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MOTIVAÇÃO ENTRE ESTUDANTES DE CURSOS SUPERIORES MOTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITY DEGREE STUDENTS MOTIVACIÓN ENTRE ESTUDIANTES DE CURSOS SUPERIORES

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EDITORIAL

MOTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITY DEGREE STUDENTS

Currently, there is growing concern regarding the increasing rates of school dropout across all levels of education. This concern is particularly acute in higher education, as it represents a non-compulsory stage of the educational pathway and, in principle, one chosen voluntarily by students themselves.

When analyzing the reasons leading students to drop out, several factors emerge as determinants of attrition; unfortunately, many of these lie beyond the direct influence of university faculty. Among them, the lack of required entry qualifications and limited financial resources to pursue studies at the institution of admission stand out as significant predictors, often resulting in the selection of less desirable or even undesirable courses, which in turn precipitate withdrawal (Itzhaki et al., 2019).

Another group of determinants relates to student motivation. The study of motivation has long been a central concern among educators, particularly within higher education. In this context, motivation can be conceptualized as the psychological force that drives individuals to act and sustains them in the pursuit of a goal.

The typology proposed by Sánchez-Bolívar and Martínez-Martínez (2022) distinguishes five types of motivation: extrinsic, intrinsic, instrumental, integrative, and transcendent motivation.

Extrinsic motivation refers to actions driven by external incentives; that is, the perceived positive outcome of an action determines whether it is undertaken. Conversely, intrinsic motivation arises when the activity itself constitutes the primary source of satisfaction — the individual experiences psychological well-being through engagement in the action, increasing the likelihood of repetition (Sánchez-Bolívar & Martínez-Martínez, 2022).

It is essential to recognize that motivation is not a static construct but rather a dynamic continuum, shaped by the interaction of personal, social, and contextual factors (Li, Liu, & Hu, 2023). Contemporary approaches in educational psychology emphasize that the meaning attributed to the task, the sense of competence, and the degree of perceived autonomy are key determinants of motivational quality (Ryan & Deci, 2022; Bottaro & Faria, 2022). Consequently, the role of the university lecturer transcends the mere transmission of knowledge and extends to the creation of learning environments that foster autonomous, enduring, and self-sustaining motivation.

According to Ryan and Deci (2022) and their Self-Determination Theory, motivation that begins as extrinsic may, through repeated engagement, evolve into an intrinsic form, thereby enhancing psychological well-being. Between these two poles lies instrumental motivation, characterized by a balance between personal satisfaction and the perceived importance of the outcome (Sánchez-Bolívar & Martínez-Martínez, 2022).

These authors argue that true “demotivation” does not exist; rather, they refer to amotivation — a state of motivational alienation in which the individual perceives a disconnection between the performed action and its outcomes. When this perception persists, behavioral engagement ceases (Ryan & Deci, 2022).

Amotivation, therefore, can be understood as a breakdown in the perception of causality, wherein the individual no longer feels control over the consequences of their actions (Palma et al., 2024). When students fail to perceive a relationship between the effort invested and the recognition or progress achieved, their motivational energy dissipates. In this scenario, pedagogical intervention plays a decisive role: strategies such as constructive feedback, acknowledgment of intermediate achievements, and the promotion of autonomy-supportive climates have been empirically linked to motivational reactivation (Yang & Xiang, 2024; Li, Liu, & Hu, 2023).

Originating from sociolinguistics, integrative motivation is conceptualized as the type of motivation in which the activator is the individual's sense of belonging to a particular social group. In this sense, international students or professionals working abroad tend to experience this form of motivation when they achieve successful linguistic and social integration. Conversely, individuals who fail to acquire the language or adapt culturally are likely to experience demotivation and, in the long term, a high risk of attrition (Sánchez-Bolívar & Martínez-Martínez, 2022).

In contemporary research, this concept has expanded beyond linguistic integration to encompass a broader sense of belonging within academic and professional communities. Recent studies indicate that social and institutional integration constitutes a strong predictor of academic persistence (Dimalibot, 2024; Bottaro & Faraci, 2022). Integrative motivation thus reflects the perception of being part of a community that shares goals, values, and professional practices, reinforcing commitment, professional identity, and academic affiliation — all of which significantly reduce dropout rates.

From an anthropological perspective, transcendent motivation is defined as the type of motivation driven by the psychological satisfaction an individual experiences upon witnessing another's well-being as a result of their own action. This motivational form is closely related to professional fulfillment, often described as a state of metamotivation (Sánchez-Bolívar & Martínez-Martínez, 2022).

Disciplines such as Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work are characterized by attracting students with a high level of transcendent motivation. For example, a nursing student experiences a sense of well-being when observing that the patient under their care

improves and is discharged from the hospital. As illustrated in this example, the nursing student performs their duties without obtaining any direct personal benefit from their actions; however, these actions lead to the recovery and well-being of the patient, which constitutes their primary transcendent motivational driver. In this regard, within such disciplines, this type of motivation may function as a buffer against stress and burnout (Lou et al., 2023; Squincalha et al., 2021).

In summary, understanding the multidimensional nature of motivation in higher education is crucial for the development of effective and human-centered pedagogical practices. Identifying and valuing different motivational profiles enables the adaptation of teaching methodologies, strengthens student engagement, and consequently reduces attrition. As Palma et al. (2024) emphasize, strengthening motivation requires institutional policies that integrate academic, social, and emotional support, fostering inclusive, challenging, and meaningful learning environments capable of sustaining students' commitment throughout their educational journey.

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