887.364566/2019-00.

Data availability statement: The dataset supporting the results of this study is not publicly available.

Authors' contributions: Writing — First Draft, Writing — Review & Editing, Methodology, Conceptualization, Formal Analysis: Paula, G. B.; Nogueira, C. M. M. Investigation, Funding Acquisition: Paula, G. B. Supervision: Nogueira, C. M. M.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GUSTAVO BRUNO DE PAULA holds a PhD in Education from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). He is a professor of Sociology at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP/Ribeirão Preto). CLÁUDIO MARQUES MARTINS NOGUEIRA holds a PhD in Education from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). He is a full professor in the School of Education at the same institution.

Received on July 17, 2023

Revised on August 14, 2024

Approved on September 11, 2024

Responsible editor: Wilma de Nazaré Baia Coelho  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8679-809X>

