

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT DROP-OUTS: BASIS FOR ENHANCED RETENTION POLICY

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Abstract

The study focused on the analysis of existing data available at the Office of the University Registrar in one of the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) in the province of Bulacan. PHEI's across the country are dependent on the revenues from collected tuition fees on students. The study was limited to the completed and submitted dropping and honorable dismissal forms from SY 2020-2021 up to SY 2022- 2023 from Kinder to Senior High School. Secondary data were collected, and data mining and coding were utilized in the conduct of the study. This method helped the researchers in understanding patterns and in extracting useful information. The researchers obtained approval and clearance from the Research Ethics and Committee (REC) of the university.

Results of the study revealed for the last three (3) School Years, the enrolment summary and attrition rates are continuously fluctuating. Decline in enrolment was associated with the onset of pandemic in 2020. Parents were economically affected due to unemployment. However, relocation and distance from the university emerged as the topmost reasons of students for dropping out, followed by financial issues. Educational system, personal/social issues and health issues comes after. Academic concerns of students were the least common reason for dropping out.

It is advised that "Parent Involvement" be incorporated into each student's personalized study plan in order to keep them from dropping out. It's also advised that the bond between parents, teachers, and students be strengthened. One of the most important things that academic institutions can do to support students in conveying their conduct, attitude, attendance, conveying their conduct, attitude, attendance, and class performance is to provide them with guidance from mentors or class advisers. To effectively address students' problems and keep them from leaving PHEIs, it may also be

analyzed to improve the intervention programs offered by the Student Welfare Services.

Keywords: PHEI, Retention Policy, Student Welfare Services, Education, Parent Involvement.

Introduction

Educational institutions across the globe faced a remarkable challenge in student retention for the past years. A significant number of students were affected and opted to stop schooling because of the onset of pandemic, and it impacted academic institutions' operation, UNESCO, (2021). Behr et al., in 2020 noted that the European region's student dropouts involve a critical process of decision making and with several factors or reasons involved. However, dropping out of school is a voluntary action of students or parents with various explanations and factors according to Kehm et al., (2019). For Higher Education Institutions who rely on enrolment, student drop-out is a financial dilemma they face every year.

School dropouts is a pressing concern specially for Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI). Several studies conducted demonstrated a summary of reasons. In 2023, Nurmaitasari, identified several factors for student dropping out of Higher Education Institutions such as: personal economic factors, academic satisfaction, academic performance, and family economics. In Greece, Androurakis (2022) found out several factors of student dropouts namely: student frustration, absence from their obligatory academic duties, and dissatisfaction from their cognitive subjects while, other factors are, sense of effectiveness, sense of effectiveness in their studies and establishing worthy relationship with peers. Muller and Klein in 2022, found out that in Germany, students have a higher probability of dropping out if they belong to the lower socioeconomic background. In Japan, the recent study conducted by Kakuchi (2021) noted that majority of student dropouts for the last three (3) years is merely due to COVID 19 pandemic. While in Thailand, students' dropout from institutions because of the absence of family support, Sosu and Pheunpa, (2019).

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In the Philippines, education plays a vital role for the development of student competency and skills in preparation for their participation in the workforce, Timabl, (2019). Students were eager to complete their educational programs to improve the standard of living of their families. In a study conducted by Parreo (2019), he found out that there is a significant social cost for school dropout in the country. However, in an article published by Gaboa of Philstar in 2021, it focused on the increasing demand of the fourth industrial revolution on students which is becoming a financial burden to most families with minimal source of income and often leads to student dropouts. PHEIs were challenged to shift to a diverse methodology to address the technological demands of learning, Joaquin, Biana and Dacela (2020). With the alarming number of student dropouts in the country, the government is confronted with the challenge to resolve this academic difficulty and the Department of Education was instructed by the national government to resolve this educational predicament, according to Romero (2021).

This study analyzed the reasons for students dropping out of academic institutions and came up with an enhanced retention or intervention to reduce the number of students leaving the university with unfinished degree. This will also address the pressing concern of Higher Education Institutions in terms of enrollees.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the theory of Tinto, (1993) also known as the “The Tinto Model of Retention”. This explains that all students who enter and voluntarily enroll in educational institutions should be motivated and increase student commitment to complete the program. This framework is deemed relevant to the current research study since the general objective of the study is to analyze the data on student dropouts and to enhance the current retention or intervention policy and the commitment of the academic institution in providing quality education to all deserving students.

Conceptual Framework

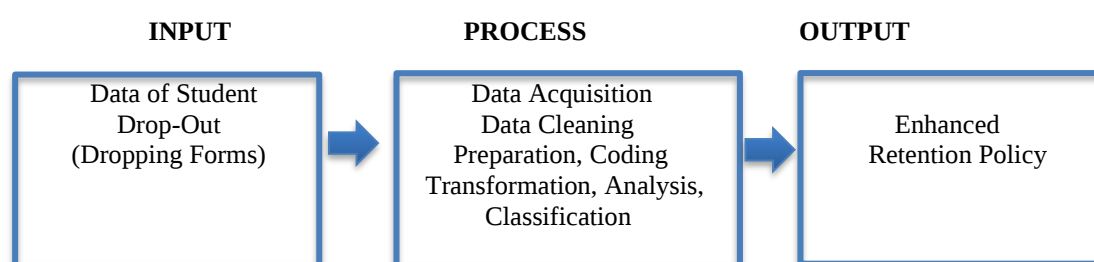


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

The conceptual model of the study depicts the input covering the data on student dropouts from PHEI which includes the program enrolled by the student, year level, reason for dropping. Process includes the acquisition of data, data cleaning, preparation, coding, transformation of transforming these data into useful information that can be used for decision making. The process includes data mining, coding, and clustering. For the expected output, analysis and interpretation of this information, the researchers will come up with an enhanced retention policy for the Basic Education Department which is beneficial to the PHEI.

Statement of the Problem

The study analyzed the data on student dropouts from a Private Higher Education Institution for the last three (3) years.

The study sought answers to the following:

1. What is the cohort percentage rate of student dropouts from Basic Education K to 10 and

Senior High School department from the institution for the last three years?

2. Why do students drop out of the HEI?
3. Based on the findings of the study, how may the retention or intervention policy of the PHEI be enhanced?

Scope and Delimitation

The study was limited to the available data of students who completed the honorable dismissal form of the Registrar’s Office from SY 2020- 2021 up to SY 2022- 2023 from Basic Education K to 10 and Senior High School in a Private Higher Education Institution in the City of Malolos Bulacan. Students categorized as unofficially dropped and students who were not able to accomplish and complete the honorable dismissal and dropping form shall be excluded in the study. Forms submitted beyond the time frame set by the researchers shall be excluded.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers used this secondary data, duly accomplished dropping form and honorable dismissal forms available at the Office of the University Registrar.

These forms contain the program enrolled by the student, year level and the reason for dropping. This is a quick method of research as data is readily available.

To further understand the subject matter of the study, the researcher used data mining and coding to comprehensively collate evidence that best fit a specific set of criteria to answer the research questions. The bulk of available data will help the researcher understand patterns and extract useful information.

Participants/Respondents of the Study

The study made use of dropout records, accomplished, and submitted dropping forms at the Office of the University Registrar of the PHEI in the City of Malolos, Bulacan from SY 2020- 2021 up to SY 2022- 2023 from Basic Education K to 10 and Senior High School in a Private Higher Education. All submitted forms processed and recorded shall be

utilized. Completed forms submitted beyond the time frame shall be excluded from the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Source of data for analysis and study were the existing records of submitted forms/documents at the Office of the University Registrar. The data were encoded per semester and school year and grouped by year level. Reasons for dropping out were recorded and tallied. The process included data mining, coding, and clustering. The researchers used codes to identify similarity of data when grouped and when compared to other items in another group.

Ethical Considerations

The study was submitted to the Research and Ethics Committee and was approved. All necessary documentation for the conduct of the study was complied with. The researchers ensured their compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The existing ethical protocols individual consent form was not possible in this research because the institution has limited contact details to students who have dropped out.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: Attrition for Basic Education (BED) K-10 and Senior High School (BED SHS)

School Year	BED K-10	BED SHS
A.Y. 2020-2021	528	8,446
Increase/ Decrease Rate	-49.81%	-28.87%
A.Y. 2021-2022	479	7,186
Increase/ Decrease Rate	-10.23%	-17.53%
A.Y. 2022-2023	650	8,375
Increase/ Decrease Rate	26.31%	14.20%
Average Enrollment (Attrition Rate)	-12.09%	-6.90%

The data on student attrition for Basic Education (BED) K-10 and Senior High School (BED SHS) across three academic years illustrates a fluctuating trend in enrollment numbers and attrition rates. In A.Y. 2020-2021, both segments experienced significant decreases in enrollment, with BED K-10 and BED SHS showing decrease rates of 49.81% and 28.87%, respectively. This decline may be attributed to external challenges, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following year, A.Y. 2021-2022, saw a continued decrease in enrollment, albeit at a slower rate, indicating a persistent challenge in student retention. However, in A.Y. 2022-2023, there was a notable reversal of this trend, with an increase in enrollment for both

BED K-10 (26.31%) and BED SHS (14.20%), suggesting a recovery phase.

Despite the recovery observed in the last year, the overall picture across these years reflects a downward trend in enrollment, particularly in BED K-10, as evidenced by an average attrition rate of -12.09%. While also experiencing attrition, BED SHS showed a relatively lower average rate of -6.90%, indicating a more stable enrollment pattern. This contrast between the two educational segments suggests that while senior high school enrollment has been relatively more resilient, the basic education segment faced more significant challenges. The recovery in the last year is a positive development, yet the data underscores the need for

continued efforts to understand and address the factors influencing these enrollment fluctuations, with a focus on enhancing student retention and

engagement in the face of evolving external conditions

Table 2: Statistics of Dropouts for the Last Three Academic Years (SY 2020-2021 to SY 2022-2023)

	ELEM	JHS	SHS	TOTAL
SY 2020-2021	1	3	138	142
SY 2021-2022	3	7	222	232
SY 2022-2023	7	16	155	132

The provided table illustrates dropout figures across three academic years (SY 2020-2021 to SY 2022-2023) for different educational levels: Elementary (ELEM), Junior High School (JHS), and Senior High School (SHS). A notable trend across these years is the fluctuating number of dropouts, particularly in Senior High School, which consistently records the highest dropout figures compared to Elementary and Junior High School levels.

In SY 2020-2021, there were 142 dropouts in total, with the majority (138) occurring in Senior High School, indicating a significant challenge in retaining students at this level. This pattern continues in SY 2021-2022, where the total number of dropouts increased to 232, again with Senior High School accounting for the bulk (222). However, in SY 2022-2023, there's a noticeable shift; the total number of dropouts decreased to 132, with a substantial reduction in Senior High School dropouts to 155. This reduction could be indicative of improved retention strategies or changing

external factors. The dropouts in Elementary and Junior High School, while significantly lower than SHS, show a gradual increase over the years. This trend might reflect underlying systemic issues or age-specific challenges that need addressing.

Relating these figures to the attrition rates discussed, the high dropout numbers in Senior High School correlates with the observed attrition trends. The fluctuating dropout rates and the eventual decrease in SY 2022-2023 suggest a dynamic educational environment, potentially influenced by external factors like economic conditions or policy changes. The data underscores the importance of targeted interventions at the Senior High School level to address specific challenges contributing to high dropout rates. The increasing dropout figures in the lower grades also warrant attention, as they might evolve into more significant issues if not addressed promptly. Overall, these dropout figures provide valuable insights into the areas needing focused efforts to enhance student retention across all educational levels.

Table 3: Reasons of Student Dropouts

Reasons	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Financial Issues	29	19.86%	29	11.84%	24	15.79%
Relocation/Distance Issues	73	50.00%	139	56.73%	85	55.92%
Academic Issues	1	0.68%	10	4.08%	2	1.32%
Health Issues	5	3.42%	16	6.53%	10	6.58%
Personal/Social Issues	12	8.22%	15	6.12%	11	7.24%
Educational System Issues	18	12.33%	21	8.57%	0	0.0%
Other	4	2.74%	2	0.82%	0	0.0%
Total	142	100.00%	232	100.00%	132	100.00%

SY 2020-2021. The analysis of student dropout reasons for the academic year 2020-2021 reveals a diverse range of factors influencing students' decisions to leave their educational institutions. The most prominent category is Relocation/Distance Issues, accounting for half of the dropout cases. This includes students who had to move houses, those who transferred schools, possibly due to logistical challenges, and those facing transportation or distance-related difficulties. It highlights the

significant impact of geographical and mobility constraints on student retention.

Financial Issues also play a substantial role, representing nearly a fifth of the dropout reasons. Economic hardships, lack of necessary gadgets for online learning, and internet connectivity issues fall under this category, underscoring the influence of financial stability on students' ability to continue their education.

Notably, the year 2020-2021 was marked by the shift to remote learning due to the pandemic, which is reflected in the Educational System Issues category. This category, covering over 12% of the dropout reasons, includes challenges faced by students in adapting to online classes and difficulties inherent in the new mode of learning.

Personal/Social Issues and Health Issues also emerge as notable factors, albeit to a lesser extent. The former encompasses challenges such as family responsibilities, the need to work, and religious issues, while the latter includes both physical and mental health problems. These factors highlight the broader context of students' lives and the various personal and health-related challenges they face, which can impact their educational journey.

Academic performance is another factor, though it appears to be a minor reason in this dataset. Students struggling with academic demands, as indicated by failing grades, also contribute to the dropout rates.

Lastly, the 'Other' category, capturing a small percentage, includes unique reasons like the direct impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which do not fit neatly into the other categories.

In conclusion, this analysis provides an understanding of the multifaceted reasons behind student dropouts during a challenging academic year. It underscores the need for educational institutions and policymakers to consider these varied factors to enhance student retention and support.

SY 2021-2022. In this final analysis for the academic year 2021-2022, "Relocation/Distance Issues" stands out as the most significant category, accounting for more than half of the dropout reasons. This category primarily includes students transferring schools or facing distance-related challenges, highlighting the impact of geographical and logistical barriers on education.

"Financial Issues," comprising 11.84%, reflect the economic challenges that students face, such as direct financial problems or lack of resources for online learning. The presence of "Educational System Issues," including difficulties with online classes and adapting to the educational system's demands, accounts for 8.57%, suggesting the impact of the educational environment and the transition to remote learning on student retention.

"Health Issues," covering both physical and mental health problems, and "Personal/Social Issues," such as family responsibilities or work commitments, also contribute to the dropout reasons, indicating the

broader context of students' lives and how personal circumstances can impact their educational journey.

"Academic Issues" are also present, though to a lesser extent, showing that academic performance and coping with educational demands are factors in student dropouts. The 'Other' category, though minimal, captures unique reasons not fitting into the other categories.

Overall, this analysis provides an understanding of the multifaceted reasons behind student dropouts during a challenging academic year. It underscores the need for educational institutions and policymakers to consider these varied factors to enhance student retention and support, with particular attention to addressing relocation/distance challenges and financial barriers.

SY 2022-2023. In this final analysis for SY 2022-2023, "Relocation/Distance Issues" remains the most significant reason for student dropouts, accounting for over half of the cases. This category includes students facing challenges related to transferring schools, distance, and transportation, suggesting the continued impact of logistical and geographical factors on education.

"Financial Issues" also represent a notable portion, comprising 15.79% of the reasons. This highlights the economic challenges and financial constraints that students face in continuing their education.

The presence of "Health Issues" and "Personal/Social Issues" underlines the impact of personal health, mental well-being, and social circumstances on students' educational paths. "Academic Issues" constitute a smaller percentage, indicating that academic performance and coping with educational demands are less predominant factors in this academic year.

Notably, there are no instances in the categories of "Educational System Issues" and "Other," suggesting a shift in the nature of challenges faced by students compared to previous years.

Overall, the SY 2022-2023 data emphasizes the significant impact of relocation/distance and financial challenges on student retention. Addressing these key areas, along with support for health and personal/social issues, remains crucial for educational institutions and policymakers to enhance student support and retention. The absence of issues related to the educational system may indicate an adaptation to or resolution of previous systemic challenges, or it might reflect a shift in the focus of students' concerns.

Vincent Tinto's theory of student retention offers an insightful lens to analyze the dropout and attrition data from various educational levels over the past academic years. Tinto's model emphasizes the importance of social and academic integration in educational settings as key determinants of student persistence (Stuart et al., 2014 as cited in Nicoletti in 2019). This theory, primarily applied to higher education, can be adapted to understand the trends observed in the elementary, junior, and senior high school levels. The high dropout rates in Senior High School, especially in SY 2020-2021 and SY 2021-2022, might reflect challenges in integrating students into the academic and social fabric of their schools. The transition to Senior High School often comes with substantial changes that, if not supported adequately, can lead to disengagement and dropout, aligning with Tinto's assertion of the critical role of integration (Stuart et al., 2014 as cited in Nicoletti in 2019).

Subsequent research has extended Tinto's theory, introducing factors such as motivational orientation and academic achievement (Guiffreda et al., 2013 as cited in Maloshonok in 2023) and the significance of faculty-student interactions (Longwell-Grice & Longwell-Grice, 2008). Applying these insights to the observed data, the drop in Senior High School dropouts in SY 2022-2023 could suggest improvements in addressing students' academic and social needs, possibly influenced by enhanced faculty engagement or better alignment with students' motivations and aspirations. The gradual increase in dropouts at the Elementary and Junior High School levels indicates emerging challenges at these stages, necessitating a broader application of Tinto's theory beyond higher education. The versatility of Tinto's model, as seen in its application across diverse educational contexts (Choi et al., 2019; Savage & Smith, 2008; Baker et al., 2018), further validates its relevance in analyzing these trends and underscores the need for strategies tailored to the unique contexts and challenges at each educational level.

3. In light of Tinto's theory of student retention and the analysis of the dropout and attrition data across various educational levels, three key recommendations emerge for addressing attrition rates:

1. Enhance Academic and Social Integration: Consistent with Tinto's emphasis on integration, schools should strive to create a more inclusive and engaging academic and social environment. This can be achieved through mentorship programs, peer tutoring, and extracurricular activities that foster a sense of belonging and

community. Particularly in Senior High School, where the transition can be challenging, targeted initiatives such as orientation programs, academic advising, and counseling services could be instrumental in helping students adapt to the new environment and curriculum. For Elementary and Junior High School levels, introducing age-appropriate socialization activities and academic support can help address the emerging challenges indicated by the gradual increase in dropout rates.

2. Focus on Individual Student Needs and Motivations: Building on the extensions to Tinto's theory, understanding and responding to individual student needs and motivations is crucial. Schools should conduct regular assessments to identify students at risk of dropping out and implement personalized support strategies. This could involve tailored learning plans, career guidance, and motivational workshops. Acknowledging diverse learning styles and backgrounds, especially in multi-cultural and diverse settings, is vital. Encouraging faculty to engage in meaningful interactions with students can also help in identifying and addressing specific challenges faced by students.
3. Strengthen Family and Community Engagement: Tinto's model can be expanded to include the role of families and the wider community in supporting student retention. Schools should actively involve parents and guardians in the educational process, keeping them informed about their child's progress and how they can support at home. Community partnerships can also be leveraged to provide additional resources and support for students, such as after-school programs, tutoring, and career exploration opportunities. Establishing strong links with local businesses and organizations can offer practical experiences and insights for students, particularly in Senior High School, enhancing their readiness for future academic and career pursuits.

Conclusion

The study showed the attrition rate of the Basic Education Department of the HEI for the last three (3) years. It can be concluded that student dropouts pose HEI's in a tight spot which is uncontrollable. Reasons for dropouts are complex and may seem to

be intractable for HEI's, despite the continuous marketing efforts, scholarship programs and social support given to students. Many of the learners, especially Senior High School can be categorized as part of the low income and economically challenged members of society. Financial complexity of the family plays a significant role in the education of every child.

Recommendations

There is no specific formula to address student dropouts in HEI's. However, the researchers recommend the following to be integrated in the existing retention/intervention policy for Basic Education Department of the PHEI.:

1. Parent Involvement in the Individualized Study Plan of learners may be integrated in the current policy of the HEI. Strengthening the engagement of parents or guardian in the success of the completion of their child/children's education program might prevent learner from dropping out.
2. Deepen the teacher-learner relationship to address their concerns. Communicating the learners' class performance, attitude, attendance, and behavior on a regular basis may resolve immediate concerns of the learner. Establishing a meaningful relationship with the learner's parent or guardian upholds the HEI's support to learners.
3. Guidance intervention. wellness
4. Future studies with a larger scope may be conducted to further explore this topic.

Implementing these recommendations requires a comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders - students, educators, parents, and the community. By addressing the specific challenges at each educational level and adapting strategies to meet diverse needs, schools can effectively work towards reducing attrition rates and enhancing overall student success.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the authors in this manuscript.

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