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Chávez-García, W. E., Moreira-Morales, D. B., Manzaba-Basurto, L. E., Álava-Castro, D. J., & Avila-Rosales, F. M. (2023). School dropout in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in upper basic students of the Bachillero educational unit. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 77-82. <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijss.v6n2.2121>

School Dropout in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Upper Basic Students of the Bachillero Educational Unit

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Abstract---The COVID-19 pandemic had a great impact on the educational system, thus causing a loss of learning and a delay in knowledge in students, which led many to abandon their studies. The objective of the research was to analyze school dropout in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in the students of Basic Superior of the Unidad Educativa Bachillero del Cantón Tosagua in the year 2021. The qualitative-quantitative approach was used since it analyzed, measured, and quantified data to present the information through statistical tables, 34 dropout students from the institution were considered, for which the data collection instrument was used; the survey addressed to parents and guardians of the courses where the dropout students were. The method used was the bibliographic, and analytical-synthetic, allowing to deepen the study, which was based on material found in books, magazines, blogs, and web pages, which contained information related to the topic raised. The results showed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative influence on the educational system since it led to less learning and an increase in school dropouts. It was possible to verify through the respondents that the causes for which the Upper Basic students of the Bachillero Educational Unit dropped out, were due to economic problems and lack of technological resources, added to this that the majority reside in the rural sector.

Keywords---COVID-19, educational system, pandemic, school dropout, technological resources.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic generated a transformation from face-to-face education to virtual education, which in such a short period of time posed challenges for which no educational system could be fully prepared (Berniell et al., 2021). This emergency world health caused a crisis in education with the closure of educational institutions that affected the learning process of students and caused many of them to abandon their studies. The objective of the

research was to analyze school dropout in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in the students of Basic Superior of the Unidad Educativa Bachillero del Cantón Tosagua in the year 2021, for this purpose, the following objective was established: Identify and analyze the Impacts of desertion on the achievement of students of General Basic Superior Education of the Baccalaureate Educational Unit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

School dropout is understood as the abandonment of the educational system by students, caused by a combination of factors that are generated both at school and in a social, family, and individual context (Calderón Ruiz, 2021). La United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020), This health emergency led to the massive closure of face-to-face activities in the education sector in more than 190 countries to prevent the spread of the virus. In this way, all educational centers were forced to change their teaching methodologies, implementing the use of technological tools as a fundamental part to give permanence to the studies. Dropping out of school in Latin America due to the COVID-19 pandemic was a harsh reality for 159 million children and adolescents in the world UNICEF (2020).

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education designed actions in a short time for students to continue their academic training through online education; but the reality is that the population to a large extent did not have access to technological resources, which led to limited learning. In Manabí in the last two years the average number of students enrolled is approximately 410,000 students, although there are no clear statistics on student desertion, Jorge Intriago president of the National Union of Educators (UNE) estimated that in this province 15% of students would be in danger of dropping out of school the causes of school dropout in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic of the students of the Educational Unit "Bachillero" of the Tosagua Canton in 2021 were investigated, surveys were applied to the parents and tutors of the dropout students involved in the academic process, it was possible to identify the main causes of the desertion of said students, in this way the proposed objectives were met. Dropping out of school is the abandonment of the academic activities of a student, who, due to various socioeconomic, family, or health factors, leave the educational system (Pachay-López & Rodríguez-Gámez, 2021).

The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador specifies in Art.26 that: Education is a right of people throughout their lives and an unavoidable and inexcusable duty of the State. It constitutes a priority area of public policy and state investment, a guarantee of equality and social inclusion and an essential condition for good living. Individuals, families, and society have the right and responsibility to participate in the educational process (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008, p. 29). This article is important for research since it makes us aware that education is a right and therefore, educational institutions should be emphasized to pay more attention to students who have dropped out of the educational system so that they can resume Their studies.

School dropout is a phenomenon that has been present throughout history; however, it has increased due to the COVID-19 situation, it is for this reason that the pandemic and its consequences are assumed as influential factors in student decision-making to continue their studies. School dropout is understood as the abandonment of the educational system by students caused by a combination of factors that are generated both at school and in social, family, and individual contexts (Spitzer et al., 2021; Chatterji & Li, 2021; Mishra et al., 2020).

A determining factor for school dropout was the low income of families since many students abandoned their studies to work and help support the home. The economic impact that Ecuadorian families have suffered due to the pandemic since they had to interrupt their work activities, this means that their income will be low and therefore they can become part of the vulnerable group in a state of poverty. Family accompaniment is another determining factor of school dropout, those students who do not live with both parents and who are often with other relatives (grandparents, brothers, uncles, cousins) in the learning process, cause them to lose interest to continue with their studies. It is necessary to emphasize that the little attention of the parents, relatives or legal representatives of the students leads them to seek company in unknown people, teaching them anti-values and incorrect forms of behavior (Velez Tuarez & Gamez, 2020).

Life as a couple, maternity, or early paternity, is also shown to negatively affect permanence in the educational system. The situation of the pandemic was complicated worldwide, distance classes, lack of employment, victims of the pandemic, premature pregnancy, and limited access to the Internet, among other difficulties, have caused students to drop out of school (Velez Tuarez & Gamez, 2020). Another problem is that in rural areas school dropout is higher than in urban areas, this is because in the latter the technology is better. Many students who are from rural Ecuador, do not have internet service, which becomes a problem not being able to enter virtual classes, resulting in deterioration in obtaining the necessary knowledge for their academic training (Vásquez-Ponce et al., 2020).

The main roles of the teacher in virtual classes are to be an academic facilitator and promoter of activities that promote resilience and support the student with motivation in stressful situations Salvatierra (2020). The academic follow-up factor in virtual education in times of pandemic, by the tutor teacher, played a fundamental role for the

student to continue with his studies. The tutor teacher in virtual classes is essential to develop and enhance student learning.

The pandemic caused by the virus called Sars-cov2 or better known as COVID-19, whose origin was in China in the city of Wuhan, in a seafood market, was initially notified on December 31, 2019, (WHO, 2020). Since it was declared a global pandemic, measures have been taken to prevent the spread. In the educational field, this emergency led to the temporary closure of educational centers, giving rise to virtual classes. In this case in Ecuador, the Ministry of Education developed a contingency plan to open a web portal to continue with education and that it is not paralyzed due to the time of health crisis that the country is experiencing (El Universo, 2020). The pandemic has revealed that the use of technology is vital in the field of education (Aguilar Gordon, 2020), hence education in virtual modality causes autonomous and significant learning through the use of free interactive digital tools, to motivate the student in the educational process (Sixty Garcia, 2019).

The lack of access to the technological network affects students since they cannot access to participate in virtual classes, which makes them less likely to learn. UNICEF detailed that 6 out of 10 children in Ecuador (UNICEF, 2020), failed to continue their studies through the virtual modality, which made it almost impossible for teachers to guide the concerns of students, which, in many cases, it delayed the delivery of educational activities and prevented the student's face-to-face interaction with their classmates. The incorporation of modern technology becomes an important opportunity within the significant learning process, it is also a useful tool in times of pandemic for positive development in society (Espinel Armas, 2020). Currently, not having a technological device is a factor that negatively influences the school process, which leads many to drop out of their studies. Camacho Marín et al. (2020), refer to the fact that the use of technology in education is not a claim, but a tool that benefits students in their learning process.

Materials and Methods

To analyze school dropout in the face of the pandemic of COVID-19 of the students of Basic Superior of the Unidad Educativa Bachillero del Cantón Tosagua in the year 2021, it was necessary to develop a bibliographical investigation since this method allowed to deepen the object of study proposed, the same one that was based on the material found. in scientific journals and theses that contained information related to the topic studied. This research had a qualitative-quantitative approach so an analysis was carried out in the bibliography studied, as well as the quantum part of the results obtained from the applied survey. This study is descriptive; which allows to give conceptualizations of the phenomenon and the exaltation of its most prominent characteristics;, Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of the quantitative data, as well as to describe the different results with their respective analysis and qualitative interpretations, based on the theoretical framework (Cui et al., 2023; Reuge et al., 2021; Essadek & Rabeyron, 2020).

The research technique used was the survey, in which thirty-four (34) dropout students were considered, for which the instrument was applied to parents or legal representatives of them, to obtain information on the causes of the desertion of their constituents, and the seven (7) tutor teachers of the Upper Basic of the Baccalaureate Educational Unit, who were the ones who had dropout students in their parallels. The method used was the analytical-synthetic; Through the application of this method, the different realities of the students who were part of the research project are addressed (Velez Tuarez & Gamez, 2020), expressing that the analytic-synthetic method was used to decompose the whole into its parts, discover the roots and based on this analysis, carry out the synthesis to reconstruct and explain.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

From the research technique applied both to legal representatives of the dropout students, as well as to the tutor teachers of the parallels that had this phenomenon, the following results were obtained. Results of the survey applied to the thirty-four (34) legal representatives of the students who dropped out of Upper Basic of the Bachillero Educational Unit, the parents were consulted about the accompaniment of the children in the virtual classes, obtaining the results shown in table 1.

Table 1
Summary of the results of the survey applied to the parents of Básica Superior

Variable	Alternative	Frequency	Percentage (%)
When your representative was receiving virtual classes, who accompanied you in this education process?	Mother father	26/34	76,47
In what sector of the city does your representative live?	Rural	21/34	61,76
For virtual education, did your client have a technological resource to study virtually?	No	16/34	47,06
To what extent did your client have the necessary guidance from the course teacher, during virtual education time?	A lot	28/34	82,35
What were the reasons why your client dropped out of studying?	was not counted on. Technological resources	16/34	47,06

From the instrument applied to the parents of the students who dropped out of the Upper Basic, it was determined through the data collected that 76.47% of the students were accompanied by their mother and father, in the virtual education process. This result indicates that the accompaniment of parents in the virtual learning process in times of pandemic was significant to continue in the educational process. The research also indicates that 61.76% of the students live in the rural sector, even though the Bachillero Educational Unit is in the urban sector of the city. This existing fact, that they live in a rural area in the city of Tosagua, allows us to point out the limitations that some students must continue with their studies. Based on this problem, 47.06% of parents affirmed that their representatives did not have access to technological resources. It can be deduced that this factor had a decisive influence so that these students did not continue with their studies ([Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza, 2018](#); [Ye et al., 2022](#); [Manzaba & Rodríguez, 2021](#); [Rayuwati, 2020](#)).

Parents refer to the fact that 82.35% of the students had the teacher's guide in virtual classes. It is evidenced through the statistics that, in the Atahualpa Educational Unit, teachers fulfilled their role as guides and counselors in virtual educational activities, this not being one of the causes of school dropout. Results of the survey applied to the seven (7) tutor teachers of the students who dropped out of Upper Basic of the Bachillero Educational Unit, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of the results of the survey applied to the tutors of Basic Superior

Variable	Alternative	Frequency	Percentage (%)
In the 2020-2021 period, was there school dropout in the Atahualpa Educational Unit?	Yes	7/7	100
How often did your tutors from the 2021-2022 period connect to receive virtual classes? Multiple choice question.	Infrequent	5/7	71,43
When you saw that a student did not connect to receive classes in this period, what actions did you take?	Called the representative. Legal	5/7	71,43
What indicators did you see in the students who were disinterested in the study? .	little connectivity	5/7	71,43
What do you think were the reasons why your tutee dropped out of study?	There were no technological resources.	4/7	57,14

The data collected from the survey application revealed that the 100% of the tutor teachers surveyed affirm that there was a school dropout in the Upper Basic of the Bachillero educational unit in the year 2021. Connectivity in times of pandemic was essential to continue with the studies, according to the tutors surveyed, 71.43% of the students connected infrequently to virtual classes, which indicated that they had via disinterest or lack of technological

resources; on the other hand, with the same percentage of 71.43% tutor teachers stated that when following up on students who were absent from classes, they did so through telephone calls to the legal representative. The tutor teachers were also consulted about what indicators they observed in the disinterested students in the study, and 71.43% indicated that the little connectivity; Additionally, they were asked what they believed were the reasons why their tutors dropped out, and 57.14% stated that it was because they did not have technological resources (Cao et al., 2020; Neves et al., 2021; De Witte et al., 2013).

Based on the results obtained in the investigation, it was determined that the tutor teacher fulfilled his role of accompaniment in the virtual education activities, relying on what he indicates, the tutor teacher in virtual classes as essential to develop and enhance student learning. In this context, tutor teachers became motivators, and guides, in virtual education in times of pandemic; therefore, it did not influence the school dropouts in the year 2021 of the Bachillero Educational Unit. One of the indicators that revealed the lack of interest of the students in the virtual process was the low connectivity. The incorporation of modern technology becomes an important opportunity within the significant learning process, it is also a useful tool in times of pandemic for positive development in society (Espinell Armas, 2020). In this sense, connectivity and the incorporation of technology played a transcendental role so that students had continuity in the educational system, through virtual classes.

Both the tutor teachers and legal representatives of the dropout students consider that the main cause of dropout of students in the Bachillero Educational Unit in 2021 was not having the technological resources to continue with the learning process; Camacho Marín et al. (2020), refers to the fact that the use of technology in education is not a claim, but a tool that benefits students in their learning process; under this criterion and according to the experiences, many students limit themselves to continue with their studies due to various factors such as economic, family, social, among others, which make it impossible to continue with said process.

The research also reflected the difficulty that students from the rural sector had to continue with their studies, since they did not have the necessary technological resources. (Vásquez-Ponce et al., 2020), states that the majority of students residing in Ecuadorian rural areas do not have internet service, which becomes a problem not being able to enter virtual classes, resulting in deterioration of the Obtaining the necessary knowledge for their academic training. In accordance with these two criteria, the author determines that the factor of the geographical sector according to the area in which one lives, added to the lack of economic and technological resources, makes school dropouts more frequent.

Conclusions

The revised theories indicate that school dropout can occur due to different factors that arise from the need to obtain some tangible or intangible resource that prevents the will or desire to train academically; Under this consideration, Thirty-four (34) Upper Basic students of the Bachillero Educational Unit have dropped out of their studies due to several of these factors. It is in the rural sector where there were more cases of school dropout since students have more precarious socioeconomic conditions, less possibilities of access to technology and more needs to be involved in productive activity to help with household expenses; For this reason, it was identified that the causes that caused thirty-four (34) students of the Baccalaureate Educational Unit to abandon their studies in a time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, were: limited economic income that many families suffered, with them also the lack of a device to continue with virtual classes and limited internet access in rural areas.

It was analyzed that the educational system is not prepared to face phenomena such as the pandemic and to be able to solve this type of problem, such as COVID -19, and since it was not prepared, there was no social infrastructure required for many students of the rural area had the necessary tools to approach their studies and thus avoid school dropout. Virtual education has revealed the socioeconomic gaps that exist in the country, the lack of technological tools strongly affected the persistence in the study, further aggravating educational problems such as desertion or school dropout.

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