

The Role of Students' Motivation When Attending Higher Education Institutions

Sonia LEITE¹

ABSTRACT

The motivation of students to attend higher education has been taking great prominence in scientific research, being the basis of several studies that aim to assess the behavior and choices of students in higher education. Based on the Self-Determination Theory, we intend to give students a voice to attend a Higher Professional Technical Course, with a view to understanding their perception of the educational experience and their choices and motivations when entering Higher Education. Data were obtained through the application of a questionnaire, Motivation to Learn Scale, and the results contributed to the understanding of motivational patterns of students of Higher Professional Technical Courses.

Key Words: *Perception of students; higher education; motivation; higher professional technical courses.*

ÖZ

Bilimsel çalışmalarda öğrencilerin yükseköğretime katılma nedeni, yükseköğretimde öğrencilerin seçimlerini ve davranışlarını inceleyen pek çok çalışmanın temeli olduğu için çok büyük bir önem kazanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, öz belirleme teorisine dayanarak, öğrencilerin yükseköğretime girerken eğitim deneyimleri; seçimleri ve motivasyonları hakkındaki algılarını anlamak amacıyla yükseköğretimde teknik eğitime katılmaları için bir söz

¹ *Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias soniamariarua@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6525-4322>*

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hakkı vermek amaçlanmıştır. Veriler, öğrenme motivasyonu ölçeği anketi ile elde edilmiş ve de sonuçlar yükseköğretim teknik eğitim öğrencilerinin motivasyon modellerinin anlayışına katkı sağlamıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Öğrencilerin algıları; yükseköğretim; motivasyon; yükseköğretimde teknik eğitim*

1. ENROLLING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIS)

In recent years, the population that chooses to enter Higher Education Institutions has increased significantly, allowing the entry of heterogeneous groups of students according to their goals and vocational projects (Almeida, Marinho-Araújo, Amaral, & Dias, 2012; Porto, & Soares, 2017a). In view of this diversity, higher education institutions are progressively more attentive to the characteristics and needs of their students, seeking to ensure their permanence and improve the quality of their training (Castro, & Almeida, 2016). Several aspects have been emphasized in relation to entering and staying in HEIs. Difficulties that arise in the process of adapting to higher education may be related to the academic experiences of students still in High School (Cole, Kennedy, & Ben-Avie, 2009) and their psychosocial maturity (Araújo et al., 2016a; Tomás, Ferreira, Araújo, & Almeida, 2014). Considering the demands and challenges of the HEIs context, it is necessary to mobilize various personal, academic, emotional and social resources, including factors such as the perception of social support, approaches to study, self-efficacy beliefs and strategies for coping, for permanence and success in Higher Education (Araújo et al., 2016b; Cabras, & Mondo, 2017; Nicholson, Putwain, Connors, & Hornby-Atkinson, 2013; Rodríguez, Tinajero, & Páramo, 2017; Valadas, Almeida, & Araújo, 2016). Indeed, success in Higher Education, defined in terms of academic performance, satisfaction, personal development, involvement and adaptation, is a complex and multidetermined phenomenon (Araújo, 2017). In a study by Pachane (2004) with the objective of evaluating the students' perception about the impact

of HEIs in their personal development, aspects related to satisfaction were pointed out, personal relationships (40.22%), learning (11, 73%), personal growth (11.17%), professional training (10.61%), course quality (8.94%) and university quality (6.14%).

Among the factors that influence academic success in Higher Education, students' academic motivations and expectations have received prominence at national (Oliveira, Santos, & Dias, 2016; Porto, & Soares, 2017) and international level (Araújo, Costa, Casanova, & Almeida, 2014). According to this literature, students' motivations are often mistaken, making their adaptation much more complex and generating a sequence of disappointments in their experiences in HEIs.

The Portuguese population has shown a wide variety of concerns regarding the need to adjust to the radical changes that the COVID-19 pandemic caused in the organization of our daily lives. Parents, or guardians, are a segment of this population that has faced a significant demand to adapt to new family, educational and professional dynamics on an uninterrupted basis. The realization of diverse roles simultaneously and in the same physical and psychological space, reveals a state of overcoming and permanent reinvention. In this sense, it was urgent to adjust plans, roles, spaces and time in relation to readjusting professional and family activity (Diaz, 2011; Ramalho, 2018).

By taking the IPMAIA students' perspective in this investigation, we intend to contribute to a more in-depth knowledge of their interests and motivations in view of the need and motivation inherent to adapting to the teaching mode in distance education due to Pandemic Covid-19. It is important, therefore, to understand and know how IPMAIA students are facing the distance learning modality and its adaptation to it, in addition to pointing out possibilities for improving academic and organizational management.

2. OBJECTIVE, SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the present study was to analyze, through the application of a motivation questionnaire, the perception of higher education students about their motivation for the educational experience, in order to describe the access profile of students from different Higher Professional Technical Courses at Polytechnic Institute of Maia.

Despite the various questions within polytechnic higher education that we could try to find answers to, we have chosen in our research to outline the following:

- a. What are students' motivations and expectations for attending a Higher Professional Technical Course?

METHODOLOGY

The design adopted in the present investigation is of the exploratory-descriptive type with a qualitative approach based on the application of a motivation scale, aiming to assess the students' motivation to attend the course they chose.

The closed questionnaire method used was as follows:

- Scale of motivation to learn EMA-U (adapted)

The study population was directed to students attending the Polytechnic Institute of Maia.

A questionnaire consisting of two parts was applied: I - Sociodemographic related data, and II - Specific questions composed by the adaptation of the Motivation scale, consisting of 29 questions.

The objective of the questionnaire was to obtain information taking into account the object of study of the present investigation.

Data collection - For systematic data collection, 200 questionnaires were distributed, of which we obtained 120 responses.

Sample characterization

In the present study, a non-probabilistic or non-random sampling process was used, using convenience sampling, focusing on the study of students at the Polytechnic Institute of Maia attending the respective courses in distance learning mode.

Objetivo do Estudo

O objetivo do presente estudo foi analisar, através da aplicação de um questionário de motivação, a percepção dos alunos do ensino superior sobre a sua motivação para a experiência educativa, com o intuito de descrever o perfil de acesso dos alunos de diferentes CTeSP do IPMAIA.

Apesar das várias questões dentro do ensino superior politécnico para as quais poderíamos tentar encontrar resposta, optámos, na nossa investigação por delinear a seguinte:

a) Quais são as motivações e expectativas dos estudantes para a frequência de um CTeSP?

Metodologia

O delineamento adotado na presente investigação é do tipo exploratório-descritivo de abordagem quantitativa a partir da aplicação de um questionário, visando aferir a percepção dos estudantes dos CTeSP sobre a sua motivação aquando do ingresso no ES.

Aplicou-se um questionário composto por duas partes: I - Dados Sócio-demográficos, e II - 29 questões referentes ao instrumento utilizado, Escala de Motivação para aprender de universitários (EMA-U), para as quais foi utilizada a escala de Likert.

O objetivo do questionário foi o de obter informação tendo em conta o objeto de estudo da presente investigação.

Procedimentos:

Foi feita uma análise e da Escala de Motivação para aprender de universitários, tendo sido feita e testada uma adaptação da mesma com vista à aplicação na população específica composta por estudantes que frequentam um CTeSP

no Instituto Politécnico da Maia (IPMAIA).

Para a avaliação da consistência interna do questionário, calculou-se o coeficiente *alpha* de Cronbach, adequado para avaliar a fidelidade de questionários formulados com escalas de tipo Likert (observa-se que todas as dimensões obtiveram valores de *alpha* superiores a 0,60 mostrando assim, que são relevantes). Os pareceres dos orientadores da investigação sobre o instrumento também coadjuvaram na validação do inquérito por questionário. Recolha de dados – Para recolha sistematizada dos dados foram distribuídos 200 questionários, dos quais obtivemos 120 respostas.

Caracterização da amostra

No presente estudo, recorreu-se a um processo de amostragem por conveniência, não se tratando de uma amostra aleatória. Assim, a amostra foi composta por 120 estudantes a frequentar os vários CTeSP do IPMAIA. De entre os alunos que responderam ao questionário, 73 são do sexo feminino e 37 do sexo masculino, sendo todos os inquiridos solteiros e sem filhos. As suas idades Variam entre os 18 e os 25 anos, sendo 29 dos inquiridos trabalhadores estudantes. Dos 120 inquiridos, 19 são provenientes do concelho de Vila Nova de Gaia, 16 de Matosinhos, 12 da Póvoa de Varzim, 11 de Santo Tirso, 7 do Porto, 7 da Maia, 6 da Trofa, 6 de Vila Nova de Famalicão, 5 de Paços de Ferreira, 5 de Valongo, 4 do Marco de Canaveses, 4 de Gondomar, 3 de Aveiro, 3 de Paredes, 3 de Penafiel, 2 de Ovar, 2 de Cinfães, 2 de Santa Maria da Feira, 2 de Espinho e 1 de Viseu.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Given that we are dealing with the analysis of questions, based on a scale, we chose to proceed with a qualitative analysis.

Thus, regarding the first question, I honestly do not know why I attend classes, the vast majority of students did not identify with the question (48.1%, no correspondence), showing that they are aware of their role as students and the need to attend classes. 29.1% of respondents opted for the moderate correspondence response, 12.7% little correspondence, 6.3% much

correspondence and only 3.8% of respondents fully identified themselves with the question (total correspondence).

Concerning the second question, I attend classes in because attendance is mandatory, most of the students surveyed identify with the question, with the responses focusing on moderate and total correspondence (43.1% and 17.2%, respectively). 21.4% identified themselves with the option little correspondence, 15.2% with no correspondence and only 3.1% with the option very correspondence.

Regarding the third question, I attend classes so as not to be missed, the answers are divided into moderate correspondence (36.7%) and no correspondence (21.5%), 17.7% little correspondence, followed by 16.5% with total correspondence and 7.6% with much correspondence, demonstrating that the problem of attendance is interpreted differently by students.

Concerning the fourth question, I attend classes for the pleasure I get when I get involved in debates with interesting teachers, it was found that 53.4% of the students answered that they identify, in a moderate way, with the question. This is followed by 22.7% of the participants who chose the option little correspondence, 12% no correspondence, 6.7% much correspondence and only 5.2% reported total correspondence.

As for the fifth question, I attend classes to prove to myself that I am capable of finishing the course, 48.1% of the students answered with moderate correspondence, while 26.6% identified themselves totally with the question. There is little or no correspondence, both with 10.1% responses and 5.1% with a lot of correspondence.

In the sixth question, I attend classes to occupy myself, the vast majority, 41.2% reported not identifying themselves with the question (no correspondence), with 28.4% indicating a moderate correspondence regarding the question. It follows 24.1% with little correspondence, 3.8% with total correspondence and 2.5% with much correspondence.

With regard to the seventh question, I feel that I am wasting my time in classes,

48.1% of respondents reported not identifying themselves in any way with the question (no correspondence), 21.5% with moderate correspondence, 19 % with little correspondence, 6.3% with total correspondence and only 5.1% with much correspondence.

As for the eighth question, I already had good reasons to attend the course, but currently, I have doubts about continuing, 49.4% of the students answered with no correspondence, 22.8% with moderate correspondence, 17.7% little correspondence, 6.3 % total correspondence, and 3.8% a lot of correspondence.

Regarding the ninth question, I attend the course to show myself that I am an intelligent person, the vast majority responded by indicating the option no correspondence (34.6%), with 32% opting for moderate correspondence, 12.8% a lot of correspondence, 11.5% little correspondence and only 9% of respondents responded with total correspondence.

In the tenth question, which concerns Attending classes because attendance is mandatory, 22.8% of students answered no correspondence, 20.3% little correspondence, 12.7% total correspondence, 7.6% much correspondence, and the remaining 36.6%, moderate correspondence.

As for the eleventh question, I attend classes in because education is a privilege, 55.3% of the participants indicated the moderate correspondence option, while the rest were divided between total correspondence (15.9%), a lot of correspondence (13.9%), and 8.9% reported no correspondence. Only 6% indicated the option little correspondence.

Regarding the twelfth question, I do not understand why I should attend classes, the vast majority of participants (48.7%), said they did not identify with the question (no correspondence), while 20.5% indicated the answer little correspondence and only 5.1% total correspondence. The remaining 25.7% reported moderate correspondence.

In the thirteenth question, I attend classes to obtain the certificate of completion, 58.2% of respondents responded with moderate correspondence, 25.3% total

correspondence, 7.6% little correspondence, 6.4% much correspondence and 2,5% no match.

In the fourteenth question, I attend classes because when I am successful I feel important, 41.8% answered with moderate correspondence, followed by the option no correspondence with 22.7%, with only 12.7% being identified with the total correspondence option, 15.2% with little correspondence and 7.6% with much correspondence.

Regarding the fifteenth question, I do not know or understand what I am doing in the course, 67.1% of the participants identified themselves with the option no correspondence, 12.7% moderate correspondence, 11.4% little correspondence, being that only 5.1% answered total correspondence and 3.7% a lot of correspondence.

As for the sixteenth question, I attend classes because for me the course is a pleasure, 60.3% of the students selected the moderate correspondence option, followed by total correspondence with 19%, much correspondence with 12.7% and little or no correspondence not reaching 10% (8%).

In the seventeenth question, I attend classes because access to knowledge occurs in higher education, 46.7% of the answers were in moderate correspondence, followed by total correspondence with 16.9% and little or none with 26.3% (12.5% and 13.8%, respectively). Only 10.1% reported a lot of correspondence.

With regard to the eighteenth question, I do not understand what difference it makes or does not attend classes, 56.4% of respondents did not identify with the question, having answered with the option no correspondence, followed by a moderate correspondence with 16, 7%, little correspondence with 14.1% and total correspondence with only 7.7% and a lot of correspondence with 5.1%.

Regarding the nineteenth question, I attend classes because I want to show myself that I can be successful in studies, 48.2% opted for the moderate correspondence option, followed by little or no correspondence with 27.8%,

total correspondence with 15.2% and a lot of correspondence with 8.8%. As for the twentieth question, I attend classes because I like these classes very much, 49.4% of the participants opted for the moderate correspondence option, 43% divided between little (21.5%) or no correspondence (21.5%), 5.1% a lot of correspondence and only 2.5% opted for total correspondence. In the twenty-first question, I attend classes because I believe that the attendance record is necessary for learning, 50% of the participants opted for the moderate correspondence option, followed by no correspondence with 17.1%, little correspondence with 15.8 %, a lot of correspondence with 13.2% and total correspondence with only 3.9%.

In the twenty-second question, I attend classes because I want to avoid people seeing me as a sloppy student, most respondents did not identify with the question, opting for the answer no correspondence (36.3%), followed the option moderate correspondence with 35.1%, total correspondence with 11.3%, little correspondence with 9.8% and much correspondence with 7.5%. Regarding the twenty-third question, I make the connection because the frequency of classes is mandatory, 41.6% of the participants answered with moderate correspondence, 22.1% with no correspondence, 19.5% little correspondence, 11.6 % total correspondence and only 5.2% much correspondence.

As for the twenty-fourth question, If attendance was not mandatory, few students would attend classes, the vast majority, 60.1% answered with the moderate correspondence option, followed by 16.7% with total correspondence, 10.3% with no correspondence, 7.7% with little correspondence and 5.2% with much correspondence.

In the twenty-fifth question, I attend classes because studying broadens horizons, 57.6% of students opted for the moderate response, 22.5% total correspondence, 12.4% much correspondence, 5% little correspondence and only 2.5 % no match.

Regarding the twenty-sixth question, I attend the course because that's

what I chose for myself, 53.9% of the participants referred to the moderate correspondence option, followed by 40.3% with total correspondence, 11% with a lot of correspondence and 3.8% with little match.

As for the twenty-seventh question, I attend the course because while I am studying I do not need to work, the vast majority of students did not identify with the question, having chosen the answer no correspondence (60.8%), followed by moderate correspondence with 17.7%, little correspondence with 13.9%, and a lot and total correspondence both with 3.8%.

In the twenty-eighth question, My friends are the main reason why I attend the course and classes in distance learning, 45.6% of respondents reported no correspondence, not identifying themselves with the question, followed by moderate correspondence with 35.5%, little correspondence with 12.7%, much correspondence with 3.8% and total correspondence with 2.4%.

As for the twenty-ninth question, I attend the course because that's what is expected of me, 40.5% of the participants answered according to the option moderate correspondence, 20.3% little correspondence, 19% no correspondence, 11.4% a lot of correspondence and 8.8% total correspondence.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data obtained, it was possible to conclude that students do not feel any kind of obligation to attend classes, they do it because they consider its frequency important to acquire new knowledge / learning and not because they feel that it's mandatory to attend them. We were able to conclude that the greatest motivation for students to study is related to the objective of completing the course show themselves and others that they were able to complete the cycle of studies, being also aware of the importance of completing it for their professional career. It was also possible to verify that students maintained their motivation during the frequency of the course they chose. Finally, it was possible to verify that the vast majority of students reported continuing to study, as they consider education a privilege.

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