



MOTIVES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ADULT AND ACTIVE STUDENTS' EVASION

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ABSTRACT

Higher education is the dream of many adults for perceiving that through qualification there is a possibility of being professionally satisfied and obtaining better conditions of life. This study evaluated potential motives for adult active students' evasion from higher education courses of a federal institution. It concerns a quantitative study, cross-sectional design and questions related to qualitative aspects. Data was collected through a validated scale that evaluates the motives for Higher Education evasion. The instrument is composed of 53 items, the answers are given in a Likert format scale of five points, varying between one – too weak and 5 – too strong. One hundred and three adult students were interviewed, out of which 98 were characterized as not traditional. We point out in this research that 45,71% presented strong and very strong motives related to the lack of support as the first component with greater representativity, followed by 27,55% with motives related to career, 23,46% to academic performance, 22,96% to vocational reasons, 20,03% institutional reasons, 14,69% related to the autonomy and 9,62% interpersonal. This study provides aids to the institution managers studied to trace strategies for the not traditional student permanence and with that minimize the rate of evasion.

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INTRODUCTION

As we already know the higher education in Brazil, as everywhere around the world, makes citizen more critical and reflexive in a way they evolve, contributing for a better development of the country, in terms of social, intellectual and human environment (Prim e Fávero, 2013). With the university reform, Brazil expanded significantly the number of graduation courses and Higher Education Institutions – HEIs,

and with that, there was an increase in the number of registrations (Baggi e Lopes, 2011). To attend higher education is a dream of many Brazilians as they perceive that through qualification, there is a possibility of succeeding professionally and obtaining better life conditions (Ambiel, 2016). Something that causes great worry is that most people who enter in a higher education system don't conclude it which is called evasion and, for some time, the HEIs have been facing this serious problem (Ambiel, 2015). Lobo and Filho (2017) report that the evasion rates in Brazil have been kept high in the last years in a percentage of 22%. Silva Filho, Motejunas, Hipólito e Lobo (2007) corroborate that the high

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number of evasions in public universities tend to affect the academic and financial planning, as each student who doesn't conclude the course represents wasted public money as well as losses in the institutional, personal, familiar and social sphere. There are many motives that can lead the student to abandon higher education, especially when it concerns to adults. Taking it consideration that most of these adults have already interrupted the studies in some moment of their lives and, after some age, many of them are coming back to conclude elementary or high school, others to take a professionalizing course or higher education courses. These ones face difficulties to get to the higher education institution as most of them need to conciliate work, study and family. In this context, we verify the importance of scientific studies concerning this topic about the evasion of adult active students of higher education courses of an institution of federal teaching of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) in Brazil.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It refers to a quantitative study with cross-sectional design and questions which include qualitative aspects. The study was accomplished with adult active students of higher education belonging to graduation courses of Systems for Internet, Chemistry, Biology Sciences and Grain Production of a Federal Institution of RS in Brazil. For the development of this research, were considered older than twenty-five years old and not traditional adults who in some moment interrupted the normal path of studies during their lives. In this sense, we chose as inclusion criteria: adult, active and older than twenty-five years old students who accepted to participate voluntarily of the research. The students who presented comprehension difficulties were excluded of questions which integrated the instruments of data collection. At the first moment, the questionnaire was applied to all students older than twenty-five years old who accepted to participate in the research. The questionnaire had a specific answer that differentiated the traditional students from the non-traditional ones, understanding as traditional ones all students below twenty-five years old, who according to Horn, Neville e Griffin (2006) were between 18 and 24 years old. According to the authors, these kinds of students are usually registered full time and look for higher education immediately after high school. In order to characterize the non-traditional ones, it will be used Kim's criterion (2002, p. 74), which refers to "25-year-old or older students" and represents "maturity and development, complexity acquired through life responsibilities, perspectives and independence, and the status of responsible adults who often play roles that reflect work, family, community and university students" (Kasworm, 2003).

From a survey done in the National System of Professional and Technological Education Information – SPTEI, it was identified in the month of April of 2018, a total of 350 students belonging to all graduation courses. Out of these, 118 were older than 25 years old. The present research was applied in the students' population who were included in the established inclusion criteria. From the 118 students, 103 accepted to participate in the research, one was on maternity leave, four didn't accept to participate and ten were not attending classes anymore, that is, they had already left the course they use to attend. Data collection occurred in the months of April and May in the year of 2018, after the approval of the project by the Ethics and Research Committee - ERC nr 84994118.5.0000.5574 -and authorization for the development

of the research by the studied institution. Data was collected through a validated scale that evaluates the Motives for Higher Education Evasion – M-HE. The instrument is composed of 53 items, divided into seven components, which are the following: institutional, vocational, concerning lack of support, concerning academic performance, interpersonal, concerning career and autonomy motives. Answers are given in a Likert format scale of five points, varying between 1 - very weak and 5 – very strong. The scores obtained are added giving a total punctuation that was interpreted through percentiles, ≤ 10 : very weak motives for evasion; 20 – 30: weak motives; 40 – 60: medium motives; 70 -80: strong motives; and ≥ 90 : very strong motives (Ambiel, 2016). The applying of the instrument occurred in a collective way in classrooms. In this sense, all students were approached by the researcher and clarified about the research's objective and the ones who accepted to participate were oriented to sign the Term of Informed Consent – TIC, allowing the application of the instruments of data collection. All ethical principles that are involved in a research with people were observed, according to the Resolution 466 (2012) of the Health Ministry, being guaranteed to the subjects the anonymity, the secrecy, as well as the right to refuse to participate in the research. The data was stored and organized in an electronic spreadsheet in the Excel for Windows (Office, 2013) program and electronically analyzed with the help of the *Statistical Package for Social Science* – SPSS program version 22.0. The evaluation of the reliability of the instruments was done by the analysis of the internal consistency determined by the Alfa Cronbach Coefficient - α . The data was analyzed by descriptive statistics calculating the relative and absolute frequency.

RESULTS

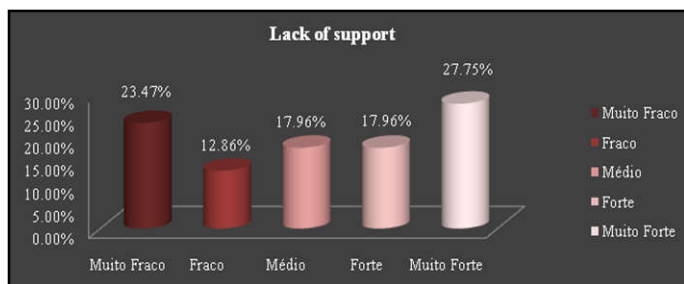
From the 103 participants of the research, 98 respondents were characterized as adults. In relation to variabilities of the Alfa Cronbach of the scale M-HE, that evaluated the level of consistency of this instrument, the index varied between 0,6 $>\alpha < 1$, what proves the reliability of the instrument for the studied population. The table 1 presents the Alpha Cronbach of the scale of Motives for Higher Education Evasion of adult students of a Federal Institution of Teaching/RS.

In this context, the potential motives of the adult students' evasion were mapped. Seven components will be presented for the evasion related to the lack of support, career, academic performance, vocational, institutional, autonomy and interpersonal motives.

Variables	Alfa of Cronbach
General Scale	0,947
Institutional	0,894
Vocational	0,856
Support	0,851
Career	0,747
Performance	0,862
Interpersonnal	0,772
Autonomy	0,626

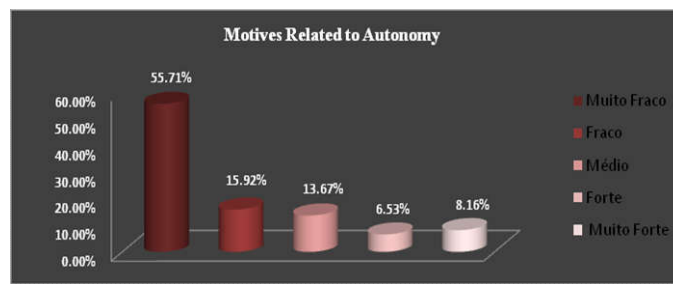
Source: Research data, 2018

The Figure A presents the component lack of support as a cause of major impact of evasion, 45,71% of the respondents stayed among strong and very strong motives. The Figure B evidences the component related to the career for evasion. 27,55% of the respondents stayed between strong and very strong motives to evade. The third motive for evasion is related to the academic performance, according to Figure C.



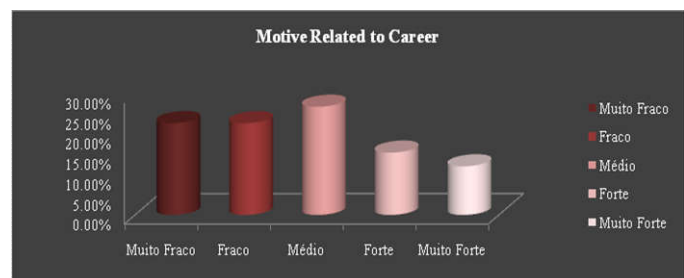
Source: Research data, 2018

Figure A. Motives related to the lack of support of adult students of Higher Education of a Teaching Federal Institution /RS. April to May/2018



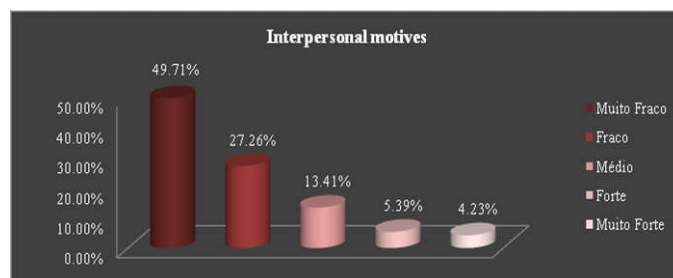
Source: Research data, 2018

Figure F. Motive related to autonomy of adult students of Higher Education in a Federal teaching Institution in RS. April to May/2018



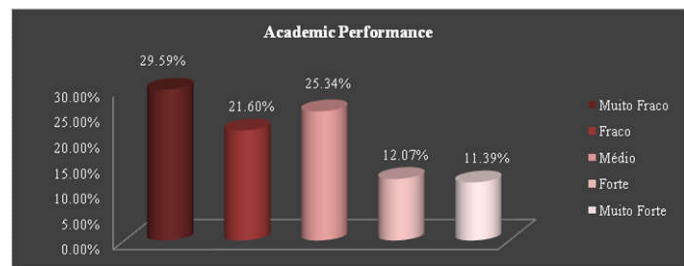
Source: Research data, 2018

Figure B. Motives related to the career of adult students of Higher Education of a Teaching Federal Institution /RS. April to May/2018



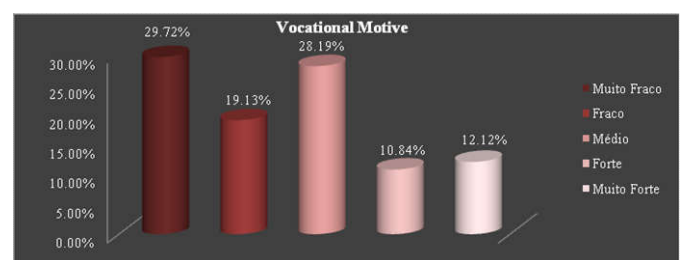
Source: Research data, 2018

Figure G. Interpersonal motives of adult students of Higher Education of a Federal teaching Institution /RS. April to May/2018



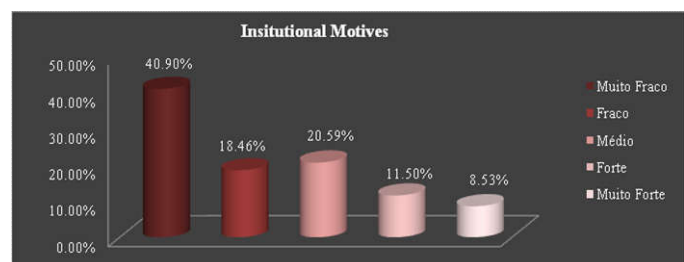
Source: Research data, 2018

Figure C. Motives related to the academic performance of students of a Higher Education Federal Institution /RS. April to May/2018



Source: Research data, 2018

Figure D. Vocational motives of adult students of a Federal Teaching Institution /RS. April to May/2018



Source: Research data, 2018

Figure E. Institutional motive of adult students of Higher Education of a Federal Teaching Institution /RS. April to May/2018

It demonstrates that 23,46% of the respondents stayed between strong and very strong for evasion in this component. The figure D contemplates the fourth motive for evasion related to vocational motives. Among the participants, 22,96% presented strong and very strong motives for evasion. The Figure E points out that the institutional motives are the fifth place in evasion, in this component 20,03% of the respondents stayed between strong and very strong motives. The sixth motive for evasion is related to autonomy, according to figure F. Data found showed that respondents presented 14, 69% between strong and very strong motives for evasion. The figure G presents the interpersonal motives for evasion related to interpersonal questions. Among the studied components, the interpersonal motives are the ones that had lower risk rate for evasion in this research, 9,62% of interviewed students presented strong or very strong motives for leaving the course.

DISCUSSION

Ninety-eight students of Higher Education participated and were characterized as adults. Concerning the reliability of the instrument, the Alpha of General Cronbach of this study found in MHE was of 0,947, being evaluated with an excellent rate according to Prieto e Muñiz (2000) who establish this definition. We should point out that in the study done by Ambiel (2015) who reported the construction of items and validation of the internal structure of the MHE scale, obtained Alfas between 0,79 e 0,93 considered appropriate and excellent. As we can see in this study, lack of support was the motive with greater representativity for evasion. Ambiel (2015) points out that the lack of support is a component that concerns to the need of conciliating work and study, existing a conflict between working load and higher education demands, as well as a financial difficulty for monthly payment allied to personal and familiar problems. The main factors which were pointed out in this study in the category of lack of support and that can take students to quit the academic life are related to

family serious diseases, compatibility of classes and work schedule, allied to financial difficulties. Hunter-Johnson (2017), in a similar study, exploited the barriers perceived and possible strategies of 100 non-traditional adult learners in Bahamas. The results confirmed that the main barrier that impeded the search for a graduation course, or even staying in it was related to financial issues. The interviewees justified that monthly payment and financing were not feasible and declared that during their academic life they went through difficulties and lived with the minimum necessary. The author still highlights that work is a great obstacle and can influence them not to persist in the academic life. The participants expressed difficulties in conciliating working hours with those of university, as well as balancing due papers and studies at home, and the loss of classes (Hunter-Johnson, 2017). Diogo *et al.* (2016), in a study with coordinators of different graduation courses of a public Brazilian higher education institution, the determinant phenomena of evasion and failure of students was analyzed. The authors stated that most of the students in these graduation courses presented economic difficulties what led them to search for work or paid trainings in alternated periods, what limited the time dedicated to studies. Broek e Hake (2012) researched seven countries and tried to find out the strategies used to enlarge the participation of adults in higher education. The authors highlighted the difficulty of students in paying courses tuitions, lack of time for having to conciliate family and work, few availability of public transport and inconvenient locals of available courses as potential motives to lead to a non-traditional student to leave its graduation course. In relation to career motives, Ambiel (2015) highlights that they are related to future perspectives in which students present worries in relation to the execution of tasks concerning the profession and job market.

The participants of this research noticed that a graduation course is not the only possibility to get a good job in the future and it doesn't give any guarantees. Another important factor in this component is related to the salary range, which being too low puts them down. Diogo's *et al.* (2016) research corroborates with the study that shows that the job market *also* influences in the permanence of students in higher education and makes them, most of the time, leave the graduation course with a lower professional status to search for others of higher wage and social visibility. The professional choices are made in an individual way, but there are some factors that can influence on decisions, such as family, psychological, social, cultural and financial issues (Brasil, Felipe, Nora e Favretto, 2012). The authors state that most of the choices are taken without an effective reflection but through expectations created in their personal life, such as parents' influence, and job market offers. Another motive analyzed is the academic performance which is related to low grades, flunking and difficulties with contents (Ambiel, 2015). The main factors that influenced the investigated adults in this study to give up their academic life are related to flunking in several disciplines and having grades below average for more than once in the same discipline. The first terms of courses are crucial in students' academic life. The leaving and flunking rates could be related to the high level of demand in the initial phases what meets the purpose of this study (Diogo *et al.*, 2016). The authors corroborate in their studies that evasion of an isolated discipline occurs with a higher frequency in the field of Exact Sciences which are distributed in the initial phase of some courses. According the interviewees, another contributive aspect for the elevation of evasion and flunking in initial

phases is the frustration of students due to the lack of theoretical/practical articulation of the curriculum in those phases (Diogo *et al.*, 2016). Broek e Hake (2012) verified that bad experiences with the previous education, lack of confidence, feeling of being someone too old to learn, lack of consciousness of positive feedbacks for the learning can be potential motives for a non-traditional student leaving its graduation course.

The vocational motive investigated by Ambiel (2015) relates these factors to uncertainty concerning the choice and permanence in the current course, as well as to the curiosity of getting acquainted with new courses. Some factors that influenced adults participating in this investigation to think of leaving academic life are related to deception with the course and to family imposition to be in college or university. Many students showed interest in getting to know other courses as they are not certain they've made the best choice. Other studies corroborated with this research and pointed out the vocational factor as an evasion motive. So that the evasion of the course really occurs several determinants are needed such as: "the existence of wrong ideas of students about education, lack of understanding the characteristics that constitute different fields of acting, mixing up courses and similar curricular grids and vocational inconsistency" (Diogo *et al.*, 2016, p. 136). The authors state that the course would not attend the initial perspectives of students, creating an expectation that does not come true in terms of field knowledge. Tontini e Walter (2014) investigated the evasion risk of 8.750 college students and verified that the vocational and professional placement were the dimensions with greater influence for the student to evade. These variables are complemented by subfactors: choice and identification with the course, perspectives of a better life and learning with the course, followed by personal development, professional opportunities, professional importance of the course, personal commitment with the course and professional application of learning.

In relation to institutional motives, Ambiel (2015) explains that they are related to institutional aspects, quality of teachers' staff, relationship with students and the lack of some offered services as facilities. In this study, the main factors that influenced adults to think of giving up academic life are related to the institution. Among them, we have the disorganization of the institution, the way teachers teach, and the lack of attention teachers give to students. Hunter-Johnson (2017) verified in his research that 34% of non-traditional students informed that institutional factors can be impeditive barriers for obtaining or continuing higher education. The author emphasizes as impeditive barriers the availability and duration of courses, register process and institutional bureaucracy. The participants highlight that academic institutions should give more attention to the non-traditional adult student when programming the courses (Hunter-Johnson, 2017). The evasion can occur in relation to the course or in relation to isolated disciplines and factors of pedagogical nature such as difficulties in the teacher/student relationships which were also listed as contributive to evasion and flunking (Diogo *et al.*, 2016). The authors evidenced that some requirements pointed out as potential motives not to continue the studies are the non-fulfilment of the schedule, lack of didactics and performance problems of some teachers. Sogunro (2015) verified that 72% of the interviewed students pointed out the conductivity of the teaching-learning

environment. The author emphasizes the traditional structures of classrooms and the way they were organized which remind students of some negative experiences they went through in schools. He also highlights that the speech of some students who state that the facility and warmth in a classroom are essential for them to feel motivated and to persist in academic life. Hunter-Johnson e Smith (2015) verified that 34% of the participants identified institutional barriers like problems for obtaining or continuing higher education. The authors reaffirm the lack of support of the institution for the student, not giving adequate assistance, the way courses are made available and the length of courses, among other institutional bureaucracies.

The motive related to autonomy is explained by Ambiel (2015) as a component of responsibility, related to living out of home, far from the family and having to deal with domestic and academic chores. In this research, the main factors that influenced adults to give up academic life are related to having to live far from the family and college/university followed by having to assume the responsibility of living alone. The first weeks for many students are the more difficult ones, what potentializes the risk of evasion (Cotton *et al.*, 2017). According to the authors, some students fought to adapt living far from home, but many times would cry in the bathroom as a way of relief. Hunter-Johnson e Smith (2015) in their study verified that 48% of the participants identified several barriers associated to family as a crucial factor that avoided them of searching for or obtaining higher education. The authors explained that the student is not able to detach from his family and the commitment, added to the responsibility for family members like husband/wife, son/daughter make them vulnerable. Holmegaard, Madsen and Ulriksen (2017) analyzed five individual studies of four countries to understand the risk of non-traditional students of leaving higher education. The authors noted that Bradley's article developed in Great Britain revealed some reasons to giving up such as homesickness and the feeling of not belonging to the local. Hunter-Johnson (2017) found in his study that the lack of familiar basis can affect non-traditional students and take them to interrupt academic life. Interviewed students reported that the social role of a father or mother is implicated and that makes it difficult to balance family life and higher education. In Ulriksen's *et al.* (2017) study, one of the interviewed students explains that life outside university affects her studies for having to manage her own life living alone and conciliating work with studies and coping with rent expenses are not easy tasks. The last motive concerns to interpersonal relationships. Ambiel (2015) emphasizes this component as difficulties to relate to colleagues, as well as the lack of support given to them, allied to academic difficulties. The main factors that influenced adults to think in giving up academic life are related to not having help from colleagues to go through difficulties in learning some contents, noting that people think differently from one another and differences of age among colleagues. The bond among friends, as well as social life, changes when taking a graduation course (Hunter-Johnson, 2017). The relationship among colleagues decrease due to the lack of time, as students have less time available for studies and to attend classes (Tontini e Walter, 2014). The lack of social activities in the course can be noticed as an obstacle to establish bonds with other students (Cotton *et al.*, 2017). The authors bring the report of a single mother that claims having found difficulty in setting bonds with people in a similar situation and reiterate that a good net of friends and relatives is important to increase persistence and avoid the academic abandonment. It is

observed that this instrument evaluated seven important components to identify the reasons that can take an adult student to leave higher education courses. Through them it is possible to make the mapping and monitoring of these motives by educational managers and by public policies, aiming at the permanence and success of the student.

Conclusion

The present research allowed to evaluate the potential motives for the evasion of the 98 adult active students belonging to higher education courses of the studied institution. Taking into consideration the aspects observed from the descriptive analysis of the results it is possible to verify that some motives influenced more the adults to give up the graduation courses. The component with higher representativity in the research was the lack of support, in which participants presented 45,71% of strong and very strong motives – followed the motives related to career with 27,55%, academic performance 23,46%, vocational 22,96%, institutional 20,03%, related to autonomy 14,69% and interpersonal 9,62%. It is noted that the non-traditional students represent a significant group in this institution of teaching, but Cotton, Nash e Kneale (2017, p. 75) explain that “they should not be seen as an undifferentiated group facing greater difficulties in higher education than traditional students”. But the authors state that there are specific individual differences between the non-traditional students. Based on the presented results and what is in literature, it was possible the suggestion of some policies to try to minimize these rates. Firstly, it is needed to notice that we are educating adults in higher education, people that need to conciliate many tasks with studies. They are many times in vulnerable financial conditions and personal or family issues, who stayed many times a long time away from studies and bring a great life background experience. Considering the presented arguments, the studied institution can be influent to the student through the commitment and effort of all public servants, monitoring activities, support to the directed study, the valorization of all knowledge of this student, assistance in the social and academic integration, continuing education of the teaching staff. These activities can make the difference for a non-traditional student to keep up studies. It is necessary to think in the adult student and reflect about different attitudes, in order to minimize the great rates of evasion that concern not only the studied institution, but all higher education institutions, private as well as public ones. It is expected that this study will enhance researchers to expand studies about this issue, including other methodological approaches and will allow to be made inferences with scientific evidences.

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