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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Terrell Lamont Strayhorn,
Virginia Union University, United States

*CORRESPONDENCE
Antonio Hernández Fernández
✉ antonio.hernandez@ujaen.es

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Editorial: Stories of abandonment. A biographical-narrative approach to the academic dropout in Andalusian Universities. Multicausal analysis and proposals for prevention

Manuel Fernández Cruz¹ and Antonio Hernández Fernández^{2*}

¹University of Granada, Granada, Spain, ²University of Jaen, Jaén, Spain

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[Stories of abandonment. A biographical-narrative approach to the academic dropout in Andalusian Universities. Multicausal analysis and proposals for prevention](#)

The monograph “Dropout Stories” addresses the problem of university dropout in Andalusia from multiple perspectives, including qualitative and quantitative research. Much of the research included has its origin in the research project financed by the EU ERDF funds that was coordinated from the University of Granada between 2018 and 2021 and from which products were obtained that are reported in the various contributions such as literature reviews, results of application of surveys, collections of personal histories of students, diagnosis of risk groups and analysis of prevention measures designed by universities to alleviate the serious personal, social and economic consequences of the phenomenon.

As many authors have done before in different contexts, the main goals of the research are to understand in depth the causes that lead Andalusian university students to drop out of their studies, considering the effect of the factors involved (Behr et al., 2020) such as financial policy, the educational quality of the institutions and others related to the students themselves (educational background or study ability), in order to be able to predict and prevent this situation. The research also aimed to develop concrete proposals for reorienting educational policies and training models to mitigate the predictors of academic dropout (Richardson, 2005) and to strengthen persistence in studies (Nieuwoudt and Pedler, 2023).

The aims of this Research Topic of articles include gathering up-to-date data on the scale and evolution of academic failure in recent years, examining the measures adopted so far by universities to tackle the problem, reconstructing the biographical

trajectories of students who have dropped out in order to identify similarities and differences in their experiences, and carrying out an in-depth analysis of the personal, social, economic, and educational triggers of student dropout with the essential aim of preventing it in order to mitigate its consequences (Von Hippel and Hofflinger, 2021).

Researchers such as Reynolds and Cruise (2020) have pointed out the importance of understanding socio-economic factors as predictors of academic dropout. Others, such as Casanova et al. (2021), have insisted on the need for screening tools to diagnose at-risk groups. Other researchers encourage the exploitation of data mining to correctly identify the phenomenon (Sani et al., 2020), and even the use of emerging methodologies in Higher Education processes, such as the LSS (Gupta et al., 2020), to address it.

In addition, our study incorporates perspectives such as those of Freire (2004), which focus on the transformative role of education. The application of innovative pedagogical models is key for Alfonso et al. (2012), author of numerous studies on university dropout in Latin America. Valenzuela and Yáñez (2022), an expert in educational inclusion policies, has worked on concrete proposals for dropout prevention that will be useful for this study. This study seeks to support public policy proposals, pedagogical and institutional models for the early detection and reduction of this problem, in line with Valenzuela and Yáñez (2022).

The Research Topic addresses the problem of university dropout from multiple perspectives. Several articles analyze the factors associated with dropout based on surveys and focus groups with students who have dropped out. Others conduct systematic reviews of the existing literature on the causes and proposals to reduce this phenomenon. Some articles test psychometric instruments to detect the risk of dropout or apply these tools to specific universities in Andalusia. Biographical accounts of students who have dropped out of university are also included. Other papers review the state of dropout in the general context of Spain or analyze particularities in teaching careers. One article specifically addresses the use of neurodidactics in vulnerable groups. Finally, one paper concludes the Research Topic by systematizing the determinants of university dropout according to the literature.

The article “*Incident factors in Andalusian university dropout: a qualitative approach from the perspective of higher education students*” identifies the factors that influence dropout through a focus group with twelve students who dropped out of the University of Malaga (Santos-Villalba et al.). It concludes on the importance of aligning educational policies with the real needs of students.

The study “*School dropouts in Spain: a systematic review*” reviews 28 studies on school dropouts in Spain since 2010, analyzing the areas of knowledge addressed, the research institutions and the proposals for prevention (Berral-Ortiz et al.). It concludes that there is a need for further research on this phenomenon in Spanish institutions. The article serves to connect the phenomenon of dropout in Higher Education with the basic and widespread problem of school dropout.

The study “*Prediction analysis of academic dropout in student of the Pablo de Olavide University*” uses a survey of 70 students to determine the factors linked to student permanence at the UPO,

establishing that 15.71% of those surveyed have a high risk of dropping out (Cuevas López et al.).

The article “*The impact of dropout at the University of Granada and proposals for prevention*” shows the application of a dropout risk diagnosis instrument to 642 first-year students at the University of Granada, identifying a risk group of 20 students for which preventive measures of a pedagogical and didactic nature are proposed (González-González et al.).

The article entitled “*Multicausal analysis of the dropout of university students from teacher training studies in Andalusia*” analyses the reasons for dropout in a sample of 608 students from initial teacher training programmes in six Andalusian universities (Ibáñez-Cubillas et al.). The results reveal that the majority wish to persist in their studies, although some express difficulties for continuity.

The article on “*Psychometric properties of a dropout prediction tool for students in Andalusia*” analyses the psychometric properties of a scale applied to 970 students from 6 Andalusian universities, forming a valid and reliable instrument for the prediction of dropout (Hernández-Fernández et al.).

For its part, the article entitled “*Dropout stories of Andalusian university students*” recovers 22 biographical accounts of students who dropped out of Andalusian universities, analyzing them to characterize paradigmatic cases of desertion according to psychological, social, economic, pedagogical and institutional dimensions (Gijón et al.).

The article “*Causes of academic dropout in higher education in Andalusia and proposals for its prevention at university: A systematic review*” identifies 25 studies on causes and proposals for reducing university dropout, concluding that the main reasons are related to poor academic performance, lack of social support, economic problems and demotivation (de la Cruz-Campos et al.).

The contribution entitled “*Neurodidactic teacher training program for educational dropouts in vulnerable groups*” proposes the use of neurodidactics in vulnerable groups and analyses key aspects to be incorporated into university teacher training in order to implement effective programmes with this innovative methodology (de Barros Camargo et al.). The contribution emphasizes motivation and brain functioning in learning processes. It analyses which aspects should be included in teacher training in order to develop neurodidactic intervention programmes aimed at reducing educational dropout. The results allow us to determine the knowledge of university teachers about neuroscience and neurodidactics.

The study on “*Factors contributing to university dropout: a review*” systematizes five groups of determinants of university dropout: student adjustment, personality, socio-economic status, teacher-student relationship and quality of higher education (Lorenzo-Quiles et al.).

Finally, the study entitled “*Dropout in Andalusian universities: prediction and prevention*” tests an instrument for the early detection of dropout risk applied to students at three Andalusian universities (Fernández Cruz et al.). With a sample of 976 students, a group of 34 at risk was identified. The extension of this screening instrument to the whole university system can help universities to apply personalized preventive measures.

In summary, the compilation provides field research, testing of predictive instruments, systematization of causes at a theoretical level and concrete proposals for tackling this problem that affects thousands of Andalusian students every year. The multiplicity of approaches enriches the understanding of the phenomenon and provides a solid basis for recommendations for its prevention.

Ethics statement

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Granada with registration number 2778/CEIH/2022. This research is under the authorization of the ethics committee of the University of Jaén, with reference JUL.22/4.

Author contributions

MF: Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Writing—review & editing. AH: Conceptualization, Writing—original draft.

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