



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**  
**FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

EXPLORING STUDENTS' POSSIBLE REASONS TO DROP OUT AND  
THEIR REASONS TO PERSIST AT THE LEI BA PROGRAM

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LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

PRESENTED BY:  
GERSON ANTONIO ÁVILA RODRÍGUEZ

THESIS DIRECTOR:  
MTRA. AMELIA HERNÁNDEZ GRANDE

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This thesis has been read by the members of the

Committee of

GERSON ANTONIO ÁVILA RODRÍGUEZ

And is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment of

the requirements of the degree of

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

Thesis director



---

Mtra. Amelia Hernández Grande

Committee Member



---

Dra. Catalina Juárez Díaz

Committee Member



---

Mtra. Blanca Adriana Téllez Méndez

**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**  
**PUEBLA**  
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## **Abstract**

The present research project arose from the interest in knowing the reasons students at the LEI BA program come to the point where they desire to drop out from the major but also the reasons for not engaging such behavior. The context where it took place was at the faculty of languages, BUAP. More specifically, the target population included all those students who entered the major from year 2016 because it was the year the curricular plan was changed. In order to meet the research objectives and answer the research questions, this study followed a qualitative approach. Therefore, different techniques, strategies and instruments that are usually used for qualitative studies were applied in this study as well.

Findings revealed 32 reasons that are related to students' desire to drop out from the LEI program. 59.3 % of the reasons could be included within a category related to the individual aspect, 12.5% of the reasons could be included within the category related to the family aspect, 9.3% have to do with the school aspect and finally 18.7% of these reasons were related to the social aspect. With regard to the reasons students reported they had to persist, the study shows 7 of them. These reasons were analyzed rather into 2 categories: intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Finally, participants in this study also had the opportunity to share their ideas about what the faculty of languages could do in order to incentivize their stay at the major.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The importance of higher education is unquestionable. According to The World Bank (2017), a well-educated workforce is crucial for innovation and development, it turns individuals into more capable people who can better face the challenges of the current world. Similarly, Chemwei and Nyamesa (2013) highlight that UNESCO views education as a tool which helps reducing poverty, improving people's quality of life, becoming productive and promoting social inclusion. Therefore, it can be inferred that those people who enroll into a major program, get a bachelor's degree, and join the job market may reach a higher quality of life than those who only reach the basic and intermediate education levels.

However, there are challenges that are encountered at the higher education context which impede many students to successfully complete their studies. For instance, ANUIES (2001) points out that school lag, low graduation rate and dropout are among the main issues that most universities face.

Additionally, in many studies it has been observed that the literature on dropout is quite large and long-standing (Ah & Rumberger, 2008; De Vries, León, Romero & Hernández, 2011). Nevertheless, despite the fact that there is available research on the field, the problem of dropout

seems to persist (Abu-Oda & El-Halees, 2015). This implies that research does not solve the problem by itself but it is the first step on the process. In other words, research regarding dropout is important because it allows having a better picture of where to focus and what needs to be done in order to combat the issue.

What is more, when looking at Mexico's situation with regard to dropout from an international perspective, it can be observed that the problem in our country is quite severe. As an illustration, CEPAL (2015) in its report *Juventud: Realidades y Retos Para un Desarrollo con Igualdad* indicates that Mexico was the first place among 17 countries from Latin America where most students dropped out from secondary and high school. In the same way, research by OCDE in 2012 places Turkey along with Mexico as the countries where dropout rate was the highest. This suggests that dropout in Mexico is a serious problem in both secondary basic and higher education.

For this reason, the present study focuses on the problem of dropout. Being more specific, it addresses the issue of dropout at the LEI (Licenciatura en Enseñanza del inglés) program at the Faculty of Languages.

## **1.1 Significance of the study**

As shown above, the problem of dropout is worth studying. It is an issue that goes beyond what can actually be observed at first instance. For example, Moreno and Moreno (2005) argue that an efficient educative system is that which meets its objectives in time and form avoiding economic and human resources waste. Then, according to what these authors state, it is entailed that if students do not successfully conclude their studies, there is waste of resources making that educational systems be ineffective. Rode, Bjornoy and Sogaard (2013), also mention the concept of "waste". They agree that waste refers to the loss of personal resources such as time and money.

To illustrate, research by BBVA (de la Fuente Moreno & Serrano, 2013 as cited in Arce, Crespo & Míguez, 2015) suggests that dropping out from educational institutions in Spain has imposed a great negative impact on this country economy causing a loss of 5,772 euros per student annually. In Mexico a similar phenomena occurs with regard to the economic impact due to dropout. For instance, it is known that federal investment is required in order to afford educational expenses. However, if students drop out from school, any investment intended for education becomes a loss. As an illustration, a report by Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE) (2015), indicates that the amount of invested money per student in 2014 in Mexico was as follows: 16 800 in pre-primary education; \$15 300 in primary school; \$23 500 in secondary education; \$32 400 in high school; and \$72 700 in higher education. When observing the amount of invested money in previous years, it can be noticed that the tendency is upward leading to higher economic resources waste (as long as dropout increases or stays the same). Furthermore, it is claimed that human resources are also wasted as chances to develop for any society, country, or person are considerably reduced. As illustrated by Briceño (2010, p. 47-48):

Education, understood as the gradual process of acquiring knowledge and skills, allows potentiating individuals' capacities letting them turn into productive agents that create added value and improves its milieu. Therefore, education is the main element for forming human capital that determines productivity and individuals' wellbeing in a society.

Once again, the previous statement agrees with Rode, Bjornoy and Sogaard's (2013) point of view because as it was illustrated, dropout has consequences in society at different levels, one of them regarding returns to education, and the second one having to do with overall economic

growth (Bound & Turner, 2011). Therefore, it can be said that some important savings could be made by researching dropout, raising awareness on the problem, and taking the necessary actions to reduce dropouts.

## **1.2 Background of the research and previous literature**

In this area of study, a number of local, national and international studies have emerged. For example, at an international level we can observe two cases. One of those studies was carried out in India and the second one in Japan. In the first study, findings showed that the main reasons students had for dropping out at this Indian university were related to the individual factors and the reasons most students dropped out were due to illness and homesickness. But also it was found that educational factors and reasons such as learning problems, and difficult courses were affecting students' decision to drop out. Not only that, but a third factor was encountered. And it was the school factor because some of the reasons students also had for leaving college had to do with campus environment, too many rules in hostel life and poor entertainment facilities (Rai, 2015). In the second study, carried out in Japan, it was found that some students tended to drop out due to their gender, mother's years of schooling, mother's employment status, and student's educational aspirations at the age of 15 (Minami & Satoshi, 2014).

Certainly, our university is concerned with dropout. Dr. José Alfonso Esparza Ortiz, rector at the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP), estimates that dropout rate reaches 30% just in higher education (Zambrano, 2013). As a matter of fact, previous studies attending to dropout at the Faculty of Languages at BUAP have already been done. However, the last study that addressed dropout at the LEI program was carried out in 2014. And from that time some traits

such as subjects, teachers, and modality have changed. Puente and Serrano's (2014) objective was to analyze and determine the main factors that had the most influence on dropout at the LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) program. Findings showed that organizational factors, such as having about 25 to 30 students, were the main trigger for dropping out at that time. The results now can be different now because the context is not identical to that of 2014. Another study tackling dropout (Simón, 2017) aimed to identify the academic and non-academic factors that determined dropout at CELE program. On the one hand, some academic factors that were identified are schedule incompatibility, teachers' poor teaching methodology and engagement with the subject, low feedback, and subject saturation. On the other hand, individual factors had to do more with students' emotional status such as motivation loss and stress.

### **1.3 Justification**

Even though there is research attending to dropout at the Faculty of Languages, a specific study addressing dropout at the new LEI program is needed. According to Todaro (1994), causes of drop out will differ from region to region, country to country, school to school and individual to individual (and of course program to program). The context in the LEI, the CELE, and the LEF program is not identical. For example, some differences among these programs are subjects, professors, teaching methods, and materials. So, what occurs in the LEF and the CELE program with regard to dropout is not necessarily the same for the LEI program. Moreover, raising awareness on the current dropout-situation at the LEI program is relevant for suggesting possible actions to face the problem. Abu-Oda and El-Halees (2015), point out that one of the reasons for not achieving school retention is that most schools do not successfully detect those students who are susceptible to abandon their studies. Rai (2015) also states that:

...student dropout prediction is an indispensable for numerous intelligent systems to measure the education system and success rate of any university as well as throughout the university in the world. Therefore, it becomes essential to develop efficient methods for prediction of the students at risk of dropping out, enabling the adoption of proactive process to minimize the situation.

## **1.4 Limitations**

The main limitation of the present study could be that not all students who are prone to drop out would be taken into account. One of the main reasons for that is that it cannot be assured that all students will reveal their current or past intentions to abandon the career even if asked face to face or by other means. So, the number of students who are likely to drop out cannot be determined. Then, in this study, only those students who acknowledge their desire to drop out will be addressed.

### **1.5.1 General objectives**

To determine students' possible reasons to drop out the LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) program at the Faculty of Languages.

To determine students' reasons to persist at the LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) program at the Faculty of Languages.

### **1.5.2 Specific objectives**

To identify LEI students' possible reasons to drop out the major.

To identify LEI students' reasons to persist.

### **1.6.1 General research question**

Why would LEI students drop out their major?

Why do LEI students persist?

### **1.6.2 Specific research questions**

1. What are students' main possible reasons to drop out the major at LEI program?
2. What factor does most influence students so that they think of dropping out?
3. Why do LEI students persist?
4. What could influence over students' persistence?

### **1.7 Hypotheses**

It is known that the existing reasons for dropout are various and different (Ungureanu, 2017). On this study different causes have been predicted to influence students' desire to drop out the major.

H1) The first cause affecting students' desire to drop out is migrating to another career.

H2) The second cause affecting students' desire to drop out is being unsatisfied with teachers' teaching methods.

H3) Family pressure is the main cause that promotes students' persistence.

H4) Benefits and services offered at the university are also determinant for students' persistence.

## **Chapter II Theoretical Framework**

### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter the theoretical framework is presented. To begin, some aspects related to the curriculum that conforms the Modelo Universitario Minerva are discussed. Then, there is information that will describe more in detail dropout and persistence. Finally, motivation is included to reinforce the psychology behind human behaviour. In this case, focused towards dropout and persistence.

### **2.1 Modelo Universitario Minerva (MUM)**

Before checking the Modelo Universitario Minerva (which is the educative model at BUAP), it is convenient to take a closer look at what an educative model is about. Tünnermann (2011), indicates that an educative model is the concretion of the educative paradigms that an institution adheres to. It is the main reference and guide for the institution's endeavor, and some of the basic components in the educative model are the institution's mission and vision.

Tünnermann (2011), later, states that educative models basically intend to foster equilibrated integral formation that accounts human dimensions such as the intellectual, ethical, social and



professional ones. Finally, he points out that as principles, values, philosophy and paradigms are determined by the model so are the processes.

As stated earlier, the educative model should serve as a guide of the principles, values and philosophy that an institution (in this case BUAP) professes. At BUAP, the MUM aims to achieve students' integral and pertaining formation through a constructivist focus with social and cultural orientation that strengthens the main aspects of the critical humanism (BUAP, 2014). For that reason, both social constructivism and critical humanism are also considered in this research project since they dictate the principles and philosophy that determines the university labor at BUAP.

### **2.1.2 Social constructivism**

As stated in BUAP (2014), the MUM is influenced by social constructivist principles. Therefore, a review of the main traits of this pedagogic theory is treated in this section.

First, it is necessary to consider how social constructivism is defined. According to Amineh and Asi (2015), it is a theory that studies how knowledge and understanding (learning) of the world take place through the social factor. Then, knowledge and understanding creation needs to be mutually built and constructed by individuals. Kalpana (2014), points out that social constructivism has as the primary goal of teaching students how to learn by themselves. Correspondingly, within this theory, the teacher's role is just to function as a mediator or facilitator that creates learning situations and observes how students go through a self-discovery process (Tünnermann, 2011; Kalpana, 2014); and the student's role is that of a critical thinker who contributes and receives contribution to construct new knowledge. In that sense, the student

is no understood as a passive listener (Kalpana, 2014) but rather an active participant in the learning process.

Two more concepts that are crucial within this learning theory, and which help us understand better the learning process at social constructivism are the “zone of proximal development” and “situated cognition”.

Firstly, Lev Vygotsky, who is considered the founder of the social constructivism current, states that the zone of proximal development can be established as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers, (Vygotsky; 1978, p. 86). Moreover, Greddler (2008) adds that the zone of proximal development is the limit where students struggle to perform a task on their own, but can master with the assistance of others who are more capable. Then according to a social constructivist view of learning, a student would have better chances to master new knowledge with help of teachers or more experienced peers.

Second, situated cognition is basically the idea that cognition is located in a social and physical plane and not inside the individual’s mind (Gauvain 2008). From this perspective, learning is originated first in the social milieu and then in the individual’s inward psyche. In other words, opportunities are provided to students to learn through social interaction in construction of knowledge and understanding (Kalpala; 2014, p. 27). Then, it can be said that students and professors at BUAP are immersed in a constructivist environment and that they are influenced by that learning theory’s principles.

### **2.1.3 Critical Humanism**

Another current that has been taken into account within the MUM is the critical humanism. According to BUAP (2007), critical humanism is a philosophical current that seeks to understand the human nature and existence, and that places the human into a holistic view. That is, it considers every aspect that constitutes the human beings. In this sense, human beings are seen as dynamic, ever changing and interrelated individuals. Furthermore, Woolfolk (1999) states that in critical humanism individuals construct their own reality but cannot fully understand that of others.

### **2.1.4 MUM principles**

As stated early, an educative model serves as reference for determining the values, philosophy, paradigms and principles. Consequently, in this section the 14 principles that are adopted at BUAP through the MUM are reviewed. But before examining them, it was necessary to study both the social constructivism and the critical humanism because they were the basis for constructing the following principles:

1. The human being is more than the sum of all his parts. To comprehend his nature and existence, it is indispensable to consider him in his totality and not fragmented into psychological processes.
2. The human possesses a natural tendency to pursue self fulfilment to transcend.
3. The human being has a relational nature.
4. The human being is aware of his own existence and decides for freedom, is active, intentional and constructor of his own life.

5. Learning implies an inner constructive process that is subjective and personal.
6. Learning is facilitated due to the mediation and interaction with other, and for that reason it is social and cooperative.
7. Learning is a reconstruction process of cultural knowledge.
8. The degree of learning depends on the cognitive, emotional and social development, and the nature of knowledge structure.
9. The starting point of knowledge is based on the previous knowledge and experiences that students have.
10. Learning implies an intern reorganization process of schemas.
11. Learning is produced when there is conflict between what students know and what do not.
12. Learning has an important affective component that is crucial for the factors that give rise to self-knowledge, personal goal establishment, willingness to learn, attributions about success or failure, mutual expectative and portrayal.
13. Learning requires contextualization; students must work with culturally authentic and significant tasks, and need to learn how to solve meaningful problems.
14. Learning is facilitated through aids that lead to the construction of cognitive structures between what is new and familiar, as well as potentially significant learning-materials.

## **2.2 Dropout and Curriculum**

The scope curriculum has over dropout decision is quite relevant and naturally demands to be taken into account in this study. Curriculum first affects students' performance, and therefore it can also affect students' decision to drop out or persist. For instance, Vergel,

Quintero, Isaza, Ortiz, Latorre and Pardo (2018) state that “when students struggle academically, the probability of dropping out increases” (p.1). Moreover, Cobo and Moravec (2011) suggest that there is a large number of universities which lack inclusion, efficacy, innovation and *flexibility* within their educational models leading to rigid-curriculum implementation which could bring students obstacles along their professional career.

According to ANUIES (2001), flexibility at higher education can be understood as students’ freedom to act according to their free will. Then López and Sánchez (2009) deepen that definition by stating that flexibility can only be achieved when curriculum empowers students to decide over their professional formation and academic participation within the university. However, it is important to point out that in the case of all students at BUAP who have enrolled from 2016, there is no really chance for them to decide on things such as when and how many subjects to take each period until they reach the third semester. Therefore, no total flexibility exists at the LEI program.

Certainly, some changes at BUAP’s curriculum have been done over the last years. However, there is no evidence whether it affects or not students’ decision to drop out; and again, that is why this study results somewhat relevant. Something else to mention about the curriculum at the LEI program is that the syllabus is composed by eight periods (semesters) in which students take a maximum of six subjects and a minimum of three. It would be interesting to know whether this modality has some impact over students’ decision to drop out or persist.

### **2.2.1 What is dropout?**

It is highly important to define the main concept which is the nucleus of this research in order to have a better understanding of the problem, that is dropout. However, because of the

vast literature that exists regarding the problem (Rumberger and Lim, 2008, Mastrorilli 2016), and the many definitions of dropout that have been suggested by different authors and organizations, selecting one single definition becomes such a complex task. According to Tinto (1989), there is no capable definition to encompass the whole complexity of the dropout phenomenon, and therefore, it is the authors' task to choose the most suitable definition according to their objectives and needs. Thus, different definitions have been consulted in this study. Firstly, Tinto (1982) states that: “a student voluntary drop out is anyone who withdraws from the institution without completing the academic program in which the student was enrolled” (as cited in Arce, Crespo & Míguez, 2015, p. 248). Equally, Himmel (2002) states that dropping out can be referred as to the act of leaving an educational program before obtaining a diploma or degree, and the time the student has been absent should be long enough to discard his/her return. In the same light, Castaño, Gallón, Gómez and Vásquez (2008) emphasize the importance of the time that a student leaves school. To them dropping out is considered so if the student has been inactive for more than three consecutive semesters in an educational institution. Finally, Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) (2004) defined dropout as the non-conclusion, temporary or definitive abandonment of a school system or the act of not moving into the next level to that in which a student was enrolled. A more specific definition for this study is provided by who state that dropout refers to the situation in which students leave university study in which they were enrolled before obtaining a formal degree. Then, in this study where the context takes place at a university, dropout will be referred as leaving a college program definitely or temporarily (for a period of at least one year) before obtaining the major degree.

### **2.2.2 What is persistence?**

Normally one would infer that persistence is the opposite of what dropout is. And even though it is true to a great extent, it is necessary to take into account the different definitions that have been suggested in the literature. One example that illustrates this is what Zaragoza (2013) states. They argue that persistence is to continue studies until their completion. Furthermore, González and Velázquez (2017) add that persistence does not only refer to the conclusion of a school level but also the enrollment into the following academic level whether it is elementary school, secondary school, high school, university, and so on. Finally, Fonseca and García (2016) point out that persistence can be associated with concluding an educational program, but these authors also emphasize that persistence is also named as “permanence” or “retention”. Then, in this study persistence will be just referred as the continuation of studies within our university and faculty.

### **2.2.3 Types of dropout**

Due to the diverse studies that have been done with regard to dropout, it has been possible to break it down into different categories or types that take into account a number of aspects such as the willingness that the student has (or does not) to dropout, the time when dropout takes place, and the actual type of dropout whether it is from the institution, a major program in a university, or the whole educational system. All these three types of dropout provide a broader perspective of the matter itself, and therefore, they are discussed below.

First, Himmel (2003) distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary dropout. On the one hand, Himmel states that voluntary dropout can be understood as the student's withdrawal

from the career without previous announcement to the institution of his/her leaving. On the other hand, she explains that involuntary dropout occurs as a consequence of an institution's decision based on its rules and regulations taking the student to leave.

Second, it has been argued that dropout can be seen at different stages in different periods of time. For instance, Rode, Bjornoy and Sogaard (2013) argue that dropout can be characterised into early and late dropout. Similarly, Castaño, Gallón, Gómez and Vásquez (2008) suggest that dropout can have three subcategories: premature, early and late dropout. Where:

- Premature dropout refers to a student who was accepted in a university but leaves the program.
- Early dropout refers to a student who dropouts in the first semesters of the career.
- Late dropout refers to a student who dropouts after having completed half the credits in a major program.

Last but not least, another distinction on dropout has to do with dropping out from a specific major program, dropping out from a subject of study, dropping from a higher education organism (university), or dropping out from the entire system (Rode, Bjornoy & Sogaard, 2013). In that sense, Himmel (2003) affirms that dropping out from a major program does not necessarily entail dropping out from an educational institution. In some cases, students migrate from one career to another without losing their affiliation to the university. In contrast, dropping out from a university implies that the student either changes the program or abandons his/her studies definitely.

#### **2.2.4 Why do students drop out?**



As shown in some studies (Mastrorilli, 2016; Hammond, Linton, Smink and Drew, 2007) by looking at the relationship that exist between dropout and both school engagement and disengagement, one might get to understand the dropout phenomenon better. Some of the notions that relate these three phenomena are that school disengagement is seen as a key part of the dropout process (Alexander, Entwisle and Horsey, 1997), and that school engagement can be seen as an effective way to avoid dropout increase. In the past, some authors (Finn, 1989; Newmann, 1992; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Wehlage, 1989) have viewed dropout as a dynamic and cumulative process where disengagement takes place before dropout actually occurs. Mastrorilli (2016) explains that depending on students' engagement and involvement in school's activities these will have higher or lower chances to abandon school.

### **2.2.5 Dropout and Persistence Models**

What is more, there have been different models (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Spady, 1970 and Tinto, 1975) that seek to explain how dropout and persistence take place. For instance, a model proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen draws on a behaviorist perspective explaining the actual process that occurs before actions are taken. To them, behavior (decision taking whether to drop out or persist) is preceded by behavioral intentions that are built from attitudes and subjective norms. The first, attitudes, take place due to the beliefs students have about the possible consequences (whether positive and negative) of performing an action. The second, subjective norms (social pressure to engage or not in a behavior, Ham, Jeger, Frajman 2015), happen because of the normative beliefs (the social approval of a way of behaving, Fang, Ng, Wang, Hsu; 2017) individuals have about performing certain actions (see figure 1).

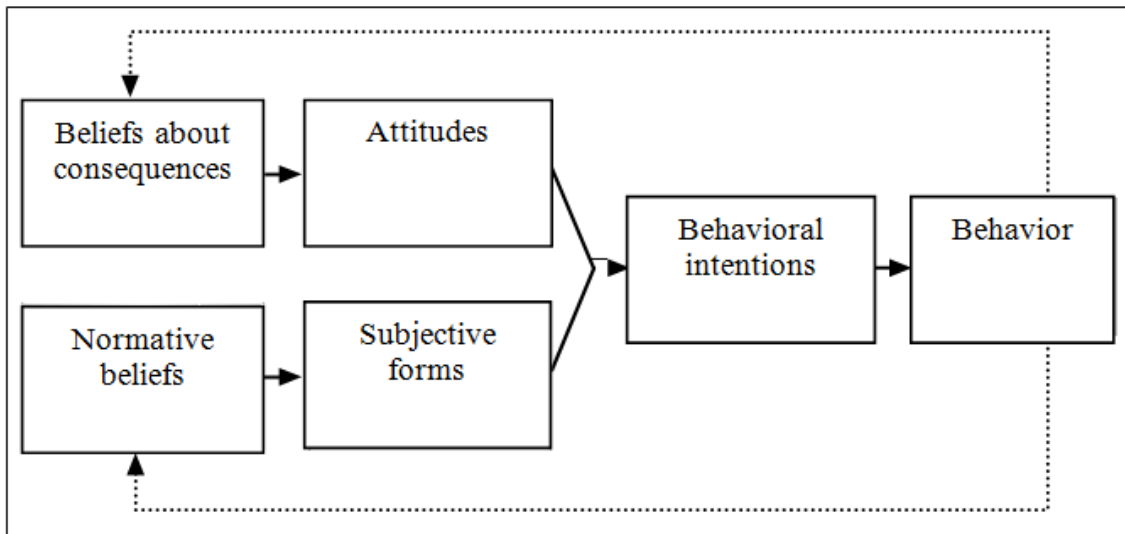


Figure 1 Fishbein and Ajzen 1975

Then, Himmel (2003) points out that dropout can be perceived as students' behavioral intention decline, and school persistence as the strengthening thereof.

Not only is that, but another model seeking to explain how dropout takes place Spady's (1970). He focused his dropout model on the social aspect of disengagement which is based on Durkheim's theory of suicide. Spady claims that these two events share some similarities when comparing them. For example, Durkheim's theory of suicide holds the notion that individuals decide to commit suicide because of their rupture (or disengagement) with the social system as a result of their incapacity to adapt to the society. Consequently, the less social integration people have, the more chances they will have to commit suicide (Himmel, 2003). Furthermore, Spady points out that social integration (which is prior to decision of dropping out) is preceded by some other elements such as family background, academic potential, normative congruence, grade performance, intellectual development, and friendship support. He explains that family

background influences academic potential and normative congruence. On the one hand, academic performance impacts grade performance (see figure 2).

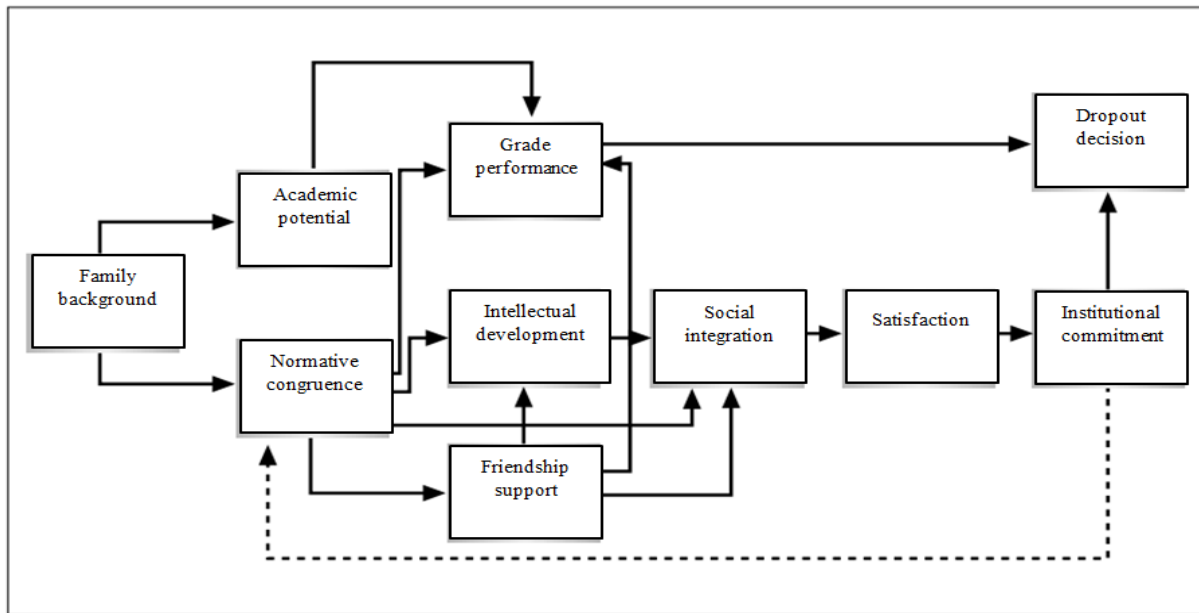


Figure 2 Spady 1970

A third model (Tinto, 1975) is based on Spady's. Tinto retakes the notion that social interaction plays an important role during the dropout process but he also suggests that "academic integration" is another dropout determinant. According to him, social integration promotes students' commitment with the school; and academic integration influences students' commitment to fulfill their goal of graduating (see figure 3). Then, if students' social and academic integration is low, student will be likely to abandon their studies. Within Tinto's model it can be observed that there are other elements preceding social and academic integration. The ones leading to academic integration are grade performance, intellectual development, goal commitment, family background, individual attributes, and pre-college schooling. Conversely,

social integration is affected by peer-group interactions, family interactions, institutional commitment, family background, individual attributes, and pre-college schooling as well.

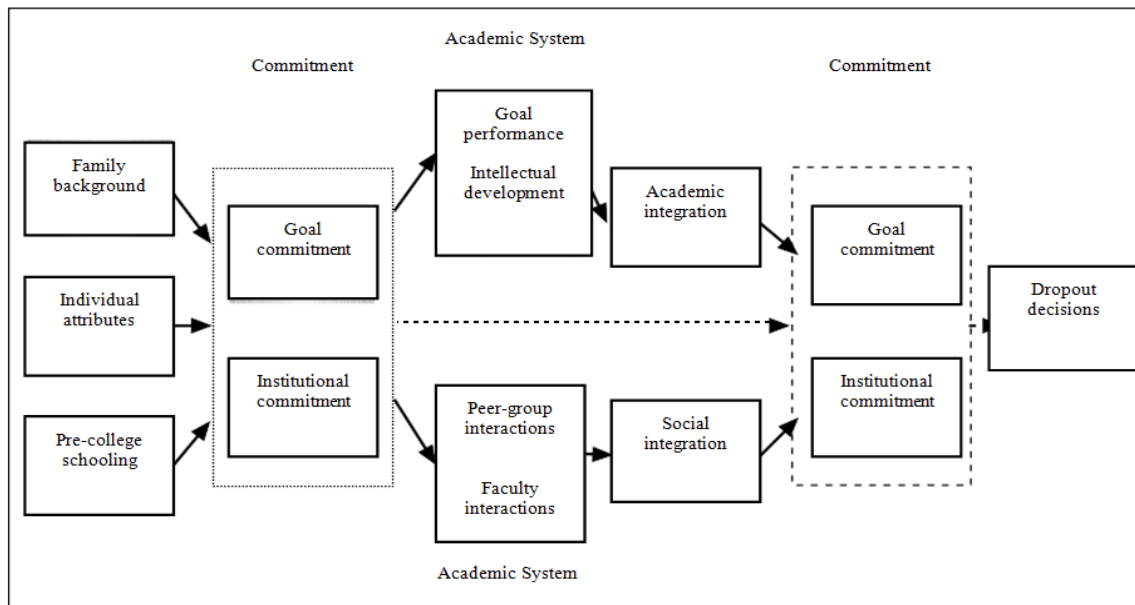


Figure 3 Tinto (1975)

## 2.2.6 Dropout Factors

Different studies have sought to identify what the main dropout-related factors are. And as a result, different domains or categorizations have been suggested to classify those factors affecting students' decision to dropout (Suh and Suh, 2007). Some authors (Hawkins, Catalano and Miller 1992; Rumberger, 1991; Domínguez, Sandoval, Cruz and Pulido, 2013) refer to these domains as individual, family, school and community factors. And in turn, these four domains reveal a number of indicators that allow determining students' actual reasons to leave school. First, individual factors, as it suggests, are the specific characteristics that students have. Some examples of those characteristics would be race/ethnicity, gender, immigration status, having

limited cognitive abilities or disabilities whether physical, emotional or behavioral, students' responsibilities; attitudes, values, and behaviors; and poor school performance (Hammond, Linton, Smink and Drew; 2007). Second, observable characteristics at the family risk factor domain include the socioeconomic status (or SES), family structure, high stress at home caused by family conflicts, other family members' financial or health problems, residential moves, family changes (death, divorce, or remarriage); quality of mother-child relationship, parents' low expectation towards education, parents who dropped out school, parents' poor or no contact with school about their children's academic performance and not talking with them about it, and little parent monitoring of homework (Hammond, Linton, Smink and Drew; 2007). Third, with regard to academic risk factors, some of the characteristics that belong to this domain are whether the school is public or private, the school's resources, the organizational and/or structural features of the school. School environment, academic policies and practices (Hammond, Linton, Smink & Drew; 2007). Finally, some of the traits that correspond to the community risk factors domain are location, demographic characteristics and the environment where students interact (Hammond, Linton, Smink & Drew; 2007).

### **2.2.7 Dropout Causes**

In this section, the main causes that have been claimed to influence dropout decisions are presented and categorized according to the four dropout risk-factor categories in a chart along with the authors and studies that exposed them. Nonetheless, it is important not to forget that these causes and factors do not fully reveal the ones that could be found at the context which is studied in this research. Therefore, this chart only serves as a reference for planning and creating the instrument for this study.

**Table 1***Causes Students Drop Out According to Individual, Family, School and Community Factors.*

<b>Individual factors</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
Individual Background Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a learning disability or emotional disturbance</li> </ul>	1) Kaufman, Bradbury, Owings (1992) 2) Wagner, Blackorby, Hebbeler (1993)
Early Adult Responsibilities: High Number of Work Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High number of work hours</li> </ul>	1) Barro and Kolstad (1987)
Early Adult Responsibilities: Parenthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a child</li> </ul>	1) Barro and Kolstad (1987) 2) Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989) 3) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)
Social Attitudes, Values, and Behavior: High-Risk Peer Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has close friendships with peers who are involved in high-risk, antisocial behavior (drug and alcohol use, misbehavior at school, illegal behavior, trouble with police,</li> </ul>	1) Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, Hawkins (2000) 2) Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989) 3) Elliott and Voss (1974)

	<p>violence, or aggression)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has close friends who are likely to or have dropped out</li> </ul>	
<p>Social Attitudes, Values, and Behavior: High-Risk Social Behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has been involved in high-risk, antisocial behavior (drug and alcohol use, misbehavior at school, illegal behavior, trouble with police, violence or aggression)</li> <li>• Has previously dropped out of school</li> <li>• Number of arrests</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, Hawkins (2000)</li> <li>2) Ensminger, Lamkin, and Jacobson (1996)</li> <li>3) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</li> </ol>
<p>Social Attitudes, Values, and Behavior: Highly Socially Active Outside of School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of time spent socializing with friends in activities outside of school hours</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997)</li> <li>2) Wagner, Blackorby, Hebbeler (1993)</li> </ol>
<p>School Performance: Low Achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade point average</li> <li>• Subject grades</li> <li>• Achievement test scores</li> <li>• Reading level</li> <li>• Whether failed any courses</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001)</li> <li>2. Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, Hawkins (2000)</li> <li>3. Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989)</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall academic success</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack and Rock (1986)</li> <li>5. Elliott and Voss (1974).</li> <li>6. Ensminger, Lamkin and Jacobson (1996)</li> <li>7. Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992).</li> <li>8. Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</li> <li>9. Goldschmidt and Wang (1999)</li> <li>10. Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt and Chen (2002)</li> <li>11. Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997)</li> <li>12. Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, and Carlson, B. (2000)</li> <li>13. Jordan, Lara and McPartland (1994)</li> <li>14. Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</li> <li>15. Lloyd (1978)</li> <li>16. Rumberger (1995)</li> <li>17. Wagner, Blackorby, Hebbeler (1993)</li> <li>18. Wehlage and Rutter (1986)</li> </ol>
<p>School Performance: Retention/Over-age for Grade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failed a grade</li> <li>• Over-age for grade level</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001)</li> <li>2) Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989)</li> <li>3) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</li> <li>4) Goldschmidt and Wang (1999)</li> </ol>



		<p>5) Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997)</p> <p>6) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</p> <p>7) Lloyd (1978)</p> <p>8) Rumberger (1995)</p> <p>9) Wagner, Blackorby, and Hebbeler (1993)</p>
School Engagement: Poor Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number of absences from school</li> <li>● Number of days truant</li> <li>● Number of days tardy</li> <li>● Number of classes cut</li> </ul>	<p>1) Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001)</p> <p>2) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</p> <p>3) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</p> <p>4) Wagner, Blackorby, and Hebbeler (1993)</p> <p>5) Wehlage and Rutter (1986)</p>
School Engagement: Low Educational Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Certainty of graduating from high school</li> <li>● Hopes or expectations of getting education beyond high school graduation</li> <li>● Amount of formal schooling they expect to get in the future</li> </ul>	<p>1) Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992)</p> <p>2) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</p> <p>3) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</p> <p>4) Rumberger (1995)</p> <p>5) Wehlage and Rutter (1986)</p>

<p>School Engagement: Lack of Effort</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of hours spent on homework</li> <li>• Whether performing up to their ability</li> <li>• Frequency of going to class unprepared</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</li> <li>2) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</li> </ol>
<p>School Engagement: Low Commitment to School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liking or disliking school</li> <li>• Level of expectations for school success</li> <li>• Amount of importance placed on school success</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001)</li> <li>2) Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986)</li> <li>3) Elliott and Voss (1974)</li> <li>4) Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997)</li> <li>5) Jordan, Lara, McPartland, (1994)</li> </ol>
<p>School Engagement: No Extracurricular Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of participation in extracurricular activities</li> <li>• Memberships in school or school-based community groups</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Elliott and Voss (1974)</li> <li>2) Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt and Chen (2002)</li> <li>3) Wagner, Blackorby, and Hebbeler (1993)</li> </ol>
<p>School Behavior: Misbehavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of times sent to the office for misbehavior</li> <li>• Number of warnings sent home about behavior</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001)</li> <li>2) Barro and Kolstad (1987)</li> <li>3) Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack and Rock (1986)</li> <li>4) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of suspensions/expulsion</li> </ul>	5) Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) 6) Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe and Carlson (2000) 7) Kaufman, Bradbury, Owings (1992) 8) Rumberger (1995) 9) Wehlage and Rutter (1986)
School Behavior: Early Aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of aggression exhibited in school</li> <li>• Level of aggression relative to peers</li> </ul>	1) Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989) 2) Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992)
<b>Family domain factors</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
Family Background Characteristics: Low Socioeconomic Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family income</li> <li>• Receipt of federal assistance</li> <li>• Rating of parents' occupations</li> </ul>	1) Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbni (2001) 2) Barro and Kolstad (1987) 3) Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989) 4) Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986) 5) Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992). 6) Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) 7) Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt and Chen (2002) 8) Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (1997) 9) Jordan, Lara and McPartland (1994) 10) Lloyd (1978)

		<p>11) Rumberger (1995)</p> <p>12) Teachman, Paasch and Carver (1996)</p> <p>13) Wehlage and Rutter (1986)</p>
<p>Family Background</p> <p>Characteristics: Low Education Level of Parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of formal schooling completed by parents</li> </ul>	<p>1) Barro and Kolstad (1987)</p> <p>2) Ensminger, Lamkin and Jacobson (1996)</p> <p>3) Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992)</p> <p>4) Goldschmidt and Wang (1999)</p> <p>5) Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (1997)</p> <p>6) Teachman, Paasch and Carver (1996)</p>
<p>Family Background</p> <p>Characteristics: Large Number of Siblings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of brothers and sisters</li> </ul>	<p>1) Barro and Kolstad (1987)</p> <p>2) Lloyd (1978)</p>
<p>Family Background</p> <p>Characteristics: Not Living With Both Natural Parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents' marital status</li> <li>• Family members living in household with student</li> <li>• Type of family/household where student lives</li> </ul>	<p>1) Barro and Kolstad (1987)</p> <p>2) Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986)</p> <p>3) Goldschmidt and Wang (1999)</p> <p>4) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</p> <p>5) Lloyd (1978)</p> <p>6) Rumberger (1995)</p> <p>7) Teachman, Paasch and Carver (1996)</p>

<p>Family Background Characteristics: Family Disruption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of household changes (divorce, death, remarriage, foster care)</li> <li>• Changes in household makeup</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Alexander, Entwisle, and Horsey (1997)</li> <li>2) Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001)</li> <li>3) Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (1997)</li> </ol>
<p>Family Engagement/Commitment to Education: Low Educational Expectations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent expectations about high school graduation for child</li> <li>• Amount of formal schooling parents expect child to get in the future</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992).</li> <li>2) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</li> <li>3) Rumberger (1995)</li> </ol>
<p>Family Engagement/Commitment to Education: School status of brothers and sisters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a sibling who dropped out</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Elliott and Voss (1974)</li> <li>2) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</li> <li>3) Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992)</li> <li>4) Teachman, Paasch and Carver (1996)</li> </ol>
<p>Family Engagement/Commitment to Education: Low Contact With School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of contacts between parents and school or teacher</li> <li>• Teacher rating of level of parental involvement</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe and Carlson (2000)</li> <li>2) Rumberger (1995)</li> </ol>
<p>Family Engagement/Commitment to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of conversations between</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Gleason and Dynarski (2002)</li> </ol>

Education: Lack of Conversations About School	parents and child about what studying in school	
<b>Academic factors</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor performance and low grades</li> <li>• Type of school</li> <li>• Curriculum quality</li> <li>• Teaching methods</li> <li>• Insatisfaction with the program</li> <li>• Number of subjects</li> <li>• Academic support given by school</li> <li>• Psychological support given by school members</li> <li>• Relationship with other students and teachers</li> <li>• Available resources at the institution</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Alderman (1999)</li> <li>2) Solano (2006)</li> <li>3) Spady (1970)</li> <li>4) Tinto (1975)</li> </ol>
<b>Community factors</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer pressure</li> <li>• Failure of students to find positive social relationships</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Kakuvi (2013)</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Language-minority status</li> <li>• Racial and ethnic minority groups</li> </ul>	1) Lee (2000)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longing (family far away)</li> <li>• Feeling of belonging</li> <li>• Friendships</li> </ul>	1) Hernández and Narváez
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macroeconomic context in the country</li> </ul>	1) Castaño, Gallón, Gómez and Vásquez (2004)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social status</li> <li>• Social environment</li> </ul>	1) Castaño, Gallón, Gómez and Vásquez (2008)

### 2.2.8 Persistence factors

Just as there are factors affecting students' decision to drop out, so are there factors affecting students' decision to continue their studies until their conclusion. In fact, these factors can also be categorized into different categories. Scott (2004) suggests three categories to classify the related factors to school persistence. He proposes that persistence is divided into cognitive, social, and institutional factors. Likewise, De los Santos (2004) (as cited in González

& Velázquez 2017, p. 120), considers that the main factors that may influence over students' persistence are the individual, academic, family and social.

So, in this study those factors will be taken into account because they correspond to the ones that were suggested in the dropout factors. This way, there will be simetry when explaining and presenting the results in the next chapters.

### **2.2.9 Persistence Causes**

When looking at the literature one can notice that there are some causes that may explain students' persistence. For instance, Scott (2004) proposes that students tend to persist when they are academically prepared (in this sense Scott makes emphasis on students' reading and writing competence); when the campus climate is positive for students (integration and interaction within the educational environment are determinant to create climate); when exists commitment to educational goals and the institution by students' part (this happens when students' goals and the institutions' overall components coexist); when social and academic integration is achieved (here college experiences related to student and teacher or mentors take place to create this "integration"); when financial aid is available (in this case any financial assistance will increase the probabilities that students will finish their studies).

### **2.3 Motivation**

In this study it has been considered important to include a section that addresses motivation. By doing so it is hoped to achieve a better understanding of why people behave



certain in ways, why they stop doing what they were doing, and how this actually takes place. As proposed by Graham and Bernard (1996, p. 63), why is it that some students complete tasks in spite of enormous difficulty, while others give up at the slightest provocation? In this study a similar question can be stated: why is it that some students at the LEI career are considering the option of dropping out and why have they decided not to do so but rather to continue with their studies?

Then, one should not forget that because the main interests in this study are to identify the reasons that could make students abandon their studies as well as those reasons that are making them persist at their career, it will be useful to first have some notions about humans' decision making process influenced by motivation. Moreover, the concepts of engagement and disengagement had previously been claimed to form part of the dropout and persistence phenomena. And as Denaley and Royal (2017) imply, when understanding motivation and the different types that exist, organization can take advantage of that knowledge to foster and harness motivation in order to improve engagement. Then, motivation is a key part of engagement. By the same, Graham and Weiner (1996) add something that seems to be important as well. They state that intensity and persistence are indicators of motivation. Then, it looks like persistence and motivation elements that are correlated to one another. Here, it has been mentioned that it is also intended to know why students persist and not give up; and therefore, by considering motivation, that objective could be probably achieved with more accuracy.

Finally, one last reason for adding motivation into this study has to do with what Datu (2017) states. The author points out that there have been studies that demonstrate that aspects such as autonomous motivation and amotivation have a great impact on educational outcomes. Then, it could be assumed that dropout and persistence might be included within those outcomes.

According to Graham and Bernard (1996) motivation refers to the study of why people think and behave in the way they do. Motivation has been a concern since the past century. And because of that different proposal with regard to the types of motivation as well as motivation theories have been proposed. This study begins by reviewing literature related to the types of motivation that exist. Then, it presents a motivation theory that explains in detailed how motivation takes place; that is Maslow's theory of human motivation.

### **2.3.1 Types of motivation**

Before starting to present, explain, and review the different kinds of motivation that exist, it is has been considered important to present a couple of ideas or concepts that the reader should keep in mind as he/she reads through this section.

First, Delaney and Royal (2017) highlight an important fact with regard to motivation in human beings. They state that not all motivation is created equal (p. 129). That means that every human being builds motivation based on different aspects that are much differentiated from person to person. In fact, they later deepen this idea by stating that personality and individual traits are the main aspects that promote this differentiation. Likewise, López and Pineda (2017) seem to coincide with this and suggest that intentional behavior takes place, to great extent, due to the personal values, interests, and experiences that each person has.

Now, with that in mind, the information that addresses the different types of motivation can be presented. This information basically addresses the two main distinctions that have been proposed with regard to motivation; and which a number of different authors have referred to

Delaney and Royal (2017), Harriet (2015), Ryan and Deci (2011), Datu (2017), López and Pineda (2017); we are talking about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

### **2.3.2 Intrinsic motivation**

To begin, to understand what intrinsic motivation means, one should consider what Ryan and Deci (2000) and Harrieth (2015) imply about it. They suggest that intrinsic motivation can be defined as doing a given task voluntarily because one finds it interesting or enjoyable. Moreover, Delaney and Royal (2017) add that intrinsic motivation is the result of personal experiences, self-concepts, and drives. Or seen in another way, in order for intrinsic motivation to occur, activities have to be consistent with individuals' personal attitudes, orientations, and values; but that is not the only way because intrinsic motivation may also emerge when a task at hand is personally meaningful for individuals. Then, again, the outcome that results from this is that those tasks that people perform end up being interesting or enjoyable to them. But not only that, because according to the authors, another outcome that comes from intrinsic motivation is that individuals get fully committed with their work. When individuals are intrinsically motivated they are capable of being more creative, solving problems more efficiently and effectively and demonstrating better conceptual thinking. This coincides somewhat with what Graham and Weiner (1996) had stated years ago. They affirmed that if a person is engaged in an activity that is interesting, engrossing, and involving, and the person is oblivious to all else, then (intrinsic) motivation is high (p. 63).

What is more, Delaney and Royal (2017) also point out that excitement, accomplishment, and personal satisfaction are some elements involved when doing something because one is intrinsically motivated. In other words, intrinsic motivation seems to trigger the appearance of such elements which could probably promote engagement and persistence in the process of pursuing any determined goal.

One final comment about intrinsic motivation is that some characteristics demonstrated by people with this type of motivation include: 1) being more inclined to prefer challenging tasks, 2) seeking out learning opportunities piqued by curiosity or interest, and 3) setting goals related to competence and mastery (Delaney & Royal, 2017).

### **2.3.3 Extrinsic motivation**

Another type of motivation that has been claimed to exist is extrinsic motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000) and Harrieth (2017), extrinsic motivation can be defined as the action of doing a given task because one is trying to reach a certain goal; a separable outcome. Delaney and Royal (2017) add something that can enrich this definition. They claim that one of the main characteristics of extrinsic motivation is that this is formed and influenced due to external aspects such as work environment, social norms, peer influence, authority or promises of rewards or incentives. Therefore, a statement that can be made about extrinsic motivation with regard to its counterpart; intrinsic motivation, is that the last, has to do more with internal matters and first has to do more with external stimuli or drives. Delaney and Royal

(2017) indicate this in another way. To them with extrinsic motivation behavior is driven by the influence of outside sources such as social norms, peer influence, authority, or promises of reward, and it is focused on the utility of the activity rather than the activity itself (p. 130).

Harrieth (2015) mentions that some implications that have been made with regard to using external rewards to promote extrinsic motivation are that: 1) rewarding someone for doing something causes the person being rewarded to lose interest on the task, and 2) rewards cause more damage to interest when there was already intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, Delaney and Royal (2017) point that extrinsic motivation does not necessarily have to be less effective or important than intrinsic motivation. Then, perhaps if extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation are used correctly, chances are that engagement and persistence will be augmented. Again, and as it was suggested at the beginning, by understanding the different types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and establishing the relationship that exist between them, a better understanding of why students attempt to drop out can be achieved. That is why below some other ideas that address the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are presented.

#### **2.3.4 The relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation**

There is a correlation between the two types of motivation that exist. Therefore, it is correct to assume that intrinsic motivation may influence over extrinsic motivation and vice versa. Delaney and Royal (2017), for example, believe that this correlation may be due to the fact that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are drivers of behavior.

One of the first notions in which an interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be observed on the fact that extrinsic motivation can sometimes be turned into intrinsic motivation. This may happen if the extrinsic motivators (outside motivators) satisfy one's internal needs such as satisfaction of feelings of competence (Delaney & Royal 2017). For example, when someone studies for an exam, this person first would have extrinsic motivation because he/she would be pursuing a reward (passing the exam). But then, if this person discovers that by studying he develops his potential skills and enjoys this, chances are that his motivation could be considered intrinsic and not extrinsic anymore.

Another assumption that has been made about how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are related dictates that too much focus on extrinsic motivation can lower intrinsic motivation. In this regard, Festinger (1967) states that this occurs because external rewards affect perceptions of why people do what they do. Then, he assures that too much focus on external rewards can decrease intrinsic motivation. Delaney and Royal (2017) coincide with this by stating that when there is too much emphasis on extrinsic motivators and when they are tangible (such as pay in the case of workers), intrinsic motivation may result lowered. Additionally, Harrieth (2015) provides another example in which this phenomenon could be observed according to what has been stated. He points out a case in which students are praised in different ways stating that when students are praised for their effort, they tend to take on challenging tasks; then it could be affirmed that these students would have intrinsic motivation. But when these are praised because of their abilities, they prefer to carry out easy tasks; then their motivation would be defined as extrinsic since praise becomes a reward itself. Then, if too much focus is put on praising students because of their intelligence or abilities rather than their effort, it is likely that their intrinsic motivation would become lost. Harrieth (2015) himself affirms if a student has received praised

based on their ability, they may well begin to believe that this is the most important aspect of their learning, rather than the concept of overcoming challenges in order to improve (p. 8).

Finally, some conclusions that have been drawn with regard to the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are that intrinsic motivation is often claimed to be better than extrinsic motivation because it supposedly improves performance, productivity, and engagement (Denaley & Royal, 2017 & Datu, 2017). However, it has also been acknowledged that extrinsic motivation is easier to influence than intrinsic motivation. Yet, organization should make efforts not to overlook intrinsic motivation even though promoting this type of motivation is more difficult and time consuming. In the end, the final objective of knowing what influences the both types of motivation is for organizations to increase engagement and promote individuals' best performance (Delaney & Royal, 2017).

### **2.3.5 A theory of human motivation**

One more element that may help understand how motivation works and how students at the LEI program could be being influenced in their desire to drop out is Maslow's theory of motivation (1943). As Graham and Weiner (1996) point out, theories of motivation may assist in promoting better performance (and probably in increasing levels of engagement) by individuals. Maslow was a humanistic psychologist who interested in what motivates human behavior and he concluded that humans do what they do mainly because of their desire to satisfy a number of different needs and wants (Mawere, Mubaya, van Reisen & van Stam, 2016). This is a theory taken just as a point of reference for this study. It is not intended to signify that in the context in

which this study takes place individuals are strictly aligned with what Maslow claims with regard to human motivation, however the opposite cannot be assured either.

As Mawere, Mubaya, van Reisen and van Stam (2016) state, this theory has more often been taken as a work that should be acclaimed but it has been little criticized even though it has not been tested in different contexts than those in which it was created in order to confirm its validity. Moreover, as Graham and Weiner (1996) suggest, a good theory should be able to explain diverse phenomena across a range of disparate situations. That is, a scientific theory that entails general laws that transcend particular instances (Graham & Weiner, 1996, p.64). That is why in this study this theory is only to consider other notions that may be correlated with the main interest subject of interest which is identifying the reasons that motivate students to drop out or persist in their studies.

Then, to begin, it is pertinent to restate that Maslow believes that human behavior is dominated mainly because of the desire that humans have to accomplish different needs and wants. Not only that, but Maslow also proposes five main different groupings in which needs can be categorized. Those are: physiological needs, security needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualizing needs (Mawere, Mubaya, van Reisen & van Stam, 2016). Below is a chart that describes each one of these groups of needs that Maslow proposed.

## **Table 2**

Physiological, Security, Social, Esteem and Self-actualizing Needs



<p>Physiological needs:</p>	<p>These include the most basic needs that are vital to survival, such as the need for water, air, food, and shelter. These needs are the most basic and instinctive needs in the hierarchy because all needs become secondary until these physiological needs are met. Maslow also suggested that the other important physiological basic need was sexual: reproduction.</p>
<p>Security needs:</p>	<p>These include the desires for safety and security. Security needs are important for survival, but they are not as demanding as the physiological needs. Examples of security needs include a desire for steady employment, health care, safe neighborhoods, and shelter from the environment. When the more basic survival needs have been fulfilled, people begin to feel that they need more control and order to their lives.</p>
<p>Social needs:</p>	<p>These include needs for belonging, love, and affection. Maslow described these needs as less basic than physiological and security needs. Relationships such as friendships, romantic attachments, and families help fulfil this need for companionship and acceptance, also involvement in social, community, or religious groups.</p>

<p>Esteem needs:</p>	<p>These include the need for things that reflect on self-esteem, personal worth, social recognition, and accomplishment. It becomes important to gain the respect and appreciation of others. People have a need to accomplish things and then have their efforts recognized. People often engage in activities such as going to school, playing a sport, enjoying a hobby, or participating in professional activities in order to fulfil this need. Satisfying this need and gaining acceptance and esteem helps people become more confident. Failing to gain recognition for accomplishments, however, can lead to feelings of failure or inferiority.</p>
<p>Self-actualizing needs:</p>	<p>Here, people are self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with the opinions of others, and interested in fulfilling their potential.</p>

Furthermore, besides proposing the five groups in which human needs can be categorized, Maslow also suggested some other ideas that are related to them.

For instance, it should be mentioned that the groups, as they are organized, form a hierarchy. In that sense, it has to be pointed out that the physiological needs are the primary needs or as referred to by other authors, the basic needs. And conversely, the self-actualizing needs can be referred as the most complex needs. In fact, Maslow established that when physiological needs are unsatisfied, the rest of the other needs become unimportant or

nonexistent to individuals (Mawere, Mubaya, van Reisen & van Stam, 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that physiological needs are the most dominant of all according to Maslow.

Mawere, Mubaya, van Reisen and van Stam (2016) also mention that something else that occurs when a person cannot fulfill a set of needs, then this person's life might be dominated by the desire of trying to satisfy those needs which the person lacks whether they be physiological needs, security needs, social needs, self-esteem needs or self-actualizing needs. In that case, if a person's physiological needs are thwarted, then this person will most likely only care about doing things that help satisfy their needs of food, water or shelter. Moreover, this same principle would also apply to more complex needs. One more idea that comes from Maslow's theory of human motivation is that when a need is satisfied, then it will no longer be a need, but not only that happens when a set of needs are fulfilled. Maslow also pointed out that needs become present as their predecessor needs are satisfied. Then, if a person's physiological needs are well satisfied, security needs will become more important to that person and so on.

To conclude, all the previous information allows having an ampler notion about why humans do what they do and how their decisions are built. This information, however, must be related to the specific objectives that this research has.

## **Chapter III Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the methodology to be used in this study is described so that the objectives set in chapter I are met. This chapter should also help to outline the procedure that needs to be followed. Then, this chapter plans to establish and inform about the method, location of the

research, participants, sampling, techniques, instruments and data analysis technique. What is more, Creswell (2014) states that researchers must be critical when deciding what strategies to use in their enquiry. Equally, Almalki (2016) holds the view that researches have the responsibility of choosing adequate tools for their research. Therefore, the selection of each one of the elements above discussed are carefully chosen and justified along this chapter.

### **3.2 Method**

There are multiple ways of defining the concept of research method. For Pandey and Pandey (2015) it is a framework that researchers use for collecting and analyzing data. It would be the steps that need to be followed in order to complete a study. In other words, it can be seen as a map which helps to guide research. Similarly, Bacáioaca, Goñi, Uría, Mintegi, Mendrano, Nuño and Palacios (2002) point out that method could also be the way one approaches problems in research as well as the way one finds answers to it. Furthermore, Almalki (2016) states that method refers to the instruments that are used to administer inquiry; and that researchers have to responsibly choose the method that best suits their study.

Fortunately, in order to select an appropriate method, researchers dispose of a number of aspects that will help make the best possible decision. Creswell (2009), for example, mentions that some aspects that may influence over the decision of choosing a certain method are:

- The nature of the problem being researched
- Researcher's personal experiences and training

- The audience to whom researchers address
- The type of information that needs to be collected

Bautista (2013) adds that other aspects to consider when selecting a research method are whether one seeks to understand a phenomenon, find average or dynamic structure or comprehending human phenomena. Then, it is important to mention that all of the previous criteria or guidelines were considered as a general starting point for selecting the right method for this study. At this point the qualitative method started looking more appropriate than the quantitative method for guiding this study. Nevertheless, in order to be completely sure about the choice, more aspects such as usefulness and characteristics of this method were considered. Below, some of those characteristics are presented.

### **3.2.1 The qualitative method**

The qualitative method was selected in the present study because of what it allows doing. According to Almalki (2016), Guest, Mack, McQueen, Namey and Woodson (2005) and MacDonald and Headlam (2015), a qualitative method is useful when it is intended to explore and understand phenomena as well as the reasons and motivations for triggering certain behaviors. In this study, that is exactly what has been aimed to achieve; understanding why students become prone to dropping out and exploring the motivations that provoke so. Furthermore, Creswell (2009) points out that another reason for using the qualitative method can be when little research about a topic has been done or when a topic has scarcely been addressed with a group of people.

In the same line, Creswell (2009) states that the qualitative method can also be useful when there are important variables to examine but which remain unknown. These variables can later be used with larger samples of individuals in quantitative studies. When this study concludes, that could be done. Then, actions could be taken in order to decrease the dropout rate in the LEI program.

Other useful aspects of the qualitative method are that it provides an ample overview on the human side of social issues as well as the perspectives that individuals bring to them and their reality while considering a wide number of contextual and cultural aspects such as behaviors, beliefs, values, opinions, experiences, emotions, relationships, social norms, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion and so on (Almalki, 2016 and Guest, Mack, McQueen, Namey & Woodsong (2005). That is how this type of method achieves a major comprehension of human complexity by not being limited to observable facts but rather by interpreting hidden meanings (Bautista 2011).

Finally, it seems pertinent to define what exactly the qualitative method is. Guest, Mack, McQueen, Namey and Woodsong (2005) give a pretty general definition; they indicate that in the qualitative method, one seeks to answer a question, uses procedures to answer it, and collects evidence. For their part, Bacáioaca, Goñi, Uría, Mintegi, Mendrano, Nuño and Palacios (2002) state that the qualitative method or methodology can be defined as the research that produces descriptive data (p.7). McDonald and Headlam (2015) seem to agree with that definition but they add that besides providing rich and detailed qualitative data, the qualitative method tends to tell how people feel and what think rather than how many of a target population feel or think this or that way. Also, Alshenqeti (2015) claims that the qualitative method is one in which researchers

explore and describe the quality and nature of how people behave, experience and understand (p. 39).

Again, this is why the qualitative method was chosen for this study for it is a method that will allow exploring in depth students' behaviors, feelings, thoughts and experiences towards their possible decision to drop out. Then, in this study the concept that Guest, Mack, McQueen, Namey and Woodsong (2005) is considered as a general idea of what the qualitative methodology is about. But this is reinforced with the notions that Guest, Namey, Mack, McQueen and Name (2005) and Alshenqeeti (2015) suggest.

### **3.3 Instruments**

Now, the information regarding the instruments that were used for this study are presented. The next paragraphs discuss topics such as interview, in depth interviews, semi structured interviews, the interview protocol refinement (IPR) but some other considerations such as ethical issues, validity and reliability are included.

#### **3.3.1 Interview**

In this research the interview was selected as the main instrument for data collection. As Castillo (2016) suggests, by interviewing researchers can obtain rich and detailed qualitative data for understanding participants' experiences, how they describe those experiences as well as the

meaning that participants make out of them. With this, it could be stated that by implementing the use of interviews, the objectives of this study would be met. Catillo (2016), in fact, states that research questions tell what is desired to be understood (in this case the reasons students desire to drop out and their reasons to persist) but they cannot help in gaining that understanding; that is what interviews are used for. McDonald and Headlam (2015) also insist that interviewing can be effective when seeking participants' views, opinions and specific perspectives. According to Bautista (2011) no one can tell but participants themselves about everything they think and feel, they have experienced and intend to do. Similarly, Alshenqeeti (2015) suggests that interviewing should be used when looking to obtain direct explanations for human actions.

Now, Bautista (2011) defines the interview as a research technique that allows obtaining data about factual or emotional realities through a dialog between the interviewer and the interviewee. It would be a conversation that intends and plans to get close to achieving the research objectives of a research. Alshenqeeti (2015) claims that interviewing is a useful data collection tool for revealing the meaning that is constructed in a given setting. It is also used for expanding the understanding of phenomena since it is more naturalistic and less structured. Maybe that is why it has been claimed to be the most popular and frequently used method of data collection in social sciences according to McDolnad and Headlam (2015).

### **3.3.2 Advantages of the interview**

Some of the reasons for having selected the interview as a research instrument have much to do with the benefits that come with it. Here some of those benefits are presented.



Alshenqeeti (2015), for example, mentions a number of advantages that come from utilizing interviews as data collection tools. According to him some benefits of interviews are that: a) they enable participants to raise their voice by themselves expressing their own thoughts and feelings; b) mutual understanding can be ensured as the interaction between interviewer and interviewee allows clarifying questions that could not be understood; this, in turn, will guarantee more accurate data; c) the data that is generated allows investigating people's views in greater depth; and last but not least, d) interviews tend to be a low-cost method for data collection.

Some other authors such as Pandey and Pandey (2015) and Guest, Namey, Mack, McQueen and Name (2005) also mention several benefits of the interviews. Those benefits are presented below.

- It is direct
- It is deep
- Knowledge of past and future events can be revealed
- Knowledge of special features is revealed
- Face to face interaction between researchers and participants exist
- Written and oral information is obtained
- It is flexible
- It may be appropriate to deal with delicate, confidential and intimate topics

- Probing can be used to delve into causal factors, determine attitudes, and discover the origin of issues
- It allows getting to know participants involved in the study

It is for all those reasons that the interview as a means of data collection was selected since its usefulness would be of great help in order to meet the research objectives in this research project.

### **3.3.3 Semi-structured interview**

By now it is known that the interview is the main instrument for data collection in this study. In this section, some more detailed information is presented with regard to it since there are various styles of interviews that can be used. According to McDonald (2015) the three main styles of interviews are the structured, the unstructured and the semi-structured. The interview that was used in this study was semi-structured. Then, some of its main traits are presented here.

Alshenqeeti (2015) argues that the semi-structured interview is more flexible than the structured interview allowing the interviewer to probe and expand the participants' responses in the interview so that more depth is achieved. McDonald and Headlam (2015) also mention that in the semi-structured interview researchers can actively participate in the interview as themes and issues arise, but they also make emphasis on the fact that in this type of research there is often a framework that is followed. Bautista's (2011) point of view is of great value as well since he indicates that the semi-structured interview is a conversation with the end of collecting data

through open-ended questions which reveal the categories of interest within research. Thanks to it, researchers are able to identify and classify the issues or behaviors being researched. He adds that researchers' contributions to enrich the process of interviewing can be done through verbal and non-verbal language and this occurs with a certain degree of spontaneity.

Then, since this study is of exploratory nature, certain degree of flexibility is desired. But too much flexibility is not necessary since there is already some research that functions as a framework (the theoretical framework from chapter II) that can be used within the interview. That is why neither the structured nor unstructured styles were occupied for this research. Not only that, but as this research aims to identify and classify the reasons provoking the issue of dropout through the construction of categories, then using the semi-structured interview style results highly appropriate.

### **3.3.4 In-depth interview**

The interview used in this research does not only qualify as a "semi-structured" interview but also as an "in-depth" interview. According to Guest, Namey Mack, McQueen and Namey (2005) methods of data collection such as focus groups, participant observations and in-depth interviews qualify as semi-structured. For that reason, this section addresses the in-depth interview a little bit more in detail.

As mentioned previously, through interviews it is possible to learn about participant's perspectives and interpretations of the world and to collect data on participants' histories, perspectives, and experiences. Guest, Namey Mack, McQueen and Namey (2005) and Bautista

(2011) explain the range of possibilities that come from adopting in-depth interviews. For instance, Guest, Namey Mack, McQueen and Namey (2005) point out that in-depth interviews can be used when sensitive topics are addressed in research. The authors also state that nuances and contradictions are evidenced when using the in-depth interview. Also, as interpretations about events phenomena and beliefs are made, connections and relationships between these may be observed. Guest, Namey Mack, McQueen and Namey (2005) also add that during in-depth interviews, interviewees are normally considered to be the experts from whom researchers learn. Researchers attempt to learn as much as possible about the research topic through participants. That is why they adopt an unbiased attitude when listening to what their participant say; they, in fact, have to be cautious not to lead participants to any preconceived notions and it is also usually suggested that they do not show any signs of approval or disapproval so that participants can be as frank as possible.

Bautista (2011) views the in-depth interview as a conversational model in which interviewer and interviewee are equals. Moreover, in the in-depth interview process it is not only important to get answers but to also learn what questions are important to ask and how to ask them. Researchers normally advance slowly during the phases of the interview; at first, rapport must be built so that later information useful for meeting research's objectives is obtained.

### **3.3.5 Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR)**

Besides the semi-structured interview, in this study, a second research tool was utilized; that is the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR). Castillo (2016) acknowledges it as a method,

framework or instrument that can be utilized for refining structured or semi-structured interviews. Alshenqeeti (2015) considers that the more an interview gets rich information and flows naturally, the better it will be. Thanks to the IPR that can be achieved. Furthermore, Castillo (2016) stresses that apart from obtaining rich, focused and meaningful data, the IPR method a) increases the reliability of the interviews being used in a study; b) helps to prevent potential information gaps before the process of data collection is finished; c) can be used by inexperienced as well as experienced researchers and d) allows room for flexibility and change as is required throughout the study being carried out as long as congruence is maintained.

Moreover, according to Castillo (2016) the IPR framework is pretty systematic since there are four phases that help develop and refine interview guides as much as possible. Those are:

1. Ensuring that the interview questions align with the research questions. In this phase researchers make sure that the questions they include in their interviews are congruent with research questions of the study.
2. Constructing an inquiry-based conversation. Here, researchers carefully organize questions to shape the interview as a conversation while ensuring that it is clear.
3. Receiving feedback on the interview guide. In this phase, researchers may receive help usually from more experienced advisors. By reading the interview guide in detail, it is usually possible to determine how understandable questions are.
4. Piloting the interview guide. In this final phase, researchers test their interviews with a small sample of people who have similar characteristics to the participants desired in

the study. Also, as it is carried out under real conditions, it is possible to calculate the time invested during the interviews as well as to verify if participants are able to answer the interview questions.

Not only that, but Castillo (2016) and Alsheenqeti (2015) also suggest several ideas that should be always considered when designing interview guides.

At the beginning rapport between the interviewer and interviewee should be established so that the rest of the interview flows smoothly. At this stage researchers also have to make sure that the space they are going to use is appropriate, that they inform about the research's objectives and that they confirm participants' consent to participate in the study.

Then, Castillo (2016) points out that the questions that will help answer the research questions and meet the research objectives have to go in the middle of the interview. At this stage, researchers have to ensure that the questions they ask make the interaction flow positively so that participants are likely to share their experiences and thoughts. Therefore, questions should be clear and short avoiding any academic language. After doing this, the questions included in the interview guide will be clear, simple and answerable.

Finally, Alshenqeti (2015) highlights the importance of giving participants the chance to express any extra comments or questions. Additionally, they are also expected to thank their participants and try to establish means of communication to keep in touch with them in the future.

Undoubtedly, the use of the IPR in this study is highly important for it increases the reliability of the study ensuring that the data obtained in the interview is meaningful and useful for the study's purposes.

### **3.4 Sampling**

Sampling is another very important part of the methodology used in this research. Therefore, this section discusses some information regarding the type of sampling (or recruitment strategies) selected for this study.

First, there are a number of definitions provided by several authors. Bautista (2011) considers that sampling involves selecting the situations, agents, events, places and topics that are tied to the problem being researched. Mejia (2000) holds the view that sampling refers to selecting a group of units from a population according to socio-structural representation with the objective of generating valid results for the universe. Pandey and Pandey (2015), for their part, provide more detailed information about what sampling implies. They first claim that sampling can be seen as part of the strategy of research. They also mention that it means selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population (p. 41). According to them, by population it should be understood the characteristics of a specific group. The end of selecting individuals from the population is for observation and analysis.

Moreover, there are specific characteristics in sampling that distinguish qualitative studies like this. For example, Mejia (2000) states that in qualitative sampling participants are

selected according to their representativeness. This representativeness can be achieved through the comprehension of the subjects of study.

Another characteristic that Mejia (2000) highlights is that qualitative sampling makes it possible to generalize results to the universe being studied but only within the social-structural limitations that allow it.

Furthermore, by representativeness, it can be understood the main characteristics of a universe that describe it (Mejia, 2000). Then, Crespo and Salamanca (2007) and Martinez (2012) point out how observation units (or target populations) can be constructed and what traits can be important when defining it. Martinez (2012) claims that analysis units or observation units (target populations in other words) can be grouped into individuals, people, families, groups, institutions, and cultural or geographic areas. Crespo and Salamanca (2007) suggest that criteria are constructed based on gender, race, age, occupation, place, and context.

Additionally, according to Martinez (2012) another characteristic in qualitative sampling is that the sample size is unknown when starting the process of selecting participants. Pandey and Pandey (2015) claim that this occurs since it is not possible nor necessary to collect data from every person that is involved in the issue being researched. Instead, it is more common to select a fraction from the whole universe. Therefore, sampling only includes a fraction from the universe, not its entirety (Mejia, 2000).

Furthermore, in qualitative sampling besides using sampling small samples, the process usually tends to be non-randomized (Crespo & Salamanca, 2007). In fact, Martinez (2012) and Mejia (2000) imply that in qualitative sampling what is more important than the number of participants is the rich and profound knowledge these participants have about the research



problem. In fact, in quantitative studies such decision would be considered weaknesses but in qualitative studies that is what provides more scientific rigor and accuracy (Martinez, 2012).

Once again, the first step in sampling is defining the target population (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). Crespo and Salamanca (2007) suggest three great dimensions to take into account when doing this; time, people and context. In this study time is important since participants have to be students who enrolled into the LEI program in 2016 and after because in that year the curriculum was updated. Also, the people considered for this study are only students who belong to the Language Faculty and the LEI program. Therefore, students from the LEF program (who also belong to the Language Faculty) and other students from different careers at BUAP are not part of the universe studied in this research.

Finally, some questions that Bautista (2011) suggest researchers should ask themselves when selecting and implementing recruitment strategies are: a) how deep and extensive does the data collection process have to be? b) Where should the data collection process begin and finish? C) Whom should be included and excluded in the sample?

The last question has already been answered but the two remaining questions are answered below through the explanation of the saturation principle and the actual recruitment strategies used in this study.

### **3.5 Recruitment strategies used in this study**

A sampling technique is basically a recruitment strategy. And Guest, Namey, Mack, McQuenn and Woodsong (2005) state a recruitment strategy or is a specific plan for identifying and enrolling people to participate in a research study (p.6). Based on that, two different approaches for identifying and enrolling participants were used. Moreover, Guest, Namey, Mack, McQuenn and Woodsong (2005) also suggest that researchers, principal investigators and team members work together in order to select the most suitable sampling technique. In this study, a similar process was followed. A thesis advisor and two other research professors were consulted to make decisions about this matter. Furthermore, one of the advantages of using qualitative sampling techniques is the flexibility which allows modifying any previous decision (Guest, Namey, Mack, McQuenn and Woodsong, 2005). That was a great advantage to this study and that is why different approaches were used according to the situations that were arising.

### **3.5.1 Purposive sampling**

Purposive sampling, which is a sampling strategy, intends to identify participants according to specific criteria. The sample size is often determined based on the resources and time available for the study. But more importantly the sample size is determined according to a theoretical principle called saturation. Then, as judgment is used for selecting it is possible to select participants who are likely to have rich information about the research problem (Martinez, 2012). What is more, Mejia (2000) points out two steps necessary in purposive sampling. The first is to indicate the main characteristics for the participants based on the research issue. The second is to select participants according to those characteristics. Therefore, in this study the main characteristics for participants include:

- Students who are still enrolled into the LEI major program.
- Students who started the LEI program from 2016.
- Students who explicitly express a desire (present or past) to drop out from the major.

With regard to the second step, selecting the participants, purposive sampling was not enough because the strategy being used until that point was not effective. Then, a second sampling strategy was implemented; that is snowball sampling, and it is described below.

### **3.5.2 Snowball sampling**

One problem that arose when attempting to get in touch with participants for this study was actually finding them. As it was mentioned, one of the characteristics that participants have to have in this study is that they have current or past intentions to drop out from the LEI program. However, this characteristic is not merely observable nor evident. Then, asking students face to face was the only way to find out if that requirement was met. It was necessary to come to see these students during class and ask if they were or had been prone to dropping out. The challenge with this was that some professors refused to be interrupted during their classes and that even though some did accept, some students still hesitated to express that they met that criteria. Therefore, another strategy had to be used in order to accelerate the process of recruiting participants for carrying out the interviews. This sampling procedure is called snowball sampling.

According to Guest, Namey, Mack, McQuenn and Woodsong (2005) when not knowing how to recruit people for interviewing, it is helpful to consult with local people who are actively engaged in the target population and therefore have connections. Similarly, Martinez (2012) claims that in snowball sampling, participants who could be considered good candidates are traced through the liaisons researchers already have. These people do not necessarily have to be part of the target population.

Crespo and Salamanca (2007) point out that the main advantage of doing that is that it becomes easier to establish rapport with new participants since they have been recommended by their peers. That is a way of contacting participants that is difficult to find. Then, this sampling technique could be seen as a social web which builds the sample bigger and bigger as researchers progressively work on the study Martinez (2012) and Pandey and Pandey (2015). Lastly, Pandey and Pandey (2015) make another observation with regard to snowball sampling and it is that even though snowball sampling is usually considered to be non-probabilistic, it can be turned into probabilistic if subjects are selected randomly. In this study, it was possible to recruit participants more easily thanks to the snowball sampling technique.

### **3.5.3 Saturation principle**

Mejia (2000) argues that after having decided who the participants are going to be and how to identify them, researchers still need to determine the number of participants needed in their samples. Martinez (2012) asks the question “How many participants are enough?” and answers by indicating that in qualitative studies there are not established rules but rather it

depends on the situations and challenges that researchers encounter. Some of those situations are: the study's objectives, the possibilities and limitations, and the scope the study has. Then, in order to make decisions about the sample size, it is necessary to always consider the context in which a study takes place.

Nevertheless, in qualitative studies there is actually a method suggested that helps defining the sample size. That is the saturation principle. Then, a possibly appropriate answer to the question "To what extent is it necessary to continue collecting data?" is "until the saturation principle occurs" (Mejia, 2000). In fact, Mejia (2000) highlights that the saturation principle not only is helpful in determining the sample size but also in constructing scientific rigor when it comes to qualitative sampling. Whereby, a well performed saturation process promotes scientificity in terms of approximating the social reality, it allows achieving more objectivity and it provides a solid base for legitimation in qualitative research.

Thus, the next question to ask is... What exactly is the saturation principle? Mejia (2000) defines it as a process that reaches a maximum diversification point of information revealed by participants so that any new information and knowledge about the reality being studied is no longer obtained but rather repeated. Crespo and Salamanca (2007) agree by stating that the saturation principle is the point in which new information is no longer obtained because this starts being redundant. Martinez (2012), for his part, states that the saturation principle is understood as the extent in which diverse ideas haven already been heard and in which every additional interview does not show more elements. Then, as far as new data arises the search for information should not be stopped.

Furthermore, Mejia (2000) indicates that the saturation principle starts when there are around 11 to 15 cases, it becomes clearer from 16 to 25 cases and it is fully reached from 26 to 30 cases.

Nevertheless, some final thoughts by Martinez (2012) indicate it might not be possible to reach a saturation point since there will always be something new to learn from the reality. Then, researchers should keep exploring not until an unreachable saturation but rather until they consider they have discovered novel contributions to the research problem that are worth listening to. Then, in sum, if researchers succeed to present relevant findings they can consider that their efforts have been of value.

Therefore, in this study the ideal number of participants is considered to be around 15 to 20 participants. But it could probably be modified depending on whether the information is considered of value and contribution.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) data analysis plays one of the most important roles in qualitative research. These authors also state that the process of data analysis involves searching meaning systematically. A more detailed definition of data analysis explains that...

It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations,

mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding. It always involves [...] “mindwork”. Researchers always engage their own intellectual capacities to make sense of qualitative data. (Hatch, 2002 p. 148, as cited in Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

In the same light, Bautista (2011) argues that the data analysis process includes some elements such deep search for answers, prolonged and active observation, and a rigorous overview of the data obtained. Bautista (2011) also mentions that qualitative data analysis involves pattern identification, tracing of repeated themes, and analysis and explanations of causes. Pandey and Pandey (2015) once again mention that establishment of categories is required in data analysis. These ideas are further developed throughout the following sections.

### **3.6.1 Qualitative data**

This section introduces ideas related to how data analysis is saved and used. Then, it explains how data was saved and used in this study.

First, because qualitative data is a means of obtaining natural occurring information that can be used to increase understanding of social phenomena (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), it is very important to know how to process all the information that is obtained through the research tools and instruments being used. Perhaps, the major challenge when doing this is that managing qualitative data may represent a daunting task (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Guest, Namey, Mack, McQueen and Woodsong (2005) concern themselves with the questions:

1. What form do interview data take?
2. How are interview data used?

Guest, Namey, Mack, McQueen and Woodsong (2005) suggest that the answer to the first question is tape recordings, typed transcripts, and interview notes. They also mention that audio recordings are used to create the transcripts which are typed and saved into computer files. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) qualitative data can be turned into journals, diaries, permanent records, transcriptions of meetings and photographs.

McDonald and Headlam (2015) answer the second question when they state that a way of using data analysis is to quote parts of the interview when reporting findings.

In this study that is how data was managed. First, audio recordings of the interviews were obtained, and then, transcripts were written. Later, those transcripts were used to identify categories and codes. This process is part of a data analysis technique called “constant comparison” which is explained more in detail below.

### **3.6.2 Constant comparison**

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007), constant comparison is the most used tool for data analysis in qualitative studies. Another form of referring to it is “coding”. Leech and



Onwuegbuzie (2007) also state that this type of data analysis is to identify themes coming from the data and they also state that the process can be deductively, inductively or deductively.

Furthermore, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) explain that constant comparison is a process in which researchers read the entire interviews in order to divide it into small meaningful parts. Then, each chunk is labeled with a descriptive code. After data has been coded, groups are created according to similarity.

In this study constant comparison was used in order to identify the causes that are related to students' desires to drop out in the LEI program.

### **3.6.3 Content analysis**

In this study two methods for analyzing data were used. The first was already discussed in the previous section. The second is called content analysis. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) recommend researchers to use at least two data analysis tools because by doing that researchers are able to understand better, generate more meaning and enhance the quality of their inferences.

Thus, Bautista (2011) refers to content analysis as a process in which researchers need to interpret data since there is hidden meaning contained in it. Bautista (2011) points out that the process of content analysis consists of reducing data with the purpose of expressing them in a systematic, significant and comprehensible way. The goal of content analysis is to categorize data.

Therefore, by using constant comparison and content analysis it was possible to code and categorize data in order to answer this study's research questions. However, it must be clear how coding and categorization differ from each other and for that reason the next section is included.

### **3.6.4 Coding and categorization**

According to Bautista (2011), coding and categorizing are two concepts to which several researchers indiscriminately refer to. Both concepts refer to the reduction of qualitative data analysis but they are different.

On the one hand, Bautista (2011) mentions that categorization is tied to the coding process. It allows locating and classifying units found within the texts (interviews) according to their themes.

On the other hand, Bautista (2011) points out that coding is a process in which every unit of analysis is given a code which belongs to a category. Therefore, codes represent and are grouped into categories. Codes can be visual or numeric characters but it is also possible to use words or abbreviations to label categories.

Therefore, in this study the categories used to refer to students' possible dropout include the individual factors, family factors, academic factors and social factors. These categorizations, as mentioned in chapter II, have been suggested and used in past literature because it facilitates organizing and classifying dropout into clear separable domains.

Moreover, codes were expressed with words such as “S prefers another career (where “S” means “student”), for example. Later, these codes were organized according to the four categories already mentioned. In chapter IV, there is more information presented related to the codes that emerged from the data collected, and of course the categories to which those codes belong to.

## **Chapter IV: Findings**

### **4.0 Introduction**

In this chapter the results that were obtained from the instruments applied are discussed. First, this chapter recapitulates the research questions and objectives of this study. Then, it again presents some of the participants' characteristics. Later, the chapter presents the factors and specific reasons that affect students to be at risk of dropping out, and then it introduces the factors and specific reasons that motivate students to persist at the major. Moreover, findings are presented according to four categories (individual factors, family factors, school factors and social factors). Furthermore, these findings are also compared to those in other studies.

#### **4.0.1 General objectives**

1. To determine students' main possible reasons to drop out the LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) program at the Faculty of Languages.
2. To determine students' reasons to persist at the LEI program.

#### **4.0.2 Specific objectives**

1. To identify LEI students' possible reasons to drop out the major.
2. To identify LEI students' reasons to persist at the major

### 4.0.3 General research question

Why would LEI students drop out their major?

### 4.0.4 Specific research questions

1. What are students' main possible reasons to drop out of the major at LEI program?
2. What factor does most influence students so that they think of dropping out?
3. Why do LEI students persist?
4. What could influence over students' persistence?

## 4.1 Participants

This study consisted of nine participants who were students enrolled into the LEI program at the time they were interviewed. To protect their identity, they are referred to as participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, and so on. More information about the profile of these participants is presented in the chart below.

**Table 3**

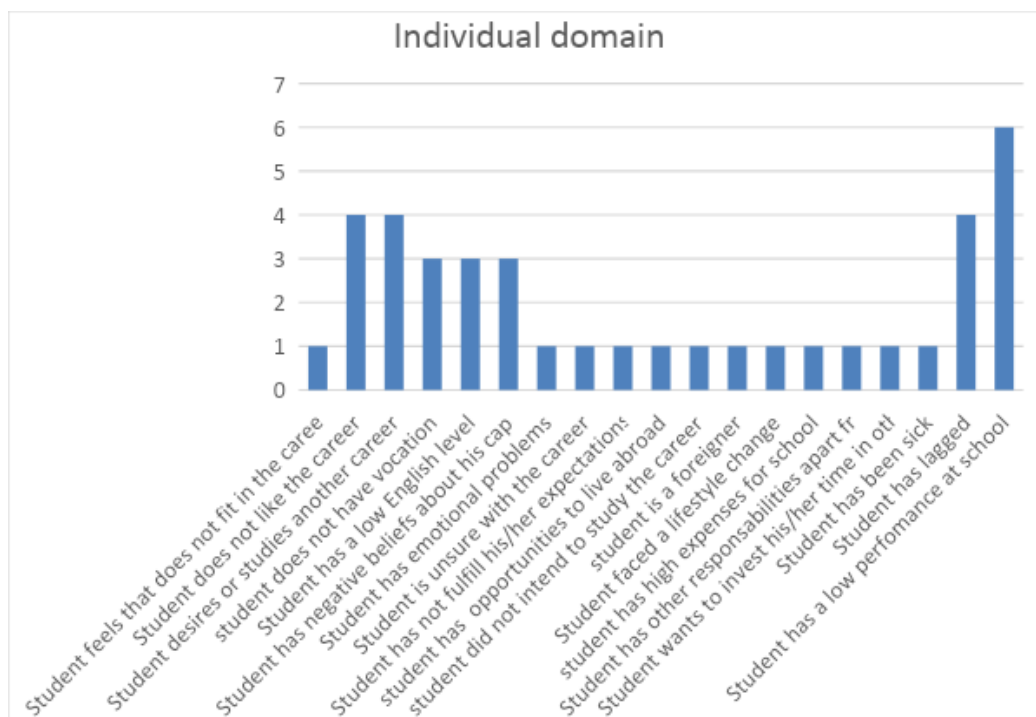
Participants' Demographic Characteristics

Participant number	Age	Gender	Generation	Place of residency (Puebla)	First career choice	Attitude towards the major
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Participant 1	9	Female	2018	Yes	Yes	Positive
Participant 2	9	Female	2017	Yes	Yes	Positive
Participant 3	3	Female	2018	Yes	No	Positive
Participant 4	8	Female	2018	Yes	Yes	Positive
Participant 5	8	Female	2018	Yes	Yes	Positive
Participant 6	9	Male	2018	No	No	Positive
Participant 7	1	Male	2018	Yes	Yes	Positive
Participant 8	0	Female	2016	Yes	No	Positive
Participant 9	1	Female	2018	No	Yes	Positive

#### **4.2 Reasons that put students at risk of dropping out (individual domain)**

In this study, participants revealed that there are at least 20 reasons that affect them to almost drop out from their major. These results are reported below and compared to those of studies similar to this one. However, not all items are necessarily found in other studies, and therefore there will be some that are only reported in this study. Thus, in the following sections, every finding is mentioned and chunks from the interviews are also included in order to illustrate these findings. Moreover, a graph is included to see the elements that were more frequently reported by participants.



- Student feels that he/she does not fit in the major.

Only one student (participant 1) reported that this was a reason for considering dropping out of college. Therefore, in this study it was observed that feeling that one does not fit in a major may contribute to students' risk of dropping out.

**P.1:** *“Sí, creo que es un hecho. No siento como que sea para mí. No sé”.*

**P.1:** *“...y ahorita con esta carrera siento que es lo mismo. Como que siento que no encajo, que no es lo mío esta área”.*

Therefore, in this study it can be observed that feeling that one is not at the right major might affect the chances of completing their studies.

There are other authors who seem to have found the same in their studies, however, that is not the case because they rather mention that not belonging to a membership in school or

school-based community groups may affect students' decision to continue with their studies (Elliott and Voss (1974), Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt and Chen (2002) and Wagner, Blackorby, and Hebbeler (1993). Then, it must be clear that feeling that one does not fit in a determined major and feeling that one cannot integrate into a school community are not the same (although they might seem to be). On the one hand, feeling that one does not fit in the career is more related to students' preferences or capacities, and on the other hand being unable to enter a school community has more to do with a social aspect.

- Student does not like the career.

In this study, findings show that some students have considered dropping out because they do not like their major.

**P.1:** “When I entered the first week I was fine, it caught my attention. But as it progressed I didn't feel like that at ease. / “Cuando entré la primera semana estaba bien, me llamaba la atención. Pero conforme fue avanzando no me siento como que a gusto...”.

**P.1:** “But I did not like it either, and now with this major I feel like it is the same.” / “Pero tampoco me gustó, y ahorita con esta carrera siento que es lo mismo”.

**P.5:** “After considering whether I like it or not, definitely I would leave in here.” / “Después de que ya vi si sí me gustaba o no; definitivamente sí me iría de aquí”.

**P.6:** “It is just that I sometimes do not feel at ease with the decision I took”. / “Sólo que a veces no me siento tan a gusto con la decisión que tomé”.



This is somewhat similar to what other studies have shown. For instance, some authors such as Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001), Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986), Elliott and Voss (1974), Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997) and Jordan, Lara, McPartland, (1994) have also demonstrated that disliking school is, indeed, a reason some students may have for dropping out.

- Student is enrolled or wants to enroll into another major.

It was also found that both wishing to enroll into a different major and actually studying one more career increase the possibilities of dropping out. That statement is well illustrated when observing what participants 1, 5, 7 and 9 indicated.

**P.1:** “Not much as I expected but I still think that I would do better at the health field”. / “No tanto como que esperaba pero sigo como con la idea de que me iría mejor en un área de salud.”

**P.5:** “Yes, definitely, If I pass the admission test at UNAM next January, I would go”. / “Sí, definitivamente. En caso de que pase el examen de UNAM que es en este enero, me iría”.

**P.5:** “Since the first semester, since the first day. Even before doing the exam I knew that I wanted to enter UNAM. This was only my second option.” / “Desde el primer semestre, desde el primer día. Incluso antes de hacer el examen yo sabía que yo quería entrar en UNAM. Ésta nada más fue como mi segunda opción”.

**P.5:** “It is just that my motivation has always been to enter UNAM. It is just that”. / “Simplemente que mi motivación siempre ha sido entrar en UNAM. Entonces es eso”.

**P.5:** “So when I read the choice of subjects at UNAM I deeply visualized myself being a translator. So, I feel like that is my motivation”. / “Pues es que cuando leí la tira de materias de traducción en la UNAM simplemente me visualicé profundamente en ser traductora. Entonces siento que como tal esa es una motivación para mí”.

**P.7:** “I thought that I was fine with the other major and I am about to finish it.” / “Sí la pensé así como pues si ya estaba bien allá con la otra carrera y ya estoy a poco de terminarla”.

**P.7:** “As the question is, one of the factors could be my other major.” / “Pues, así como está la pregunta podría ser que los factores serían con la otra carrera que estoy estudiando”.

**P.9:** “That was the only thing that made me want to go and study something different.” / “Solamente eso es lo que como que me hacía querer irme y estudiar otra cosa”.

Moreover, it has to be highlighted the fact that this finding was not presented in the studies that were consulted when writing the theoretical framework. Therefore, this finding is not compared with other studies since it only appeared in this particular case and context.

- Student does not have vocation.

Once again, this study found something that was not mentioned in studies similar to this. This study shows that lacking vocation can be a reason students may have for withdrawing from their major. This can be observed when looking at what participants 1, 8 and 9 mentioned.

**P.1:** “I do not see that passion in me as in the cases of some of my classmates who strive so much and research.” / “No veo en mí como esa pasión cómo en algunos de mis compañeros que le ponen muchas ganas y averiguan”.

**P.8:** “First I was not convinced about being a teacher. Later I was still not convinced and I do not feel convinced until this day”. / “Primero no me convencía el ser maestra. Luego me siguió no convenciendo y me sigue no convenciendo hasta la fecha. Entonces como que no, me gusta el lado de los idiomas pero no para enseñarlo”.

**P.8:** “But I do not like that even though you study the translation speciality you get a teaching degree title” / “Pero no me gusta que aunque estudies como la especialidad en traducción, salgas con el título de maestro”.

**P.9:** What I do not like about my major, personally, is that I do not want to be a teacher.” / “Pues lo que no me gusta de mí carrera, o sea así yo en lo personal que no quiero ser maestra”.

**P.9:** “And that is the only thing I do not like, it is too focused towards teaching what I am studying” / “Y es lo único que no me gusta, como que se basa mucho hacia la docencia lo que yo estudio ahorita”.

**P.9:** “Yes, it was a few weeks ago for the reason I had told you about that it is too focused towards teaching and I do not want to be a teacher” / “Sí apenas hace como unas cuantas semanas por lo mismo que te había comentado que se basa mucho en la docencia y yo no quiero ser maestra”.

**P.9:** “Not the experience itself. Not the professors either. It is just the idea of teaching”. / “No así experiencia como tal. Así como que profesores o algo así no. Solamente esa idea de la docencia”.

**P.9:** “No. Honestly it is just that I do not feel being a teacher does not attract my attention.” / “No. Sinceramente nada más es eso de que pues no me llama la atención el ser maestra”.

Then, it is likely that the reason some students at the LEI program wish to abandon their career is because they do not want to become teachers.

- Student has a low English proficiency level according to him/her.

This research has also found that in this specific context, it is important for some students to increase their English proficiency level; and not achieving this goal may cause them to consider dropping out. In this study, at least 3 participants reported this:

**P.1:** “I sometimes think: what for if I do not have the same English level proficiency as some of my classmates”. / “Es que a veces digo ¿para qué si no llevo el mismo nivel que algunos de mis compañeros”.

**P.2:** “I mostly like it, but I have problems with English. I do not feel like I have the necessary level to continue”. / “En gran parte me gusta, pero tengo problemas con el inglés. Siento que no tengo el nivel adecuado cómo para seguir”.

**P.2:** “I like the subjects that I am studying but English has always been an impediment”. / “Me gustan las materias que estoy viendo. Pero el inglés siempre ha sido como que un impedimento”.

**P.2:** “Yes, at the beginning. But as these months went by I have felt that I need to improve much more my English”. / “Sí, al principio. Pero al paso de estos meses sí he sentido que necesito mejorar mucho más el inglés”.

**P.2:** “Practicing English. That would be the only reason for which I would withdrawal from the major”. / “Practicar inglés. Sería por el único motivo que abandonaría la carrera”.

**P.4:** “Que siento que me falta un poco más de conocimiento sobre esa materia. Entonces necesito estar a la par de los demás porque a veces en las clases hay cosas que no le entiendo. O sea, de diez palabras que tú me pones, probablemente siete te entienda yo y tres no.” / “That I feel that I need more knowledge on that subject. Then I need to be at the same level as the others because in class there are things that I sometimes do not understand. Then, from ten words that you give me I will probably understand 7 and 3 I won’t”.

- Student has negative beliefs about his/her capacities for the career.

Not only having a low English proficiency level affects LEI students to consider dropping out but also believing that they do not possess other aptitudes important to continue with their studies and to perform their future professions. Participants 1, 6 and 7 illustrate this well with their statements:

**P.1:** “No, creo que es lo único que yo no me siento como que pueda hacer las cosas”. / “No, I think that is the only thing that I feel like I cannot do some things”.

**P.6:** “Y pues, sé inglés y todo, pero, no siento que yo tenga madera para enseñar. Que a lo mejor conforme pasa el tiempo lo puedo ir desarrollando. Pero, de momento no sé. No me siento con la capacidad de saber enseñar”. / “I know English but I do not feel like I have the capacity to teach. Maybe as time goes by I can develop that ability. But at this point I do not know. I do not feel like I have that capacity to teach”.

**P.7:** “Haz de cuenta que en el proceso sí llegué a decaer un poco porque al darme cuenta que no era tan fácil”. / “So in the process I flagged when I realized that it was not that easy”.

Then, according to the previous statements, not only having skills at the target language is important but also having other aptitudes is; and this aspect might influence students to be at risk of dropping out.

- Student has emotional problems.

This study also revealed that having emotional problems can affect students making them prone to abandon their major. In the literature, authors such as Kaufman, Bradbury, Owings (1992) and Wagner, Blackorby, Hebbeler (1993) coincide with this finding. They report that emotional disturbances have an impact over students’ decision to quit school. Participant 3 reported:

**P.3:** “So many times I was about to tell myself “no”. In fact, I did not want to keep coming anymore. I was already at the point where I cried, got depressed, felt really bad”. / “Muchas veces estuve a punto de decir no ya no, de hecho ya no quería venir. Ya estaba en el punto de que lloraba, me deprimía, me sentía yo mal...”.

- Student is unsure with the career.

Moreover, another individual reason students may have to think about dropping out is that some of them might not be completely sure about the choice they made when selecting their career.

**P.6:** “Mi problema es más personal porque estoy indeciso. Mientras que hay personas que sí desertan por otras situaciones”. / “My problem is more personal because I am to undecisive. While there are other people who drop out for other reasons”.

- Student has not fulfilled his/her expectations for the career.

In the past, there have been studies which have revealed that it is possible that students lose interest in finishing their studies if their expectations are low or not met. For instance, Ensminger, and Slusarcick (1992), Gleason and Dynarski (2002), Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992), Rumberger (1995), Wehlage and Rutter (1986) have pointed out that not having certainty of graduating and having low expectations of getting more education in the future can contribute to high school students' decision to drop out. In this study, it was found out that something similar may happen with regard to college students since one of the participants commented:

**P.5:** “Que pues sí me gusta pero no es completamente lo que realmente quiero”. / “I do like it but this is not completely what I really want”.

**P.5:** “Pero no lo sé, siento que a la hora de qué empecé a estudiar no cumplió mis expectativas”. / “But I do not know, I feel that when I started studying (the major), it did not fulfill my expectations.”

**P.5:** “Pero lo dudo mucho porque siento que UNAM sí cumple totalmente mis expectativas y obviamente estar ahí va a ser un prestigio para mí y lo voy a lograr”. / “But I really doubt it because I feel like UNAM does fulfill all my expectations completely and being there is going to be a prestige for me and I am going to achieve it”.

- Student has opportunities to live abroad.

This is a particular case and one which is not very common. It turns out that a student reported having dual nationality. Therefore, this allows him having the chance to migrate to

another country and it is for that reason that this student mentioned having considered dropout as an option.

**P.6:** “Por mi doble nacionalidad. Y sí he tenido ofertas con mis familiares de volver a regresar”. / “For my double nationality. I have had offers from my family to come back”.

**P.6:** “But yeah. I think that if a better offer to come back appears, I will drop out”. / “Pero sí. Yo creo que si llega a surgir una mejor oferta de regresar, yo creo que sí deserto”.

**P.6:** “For what I have told you about my double nationality. My stay at the US. There could be better opportunities”. / “Por lo que te he comentado de mi doble nacionalidad. Lo de mi estancia en Estados Unidos. Igual y habría mejores oportunidades allá”.

**P.6:** “My cousins as the same age as me and they are like me” They were born in the US. And just as me, they had the goal of coming back there, work and generate some income and all of that invest it here in Mexico. And I have this offer from my cousins and my best friend who are in the same situation as me”. / “Mis primos, que son de mi misma edad, también son igual que yo. Nacieron en Estado Unidos. Y al igual que yo teníamos la meta de regresar allá y trabajar y ya digamos que generar ingresos y todo eso invertirlo aquí en México. Y este, tengo oferta por parte de mis primos y mejor amigo que está en la misma situación que yo”.

As it was mentioned, cases like this are not very common. In fact, none of the studies consulted to compare students’ reasons to drop out mention something similar.

- Student did not intend to study the career at first.



Findings show that there are some students who selected the English teaching major but they actually do not have the intention to conclude the program. This, of course, motivates some of them to consider dropping out.

**P.6:** “I did not really have the intention of having entered (the major). “ / “Este, es que realmente tampoco tenía la intención de haber entrado”.

- Student is a foreigner.

Another challenge that students may encounter for continuing with their studies is that some of them come from a different district, city or state. Participant 7, when asked about what other situations had caused him to think about dropping out, replied:

**P.7:** “Pues debido a las complicaciones que por ejemplo de que yo no soy de aquí de Puebla y pues desconozco la ciudad”. / “Due to the complications that I am not from here in Puebla and I do not know the city”.

- Student faced a lifestyle change.

Facing a lifestyle change seems to also affect students so that they think of dropping out. Participant 7 illustrates this:

**P.7:** “It as a difficult chande for me because I had never lived alone”. / “Fue pues un cambio difícil para mí porque nunca había vivido solo”.

**P.7:** “My lifestyle changed. Then, that was the only aspect that I felt the complications”. / “Pues mi ritmo de vida cambió. Entonces, así como que pues, solamente por ese punto fue que vi las complicaciones”.

- Student has high expenses for school.

As suspected, in this context it is possible that some students may struggle financially in order to continue with their studies.

**P.7:** “It could also be the economic aspect. Because in my situation I travel every 8 days and it results in an excessive expense”. / “También en el aspecto económico podría ser. Pues porque como estoy en la situación de que cada ocho días viajo, pues sí resulta un gasto excesivo”.

Other studies (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Barro & Kolstad, 1987; Cairns, Cairns & Neckerman 1989; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Goldschmidt & Wang; 1999; Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt & Chen, 2002; Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice & Tremblay, 1997; Jordan, Lara & McPartland 1994; Lloyd, 1978; Rumberger, 1995; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1996 and Wehlage & Rutter, 1986) have also shown something very similar. They have proven that parents’ income and lacking money to afford educational expenses is crucial when it comes to dropout. Thus, this study can confirm that having economic stability is highly important in order to avoid dropout.

- Student has other responsibilities apart from school.

Authors such as Barro and Kolstad (1987) Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989) Gleason and Dynarski (2002) revealed that adult responsibilities such as working can increase dropout among students. This research has made the same discovery.

**P.7:** “And it would also be my job. If my job prevents me from continuing with this, that would be a factor”. / “Y ya sería meramente lo de mi trabajo. Si el trabajo me impide continuar con esto pues sí sería ese factor”.

- Student wants to invest his/her time in other areas.

In this study, it was found that some students may feel tempted to drop out because of their desire to do something different than finishing their career. In the previous revised studies in chapter II, there is no evidence of this happening. Therefore, this would be an “isolated” finding.

**P.7:** “Yes, I would not consider it viable because supposedly this is the time for me to create more space so I can work”. / “Sí, ya no lo consideraría viable porque se supone que ya el tiempo en el estoy ahorita ya es para que me vaya abriendo espacio para ir trabajando”.

- Student has been sick.

A participant’s testimony shows that having been sick almost made her drop out. This student implied that because of her sickness she had to stop attending school and this caused her more trouble academically.

**P.8:** “Maybe that I am hospitalized again. In that case, I would say: no, I will not come back”. / “A lo mejor y que me hospitalicen de nuevo. Ya de ahí yo diría ya, ya no regreso”.

It is also important to mention that this finding was only revealed in this study when compared to the results of the studies included in chapter II.

- Student has lagged.

Evidence shows that LEI students may be more prone to drop out if they lag because of failed subjects.

**P.4:** “I started to be more afraid when they said that if you do not pass this subject which is target language I, you start getting lagged. Then, I would not like that to happen some day, or that if I fail that subject I would lag”. / “Me entró más miedo cuando empezaron a decir que si no pasabas esa materia que es lengua Meta I, te vas atrasando. Entonces, no me gustaría que algún día, o si no llegara a pasar esa materia me atrasara otro año”.

**P.7:** “Maybe, let us say that I do not do well in one the subjects and if that implies having to repeat courses, then, I would not consider it viable any more... then, lagging would cause me trouble”. / “Pues tal vez, porque si digamos en el supuesto que no me va como lo esperaba y repruebo algunas materias y eso implique como tal estar recursando. Sí, ya no lo consideraría viable... entonces, ese rezago sí me causaría un conflicto”.

**P.9:** “Well, this would be difficult because I understand that if you fail it becomes hard to continue, right? And I think I would really think about it... it could actually be a factor that would make me go”. / “Bueno, sí sería muy difícil porque tengo entendido que si repruebas es muy difícil como seguir ¿no? Y yo creo que eso sí sería como que, si la pensaría... sí podría ser un factor que me haga irme”.

In the same way, multiple authors such as Alexander, Entwisle, and Kabbani (2001), Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, Hawkins (2000), Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989), Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack and Rock (1986), Elliott and Voss (1974)., Ensminger, Lamkin and Jacobson (1996), Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992), Gleason and Dynarski (2002), Goldschmidt and Wang (1999), Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt and Chen (2002), Janosz,

LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997), Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, and Carlson, B. (2000), Jordan, Lara and McPartland (1994), Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992), Lloyd (1978), Rumberger (1995), Wagner, Blackorby, Hebbeler (1993) and Wehlage and Rutter (1986) have also found that students dropped out when they failed a grade or were over-aged for a grade.

- Student has low performance at school.

In this study, the majority of students mentioned that their school performance affected them to consider dropping out. Moreover, there are have been studies in which it has been indicated that low performance includes grade point average, subject grades, achievement test scores, reading level and overall academic success (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani (2001), Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano and Hawkins (2000), Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989), Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack and Rock (1986), Elliott and Voss (1974), Ensminger, Lamkin and Jacobson (1996), Ensminger, Slusarcick (1992), Gleason and Dynarski (2002), Goldschmidt and Wang (1999), Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt and Chen (2002), Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997), Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, and Carlson, B. (2000), Jordan, Lara and McPartland (1994), Kaufman, Bradbury and Owings (1992), Lloyd (1978), Rumberger (1995), Wagner, Blackorby and Hebbeler (1993), Wehlage and Rutter , 1986). Alike, in this research, participants 1, 4, 6, 7 and 8 mentioned:

**P.1:** “And it is also for that that I think I will get bad grades because I did not strive very much for this semester... the truth is that I am not striving as I should. I know that I can do it but I am not doing it. And it is for that reason that I think that no”. / “Y también por eso creo que voy a sacar malas notas porque no le eché ganas la verdad a este semestre... la verdad no me estoy esforzando como debería. Sé que puedo hacerlo pero la verdad no lo estoy haciendo. Creo que es por esa parte como que no”.

**P.4:** “I stopped doing homework, I stopping putting effort into things for the same reason”. / “Dejé de hacer tareas, dejé ponerle empeño a las cosas que hacía por eso mismo”.

**P.6:** “As far as I get. Whether it is for grades or for the reason I had told you”. / “Y hasta donde quede. Ya sea por calificaciones o por la razón que ya te había comentado”.

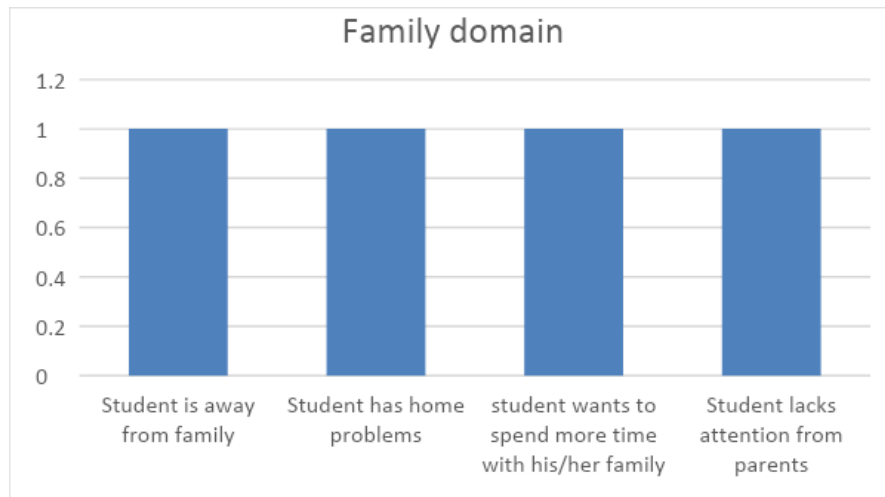
**P.6:** “Sometimes I do not put much effort into what I do. Maybe I do not give much seriousness to the things I do. I do not know, maybe yes. If I see that I do not do well in that aspect I think yes, I would (drop out)”. / “O a veces no me empeño tanto en lo que hago. A lo mejor no le tomo tanta seriedad a las cosas que hago. No sé... tal vez sí. Si veo que no rindo tal vez en ese aspecto tal vez yo creo que sí (desertaría)”.

**P.7:** “So, for exammple right now what I do not like is that I am having complications with a subject”. / “Pues por ejemplo ahorita de lo que no me está gustando es que estoy teniendo como que complicaciones con una materia”.

**P.8:** “Maybe if I fail again target language or something like that I would drop out”. / “A lo mejor y si llegara a reprobar otra vez meta o algo así si lo dejaría”.

#### **4.3 Reasons that put students at risk of dropping out (family domain)**

In this section the family reasons are presented along with the participants’ responses from the interview. As it can be observed, there are four reasons at the family domain. The graph below shows them. And below it, each item is further described.



- Student is away from his/her family

This study found that for some students, being away from their families can induce them to think of dropping out.

**P.1:** “But in the aspect of my family it is actually a bit hard, I do not know. I sometimes think about dropping out”. / “Pero de mi familia sí es un poco pesado, no sé. A veces pienso en regresarme”.

Similarly, Hernández and Narváez (2014) also have discussed that longing family can be a trigger of dropout and this study has confirmed that something similar occurs with the LEI students.

- Student has home problems.

In past studies, it has been observed that home problems can actually have an impact over students’ desire to withdraw from school. In this study, when asked about her reasons to consider dropping out, participant 4 commented:

**P.4:** “Yes. My parents argue a lot and think about divorce, and it is only me and a little brother. But in this case I have told them that that affects me, seeing them fight, yelling at each other. I do not like seeing them fight”. / “Sí. Mis papás luego pelean mucho y piensan dejarse, ya nomás soy yo y un hermano pequeño. Pero en este caso yo les he dicho que eso me afecta, porque de estarlos viendo como pelean, gritan. Y no me gusta verlos pelear”.

**P.4:** “You could say so, because if at some point in the future they divorce they are going to start arguing about who has to give money; things like that. They are going to start reproaching each other things”. / “Pues se podría decir que sí, porque en algún futuro si ellos se llegaran a dejar van a empezar con que: no, pero es que tú le tienes que dar dinero; cosas así. Cómo que se van a empezar a... se podría decir que se van a estar reprochando cosas o entre ellos mismos”.

Moreover, the authors consulted in this study (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001 and Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice & Tremblay , 1997) also mention that family disruption (parents’ divorce, death or remarriage) contributed to students’ decision to drop out according their findings. This study, once again, demonstrated that it is really likely that some students may be more prone to dropping out because of their family situation.

- Student lacks attention from parents.

In previous studies, it was demonstrated that chances of dropping out increased with those students whose families had little or no involvement with regard to their education (Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe and Carlson, 2000 & Rumberger, 1995). Once again, this research



has established that some students may actually feel more likely to abandon their studies because their parents support them very little or not all. To illustrate this it is necessary to take into account what participant 4 mentioned:

**P.4:** “Then, more than anything I need my parents to be together so they ask me how I did. They do not do it very often but I would like that”. / “Entonces más que nada yo necesito que mis padres estén juntos para que me siempre digan ¿cómo te fue? Por lo regular nunca lo hacen pero sí me gustaría...”.

- Student desires to spend more time with his/her family.

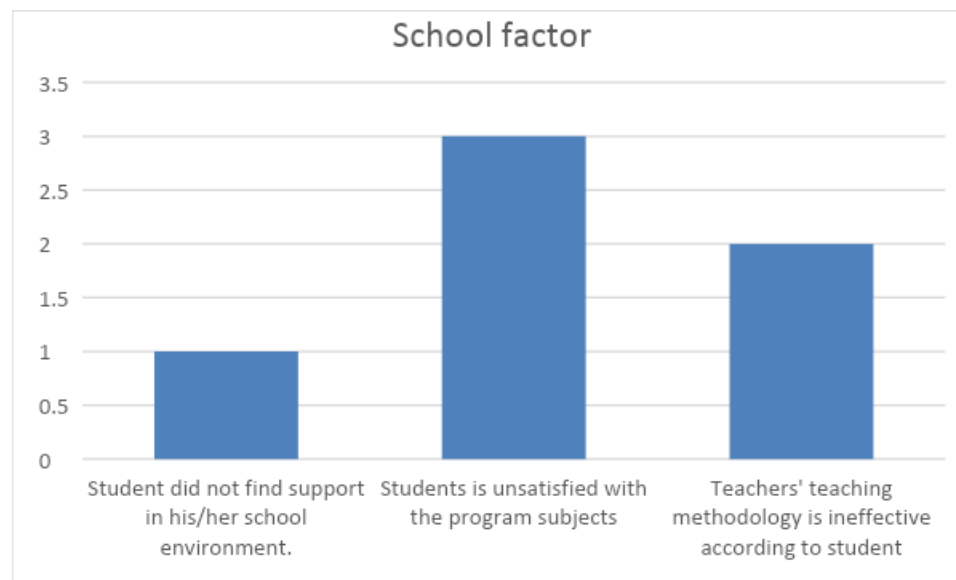
It might be the case that some students may desire to spend more time with their families. For example, participant 6 stated:

**P.6:** “Well, I have a three-year old brother. And I was thinking that I would like to spend more time with him and I feel that some things may sometimes consume my time”. / “Bueno, tengo un hermanito de tres años. Y pensaba... bueno sí me gustaría convivir con él más tiempo... y siento que algunas cosas pues sí pueden quitarme tiempo a veces”.

In this example the participant mentioned desiring to spend more time with his brother. However, this could happen with those students who are parents and have young children that have to care for. In any case, this finding proves that some students may consider dropping when they believe their studies are an obstacle to be with their families.

#### 4.4 Reasons that put students at risk of dropping out (school domain)

In this section the school reasons are presented along with the participants' responses from the interview. As it can be observed, there are three reasons at the school domain. The graph below shows them. And below it, each item is further described.



- Student did not find support in his/her school environment.

It was previously mentioned that some students experience some situations which may affect them emotionally or psychologically. And for that reason, it seems that some students expect and attempt to receive support from the psychology department in their faculty as expressed by one the participants in this study. But more importantly, it seems that not receiving that type of attention or support may actually demotivate some students making them feel even more likely to drop out. This is similar to two findings by Alderman (1999), Solano (2006),

Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975) who mention that it is possible that students leave their studies when they do not find other school members with whom they can feel supported, and who also imply that not having determined resources is of importance to some students when it comes to deciding whether they want to continue with their studies.

P.3: “My tutor suggested me to go with the psychologist. I went with the psychologist and it was a disappointment because in a half-an.hour session she mostly told me about her life. So, I was like: when am I going to talk? Like I cannot express myself. Then, I have supposedly received attention. But the truth is that the faculty does not have that. My tutor later suggested me to go to C.U. But just image the distance from here to there. That would be troublesome. So, I would like that the faculty focused on those students who have problems, the ones who have low grades or are depressed”. / “Mi tutora me dijo que, bueno me sugirió que fuera con la psicóloga. La verdad, fui con la psicóloga, y o sea, fue una decepción porque fue media hora de sesión y media hora, la mayoría, me cuenta su vida. Entonces es como de: aja ¿y a ver a qué hora puedo hablar yo? O ¿cómo o sea? No me puedo expresar, ¿no? Entonces la verdad siento que, o sea, sí he recibido. O bueno, tratado de según recibir ayuda. Pero pues la verdad es que la escuela no tiene eso. Se me hace que la escuela tendría que buscar. Porque mi tutora me dijo que si no fuera ahí a C.U. ¡Pero pues imagínate! Entonces de aquí hasta allá y luego de aquí allá. Y entonces pues no, o sea. Entonces sería mucho problema. Entonces sí me gustaría que la escuela se enfocara hacia los estudiantes que tienen problemas, los estudiantes que tienen mala calificación o que están deprimidos o así”.

Therefore, based on what participant 3 mentioned, in this study it is considered that some students do not find emotional support in other school member (such as mentors, teachers, or

even other students) neither they dispose of a psychology department in which they feel they can receive help.

- Student is unsatisfied with the program subjects.

This research also found that at least three students considered dropping out because of the subjects included in their major curriculum or program. Similarly, Alderman (1999), Solano (2006), Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975) mention that some students may feel negatively influenced by their school program; and this, in turn, can contribute to students' decision to drop out. Thus, this research confirms that in the context where it takes place, this phenomena also occurs.

**P.5:** “The subjects here are not what I thought... I am disappointed with some of the subjects that are given”. / “La tira de materias no es lo que pensé... estoy decepcionada de algunas materias de las que imparten”.

**P.5:** “So, yes. I love the program at UNAM because they study a lot of history and that is not done here”. / “Sí pues, el programa de UNAM me encanta porque ven mucha historia y aquí no hacen eso”.

**P.6:** “There are subjects that I feel are useful but I sometimes feel that we should not be studying them... I am not saying that all of them but some of the I think no. They would not be useful for my future career”. / “Y hay materias que sí sirven pero yo siento que a veces no deberíamos estarlas viendo... No digo que todas pero algunas creo que no. No me servirían para mi futura docencia”.

**P.9:** “It is only for that that I have considered withdrawing. Because I am not quite happy with some of the subjects that are being taught”. / “Solamente por eso es que yo he querido como que salirme. Porque como que no estoy a gusto con las materias que me están dando”.

- Teachers’ teaching methodology is ineffective according to student.

Another finding in this study shows that some students report having considered dropping out because of their teachers’ teaching methodology.

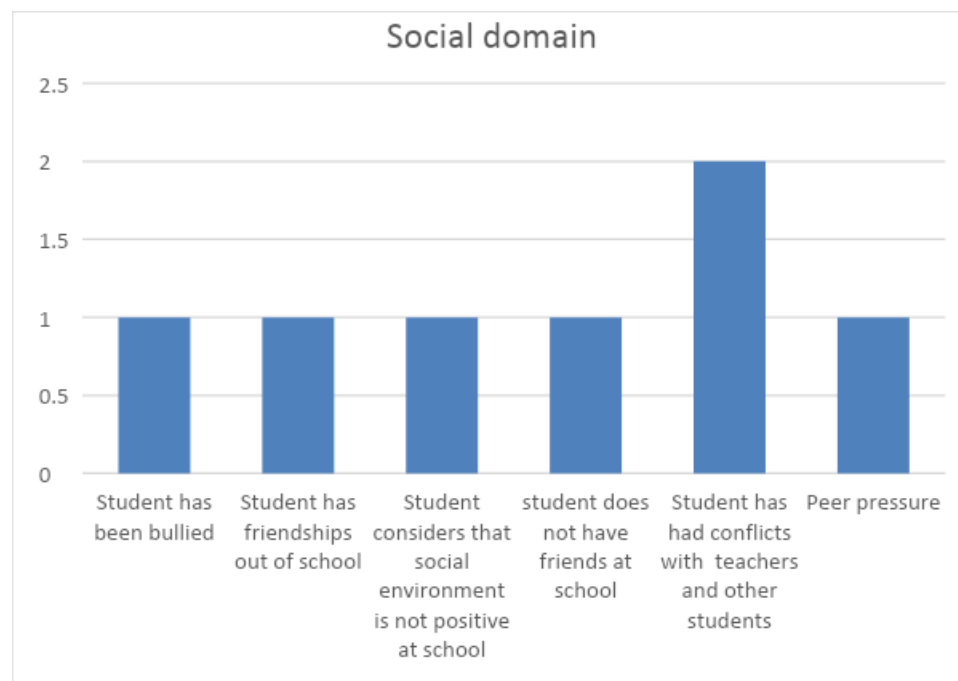
**P.5:** “And some of the subjects here are really interesting but maybe the problem is the teachers. That is what I do not like. But for the same reason I wanted to wait a little longer to see if things can change. For example, I do not like their syllabus because they make it really tedious. There are teachers whose way of teaching I simply do not like.” / “Y las materias de aquí sí son interesantes pero probablemente el problema sean los docentes que las imparten. Entonces, no me gusta. Pero por eso igual quería esperarme otro semestre para ver si las cosas pueden cambiar. Por ejemplo, no me agrada su plan de trabajo porque lo hacen muy muy tedioso. Hay algunos maestros que simplemente no me gusta la manera en como desarrollan sus materia”.

**P.7:** “And there are subjects that I dislike. Not in the content but in the way they are taught”. / “Y me disgustan ciertas materias. No en el contenido sino que en la forma en que son dadas”.

Therefore, just as Alderman (1999), Solano (2006), Spady (1970) and Tinto (1975) demonstrated, this study also has shown that dropout can be caused due to the teaching methods being used in the context where this study takes place.

#### 4.5 Reasons that put students at risk of dropping out (social domain)

In this section the social reasons are presented along with the participants' responses from the interview. As it can be observed, there are six reasons at the social domain. The graph below shows them. And below it each item is further described.



- Student has been a target of bullying.

This study is not the first to report that aggression affects students leading them to be more prone to drop out. In fact, this finding was somewhat expected even though the context in which this study takes place is a university. In this study, however, only the voice of a target was heard. Other authors such as Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989) and

Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) have reported that bullying not only affects targets to be closer to dropping out but also aggressors.

**P.2:** “At the moment of giving presentations in some subjects I would get nervous and I would see how some of my classmates made fun of my English proficiency level. At the beginning I was astonished at the fact of seeing other people mocking me for my lacks”. / “Al momento de exponer en algunas materias me ponía nerviosa e incluso veía como algunas de mis compañeras se burlaban por mi nivel. Al principio sí me impactaba y me sorprendió mucho que no pudiera y que otras personas pues se burlaran de mí”.

**P.2:** “Yes, that they mock me”. / “Sí, que se burlen de mí”.

- Student has friendships out school.

Authors such as Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano and Hawkins (2000), Cairns, Cairns and Neckerman (1989), Elliott and Voss (1974) claim that having close friendships who have dropped out or who are involved in high-risk antisocial behavior may influence students to drop out. Other authors such as Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997), Wagner, Blackorby and Hebbeler (1993) have also mentioned that socializing with friends is also a determinant for dropout.

Similarly, in this study, it was found that having friendships out of school can impact over students' decision to continue with their studies. Participant 5 reported that one of the reasons she desired to drop out was because she wanted to study in the same university as her friend. Therefore, it can be observed that friendships out of school can trigger a desire to drop out.

**P.5:** “Probably that could be one of the reasons I have thought of leaving because one of the reasons I want to enter UNAM is because a close friend of mine and I want to study there”. / “Probablemente sea porque una de las cosas por las que me quiero ir es porque UNAM, es porque una amiga muy cercana y yo queremos estudiar juntas entonces tal vez”.

- Student considers that social environment is not positive at school.

Another reason, related to the social sphere, is the social environment in which students are immersed. Some students may take the lack of positive social interactions with other peers as something demotivating as indicated by participant 3:

**P.3:** “At my group we are not quite united, the truth is that everyone has like their own small group. And when the time comes for us to take decisions or for supporting one another we do not have the courage to say: I do not like this, or this professor bothers me let us change him. In other words, there is no organization in our group. The group is quite apathetic and closed. If in class we are asked to participate only a few do it, tension is felt and there is no union in our group”. / “En mi grupo la verdad no somos unidos, la verdad es que cada quien está cómo con su grupito. Y cuando en el momento de tomar decisiones, o de apoyarnos y eso no tenemos como el valor de decir: oigan esto me molesta, o este profesor me molesta y queremos cambiarlo. O sea, no hay organización en el grupo. El grupo es muy apático, el grupo es muy es muy cerrado. Si en clase nos piden que participemos y somos pocos los que participamos, y se siente la tensión cómo que no hay integridad con los del salón”.

Not only the present study shows this but Castaño, Gallón, Gómez and Vásquez (2004) have also argued that the social environment in which students are immersed can be a decisive factor for them to drop out.



- Student does not have friends at school.

Another student pointed out that because she did not have friends at her faculty, she could also be thinking of dropping out.

**P.5:** “And because I do not have any friend here maybe that would be a factor”. / “Y como aquí no tengo ningún amigo probablemente ese sea un factor”.

Kakuvi (2013) is another author who has also demonstrated that failure to find positive social relationships can increase the chances of dropping out. In this study’s context that finding was replicated.

- Student has had conflicts with teachers and other students.

As it has been observed before in other studies (Alderman, 1999; Solano, 2006; Spady, 1970 & Tinto, 1975), having conflicts with teachers and other students can put some students at risk of dropping out. Findings show that two students had had conflicts with teachers and at least one with other students. When asked, students reported that these factors may be a reason for dropping out according to them.

**P.8:** “An argument with my classmates. It was for that. That and that I had another argument with my classmates... because the argument was also with the teacher. She did not know how to mediate things and got angry at me. It was all a mess and I think that teacher’s morality is important”. / “Un pleito con mis compañeros. Sí, fue por eso... eso y que tuviera algún otro pleito con mis compañeros... Porque el pleito que tuve también fue con la maestra. No supo mediar las cosas y se enojó conmigo. Fue un desastre entonces yo también creo que la moral de los maestros es importante.

**P.3:** “It is awful that a professor instead of encouraging you, instead of supporting you tells you that you will not earn well, tells you that you will not be rich and you have to pursue your dreams. He/she does not motivate you nor encourage you”. / “Que mala onda que un profesor mismo en lugar de alentarte, que en lugar de apoyarte te diga que no vas a ganar mucho, no te vas a hacer rico, pero pues sigue tu sueño, yo te motivo, yo te impulso pero pues no la verdad no”.

These reasons have been included into the social domain because that is what they are; social interactions can refer to those that happen inside and outside school.

- Student fears criticism if he/she fails.

As pointed out by Kakuvi (2013), peer pressure is a reason for dropping out for some students. However, it is important to point out that peer pressure is a term that can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, it could be understood that some students deliberately carry out determined behaviors against others to make them drop out; but in this case, peer pressure has to do more with being worried about others' opinions because of one's failure. For example, participant 4 highlighted:

**P.4:** “And I would not like that in the future they think of me as less intelligent. Then, I prefer to leave since the beginning”. / “Y cuando me vean pues como que me tomen a menos, menos estudiante que ellos o menos inteligente que ellos. Entonces prefiero desertar desde un principio y no estar así”.

Therefore, although hypothetically, this student expressed her concerns about the ideas other students could have towards her. This student allows observing that peer pressure in form of caring about others' opinions can actually influence some students to think of dropping out.

## **4.6 Persistence**

This section presents the reasons and factors that students reported they had to continue with their studies and their suggestions in order to increase their motivation to persist. Therefore, it is here where the research questions 3 and 4 are answered.

In other words, the section entitled “reasons that motivate students to persist” answers research question number 3; why do LEI students persist? Once again, their reasons are divided into four domains or factors. The individual, the family, the school, and the social domains. This was done so in order to keep consistency with the dropout sphere in this study and because, as indicated in chapter II, according to Scott (2004) and de los Santos (2004) persistence reasons can be classified into cognitive-individual, family, institutional and social factors.

And the section entitled “reasons that could contribute to students’ persistence” answers research question number; what could influence over students’ persistence?

Moreover, it is necessary to mention that unlike dropout literature, there is not much literature regarding persistence and for that reason these findings are barely compared to those of other authors.

### **4.7 Reasons that motivate students to persist (individual domain)**

- Student wants to travel to other countries.

As it is shown below, participant one reported that one of her motivations to stay at the career is her desire to travel abroad.

**P.1:** “I have family in the US whom I have not seen since a long time ago, so that is a reason to stay here and finish, I would like to be able to travel one day and visit them”. / “Tengo familia en estados unidos que no he visto hace mucho tiempo, entonces es una razón también de cómo de peso para que siga aquí y termine, quisiera poder viajar algún día y visitarlos”.

Since the LEI major focuses on English teaching, some other students may have this goal as well and it may increase their motivation to persist.

- Student wants to contribute to society.

Another motivation for persisting might be the desire to contribute to society. This can be observed when looking at participant's 1 statements

**P.1:** “And another would be to help my state, my city. Because there are not many teachers and the ones that there are are not very good. Then, when guys enter university they do not do well at English”. / “Y otra sería ayudar a mi estado, a mi ciudad. Porque no hay muchos maestros y los que están no son buenos. Entonces, también cuando los chicos quieren ingresar a una universidad pues no les va tan bien en esa parte de inglés”.

Then, in this study it was observed that there might be an inner desire to do something in favour of a community and it might help some students persist in pursuing their majors.

- Student considers that dropping out is not a good decision.

Another student reported that the reason she has persisted is because of the time she has reflected on whether dropping out is a good decision or not.

**P.2:** “I have considered it and thought about things better and I think that it would not be a good option”. / “Ya he considerado y pensado mejor las cosas y creo que no sería una buena opción”.

In this study, it was found that a student may decide to persist if they have some time to reflect about it.

- Student has resilience.

In this case, evidence shows that students’ attitude or resilience may also contribute to persisting in spite of challenges. Participant 4 gives light of this idea:

**P.4:** “Because as I told you, I think that everything, well I think that every major has its advantages and disadvantages. Everything in life has obstacles and one has to be able to face them”. / “Porque como te repito, creo que todo tiene, bueno toda carrera tiene sus ventajas y desventajas. Todo en la vida tiene obstáculos y hay que saberlos afrontar”.

Therefore, determining the types of mindsets can have an effect on student persistence rates.

- Student wants to learn English for other purposes than teaching.

Findings also show some students’ main motivation to stay enrolled into the career is learning English for other purposes than teaching. In other words, these students do not intend to become language teachers but rather they have other objectives for their English.

**P.5:** “Because I feel that I will use this as a preparation to do the exam at UNAM. I did not pass the English exam and I am studying English here everyday. Then, I feel like my English

level here can improve and that way pass the exam”. / “Porque siento que esto lo voy a utilizar como preparación para realizar el examen de UNAM. Porque aparte yo no pasé el examen de inglés y aquí estoy viendo inglés todos los días. Entonces, siento que mi nivel de inglés puede aumentar y así puedo pasar el examen”.

**P.9:** “I feel like staying here will help me because I studied for many years in the US. And I precisely came here for that, here if you know English that gives you more opportunities... so I entered here to improve my English. Then, what makes me stay here is precisely that”. / “O sea yo siento que como que sí me va a ayudar el quedarme aquí porque yo estudié muchos años en Estados Unidos. Y pues yo vine precisamente aquí como para eso, aquí como que si sabes el inglés se te abren muchísimas puertas... así que yo entré aquí también para mejorar mi inglés. Y así pues, lo que me mantiene aquí es precisamente eso”.

- Student wants to exploit his/her career.

It was also observed that some students do not drop out because they feel they can take advantage of their major.

**P.6:** “And if I am still here I think I am going to try to take advantage of that, right?”. / “Y si sigo aquí yo creo que voy a tratar de aprovechar eso, ¿no?”.

- Student has the goal of finishing the major.

Another reason some students may have in order to continue with their studies is that they make their education a goal which they pursue. In this study two participants mentioned that it is their desire to complete the major that has made them persist.

**P.6:** “But at this moment I would like to have a bachelor’s degree”. / “Pero pues de momento pues sí me gustaría tener una licenciatura”.

**P.7:** “More than anything it could be said that utopianly it is the dream of becoming a Spanish abroad”. / “Pues más que nada sería que podría decirse así utópicamente que es el sueño de llegar a ser maestro de español en el extranjero”.

Alike, Scott (2004) mentions that commitment to educational goals promote persistence over students. This investigation has shown something similar.

#### **4.8 Reasons that motivate students to persist (family domain)**

It was also observed that some students may find motivation to persist in their major in their family environment. Here are presented some of the influencing reasons to persist according to the participants in this study.

- Student feels motivated/supported by his/her family.

It seems that according to participants 2 and 6 receiving support from their families has played an important role in their persistence at the major.

**P.2:** “For my familiy and for my siblings. Then, I receive the motivation and support from my family not to leave”. / “Por mi familia y por mis hermanos. Entonces, tengo como que la motivación y el apoyo de mi familia para no dejarla”.

**P.8:** “I do not know, maybe it is my parents’ support”. / “No sé, a lo mejor el apoyo de mis papás”.

This study then shows that even at the higher education level, support from family can have an impact on students' academic life. And as it was reported in the dropout findings and here, receiving or not receiving that type of support may promote dropout or persistence on some students.

#### **4.9 Reasons that motivate students to persist (school domain)**

Once again, in this part of the study the reasons that are related to school are reported here. Also, it is helpful to remark that these reasons were included here because our faculty and or university are the ones that have some power in order to make some changes related to what students reported.

- Student feels motivated by the language courses offered at the university.

In our university, language courses are offered to all students and workers. These language courses are usually cheap compared to other options. In this research, a student mentioned that the reason she had kept attending to college is because of that.

**P.8:** “Studying German. Studying German has been my biggest motivation here”. / “El alemán. El alemán yo creo que ha sido mi mayor motivación aquí”.

Therefore, this type of benefits are the ones that could increase persistence rate at the Faculty of Languages at BUAP.

- Student feels motivated by the translation optative courses offered at the university.



Similar to what was mentioned above, it may be possible that some students decide to continue with their major because of optative courses included in the LEI syllabus. For LEI, it is possible to choose a series of optative subjects and there are some which focus on the translation area.

**P.9:** “As I told you it is the translation subject”. / “Te digo que por lo mismo de la traducción”.

#### **4.10 Reasons that motivate students to persist (social domain)**

Just as in the case of dropout, the social sphere seems to also have some impact over students’ decisions with regard to their academic lives. This section addresses that very aspect.

- Student feels motivated/supported by his/her friends.

According to one of the participants, her friendships had helped her stay motivated and for that reason she decided not to withdraw from the LEI major.

**P.4:** “Moreover, my friends motivate me. They mostly tell that I have to continue that I am just starting. And I try to see the positive side and I think they are right, or the simple fact of not getting discouraged but simply make the efforts, study more and give more out of me to continue in the major. Then, my friends motivate me more”. / “Y aparte bueno, me motivan mis amigos. Más que nada porque me dicen que no, que debo de seguir, que apenas estoy iniciando. Y pues lo veo por el lado positivo y creo que tienen razón, o por el simple hecho de no desanimarme tanto sino simplemente echarle más ganas a estudiar más poner más de mi parte para seguir en la carrera. Entonces, me motivan más mis amigos”.

Then, it seems in terms of becoming more motivated to persist, support is not only impactful from that side of the family but also from those people students may call friends.

- Student feels motivated/supported by a sentimental partner at the university.

Besides friends, it was also found that sentimental partners may influence students positively.

**P.8:** “And that I met my boyfriend and that is it”. / “Y que conocí a mi novio, y ya”.

- Student has had positive interactions with professors.

According to participant 3, she felt more motivated to continue with her studies because of a positive experience she had with one of her professors.

**P.3:** “Then, yes with some teachers even there has only been a teacher who teaches *teorías y procesos* and if we answer correctly she tells us “excellent” and she encourages us a lot. And that only been the one time I felt motivated by her”. / “Entonces, sí con algunos profesores incluso sólo ha habido una maestra que nos da teorías y procesos que la verdad si contestamos bien, nos dice “excelente” y o sea, nos da muchos ánimos. Y ha sido la única vez que me he sentido motivado por ella”.

**P.3:** “Well, the professor I just told you about and for that reason I have not left”. / “Bueno, la maestra que te acabo de decir por eso no la he dejado”.

In a study by Scott (2004) it was found that positive campus climate actually increases students’ motivation to persist. This study coincides with that affirmation.

- Student has had positive experiences with other students.

Very similar to the last findings, here it can be observed that positive campus climate raises the chances that students persist. Then, not only it is important for some students to have positive interactions with professors but with other students as well.

**P.3:** “And because at target language class there is a guy who is doing his social service, he strives, and he motivates me a lot honestly. He asks me to participate. He gives us, not priority, but he encourages us a lot. And the truth is that that was the reason I did not leave. In fact, I told him many times that I had had it. That I was going to drop out and he told me give me one more week, and one more week, and one week. And you will see how you feel. I am going to help you and everything. But yeah, if it had not been for him, I would not have made it”. / “Y porque en la clase de lengua meta hay un chico que está haciendo su servicio, entonces él le echa ganas, él me motiva mucho la verdad. Él me pide que participe. Él cómo que nos da, no prioridad, pero si nos apoya mucho para que tengamos el ánimo. Y la verdad por eso fue que no la he dejado. De hecho, yo le dije muchas veces que pues ya. La iba a dejar, y me dijo “no, pues dame una semana”, y una semana, y una semana. Y ves cómo te sientes y yo te voy a ayudar y todo. Pero pues sí, si no hubiera sido por él no”.

#### **4.11 Reasons that could contribute to students’ persistence**

This section now addresses those suggestions that participants in this study made and they give light to those hypothetical situations which according to some students would increase

their chances to continue with their studies. Therefore, this section would be answering research question number 4: what could influence over students' persistence?

- Student would feel more motivated if there were more cultural exchanges promotion.

According to participant 1, giving more promotion to cultural exchanges programs could increase her chances of persisting through the major.

**P.1:** “Maybe workshops could be done where they show you what else can be done like when they give talks about the camps and they explain us everything that is done and that fills you up culturally. Well, that is in my case”. / “Tal vez podría ser hacer talleres donde como que muestren más de lo que pueden hacer como cuando nos hablan de los campamentos y nos explican todo lo que hacen y, o sea, cómo es que les llena culturalmente, eso es interesante. Bueno para mí”.

- Student would feel more motivated if he/she was supported by the faculty.

Another participant suggested that more actions similar to the interviews carried out in this study could be done in order to help students at risk of dropping out increase the chances of completing their studies.

**P.2:** “Yes. Simply with the fact of having this interview I think that one of the main factors for which they want to help others”. / “Sí. Simplemente con esta entrevista que me están haciendo yo creo que es uno de los factores principales por lo que quieren ayudar a las demás personas”.

**P.3:** “Then, I would like the faculty to focus on students who have problems, the students who have bad grades or who are depressed or things like that”. / “Entonces sí me gustaría que la escuela se enfocará hacia los estudiantes que tienen problemas, los estudiantes que tienen mala calificación o que están deprimidos o así”.

- Student would feel more motivated if there was free counseling.

As it was mentioned before, the reason some students may feel discouraged and affected so that they think of dropping out is their English proficiency level and performance at the major. However, something could be done and in fact it is sometimes done. Participant 6 suggested that, as it has been done in the past, the faculty kept offering mentoring to those students who struggle academically.

**P.6:** “There are times when the faculty announces that free counseling will be given for a month. Then, the faculty helps me with this because I can come to counseling and that way acquire more knowledge about a subject in which I do not have much knowledge”. / “Hay veces que la facultad pone que va a haber asesorías gratis durante un mes. Entonces, a mí me ayuda la facultad en esto porque yo puedo venir a asesorías y así adquirir más conocimientos sobre alguna materia que no tengo mucho conocimiento”.

- Student would feel more motivated if schedules were more flexible.

For some students, it would be helpful to have flexibility with regard to their schedules.

**P.7:** “Absolutely, it would also be a part from the university, let us say the schedules. If they could give me a flexible schedule, for example, in the afternoon. That would be a good option because I would look for a job in the mornings”. / “Por completo, sería como que cuestión

también de la universidad ya que digamos para empezar con los horarios. Sí me podrían proporcionar un horario flexible, por ejemplo, en el turno ¿Qué será? De la tarde. Ya ahí sí sería una buena opción porque de algún modo buscaría un trabajo que sea de las mañanas”.

In previous LEI generations this was possible from the beginning of the career. But now there as to be a time lapse until students are able to select their own schedules. This study shows that some students could prefer the old modality.

- Student would feel more motivated if he/she had a scholarship.

Another student mentioned that financial support, such as an scholarship, would give him more chances and motivation to continue his studies.

**P.7:** “Another option would be the scholarships. Because yes I need support, as I told you in these times I have had expenses. So, it would actually be an option to look for a scholarship”. / “Otra opción pues sería de las becas. Porque pues sí el apoyo, como te digo ahorita si he tenido como que mucho desgaste económico. Entonces, sí sería cómo que una opción, buscar alguna beca de cualquier tipo”.

As shown by Scott (2004), financial aid at university can be a great motivator for students in order to commit more with their studies. This research found that financial support may indeed be a motivator for student persistence.

- Student would feel more motivated if teachers were examined more rigorously.

Due to the conflicts that have arisen between students and professors in the faculty of languages as was mentioned before, it was also suggested that faculty authorities be more observant or strict with what professors do in the classroom.

**P.8:** “The teachers. I mean, to be stricter with what professors do inside the classroom. I do not know, maybe to verify the professors’ moral quality”. / “Lo de los maestros. O sea, ser más exigentes con lo que hacen los maestros dentro del salón. No sé, a lo mejor y checar la calidad moral de los maestros”.

By doing so, it could be possible that more students persisted.

- Student would feel more motivated if facilities were improved.

One more suggestion lets know that facilities may be important and increase the number of students who persist.

**P.8:** “Maybe I do not know, to improve the facilities. The spouts for example, the cafetería. I feel like the faculty is too small”. / “A lo mejor y no sé, mejorar las instalaciones. En los bebederos por ejemplo, en la cafetería. O sea, siento que la facultad está muy chiquita”.

Finally, this chapter is concluded by pointing out that there were, indeed, similar findings to other studies but at the same time there were a number of different ones. Once again, this is why this study was necessary in the first place, because as mentioned by Todaro (1994) the roots of drop out will always tend to differ in the diverse educational contexts.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusions of this study. It might be helpful to re-state that this study followed a qualitative approach; and that the instruments used were the in-depth semi-structured and the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) (see chapter III). More importantly, this chapter answers the four research questions set at the beginning of this project and it also gives some suggestions for further research. However, before that it looks back at the objectives and that it aimed to achieve.

The general objectives of this research were:

- To determine students' possible reasons to drop out the LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) program at the Faculty of Languages.
- To determine students' reasons to persist at the LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés) program at the Faculty of Languages.

### **5.1 Research questions**

**RQ1: What are students' possible reasons to drop out of the major at LEI program?**

In the present study, there were a total of 32 reasons that could explain why some students think of dropping out. These reasons were categorized into four factors; the individual, the family, the school and the social.



More specifically, about 59.3% of students' reasons to drop out are inclined towards the individual factor and such reasons include: feeling that one does not fit in the major, not liking the major, being enrolled or desiring to enroll another major, not having vocation, having low English proficiency level, having negative beliefs about one's capacities for the career, having emotional problems, being unsure with the major, not fulfilling one's expectations at the major, having opportunities to live abroad, having chosen major as a second career option, being foreigner, facing a lifestyle change, having high expense for the major, having other responsibilities apart from the major, desiring to invest time in other areas, being sick, having lagged, having low performance at school.

Another 12.5% of participants' responses reveal that reasons to consider dropping out belonging to the family factor include: being away from one's family, having home problems, lacking attention from one's parents, and desiring to spend more time with one's family.

In contrast, at the school factor, 9.3% of students would probably drop out due to: not finding support in the school environment, being unsatisfied with the program subjects, and considering teachers' teaching methodology ineffective.

Lastly, 18.7% of participants' reasons to consider dropping out due to social aspects include: being bullied, having friendships out of school, considering that the school social environment is not positive, not having friends at the major, having conflicts with other teachers and students, and fearing criticism if one fails.

Then, based on these results, it is observed that some of the reasons LEI students have to drop out are different from what other authors have found out, some others are similar, while others appear to be the same.

An instance of a different finding would be that students did not intend to study the career. This finding was not observed nor mentioned in any of the other studies consulted in this research. Oppositely, a finding triggering dropout in other studies (Elliott & Voss, 1974; Ingels, Curtin, Kaufman, Alt & Chen, 2002; and Wagner, Blackorby, & Hebbeler, 1993) was students' amount of participation in extracurricular activities but in this study such a case was not observed.

Moreover, an instance of a similar finding in this study compared to others, is the amount of time spent socializing with friends in activities outside of school hours (Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 1997 and Wagner, Blackorby & Hebbeler, 1993) because in this research it was observed that having friends out of school may motivate some students to consider dropping out. However, these findings are not the same.

Finally, a finding that this research made and that has already been observed in other studies is that students do not like their school-major (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock, 1986; Elliott and Voss, 1974; Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay, 1997; and Jordan, Lara, McPartland, 1994). These are a few examples of how the findings in this study are different, similar and the same to those of other authors.

**RQ2: What factor does most frequently influence students so that they think of dropping out?**

In this study, it was found out that the factor that predominated the most was the individual factor because there are 19 reasons that correspond to this category as opposed to the family factor (in which only 4 reasons were observed), the school factor (in which only 3 reasons were observed), and the social factor (in which 6 reasons were observed).

Then, this study shows that the factor, domain, sphere that most frequently influence students so that they think of dropping out is the individual one (or at least that is the case with the population that participated in this research).

### **RQ3: Why do LEI students persist?**

This study also considered opportune to take advantage of the instrument and ask students about the real reasons they had to decide to continue with their studies. Moreover, to answer this research question, persistence reasons were split into 2 main categories (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation).

It is important to remember that intrinsic motivation can be related to doing a given task voluntarily because one finds it interesting or enjoyable (Deci, 2000 & Harrieth, 2015); and that extrinsic motivation has to do more with internal matters and first has to do more with external stimuli or drives (Delaney & Royal, 2017).

Therefore, research question number three could be answered by stating that the students who participated in this research have persisted because of different intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (see chapter IV to see the specific data) since a number of 9 students reported having intrinsic motivations to persist and 5 more reported having extrinsic motivation.

### **RQ4: What could the faculty of languages do in order to increase students' persistence?**

It was interesting to see the motivations that some students have had in order to persist at the LEI bachelor's major. However, there are other hypothetical situations which students

mentioned could also contribute to increasing their desire to stay at the major. These other hypothetical situations are presented below.

In order to answer RQ4, students were asked to suggest possible actions that the Faculty of languages could take so that these students felt more motivated to continue with their studies. Therefore, this means that the information that students provided would reflect extrinsic aspects of their motivations since external factors would be influencing their behaviors.

Then, the answer to RQ4 is that the faculty of languages could probably increase students' persistence rate through actions such as increase of scholarships, cultural exchange promotion, psychological attention, schedule flexibility, more rigorous examinations to professors, improvement of facilities, and free counseling support to students who struggle academically.

However, once again, since these affirmations are hypothetical, they would have to be tested in order to know if the desired outcome would be fulfilled. Nonetheless, it was interesting to see the proposals that LEI students made.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

This study was qualitative since it pretended to explore a phenome in order to reveal the factors and reasons students had to consider dropping out the major. The factor with the most items was the individual one because 19 reasons were reported at that domain. In second place, the social factor could be placed because 6 reasons were traced at that domain. In third place, the family is placed because only 3 participants reported having had reasons that corresponded to

that domain. Finally, the school factor is placed at the end considering that it was the domain with the least items; only 3.

Another aspect that was explored in this study was persistence. The individual factor once again proved to have the most influence this time with persistence. 7 participants mentioned having reasons derived from internal aspects to persist at the major. Secondly, the social factor included 4 items that belonged to this domain. The school factor is placed in third place numerically speaking because 2 items were found at this domain. And the factor with the least number of reported items was the family factor because only one participant mentioned having family-related reasons to persist.

Not only that but the present study also took into account suggestions from the participants to potentially foster persistence among students. 7 suggestions were given by the participants.

### **5.3 Suggestions for further research**

As most studies, this one also has set aside a section that deals with potential follow-up research. Therefore, based on everything that was learned throughout this study, it is suggested that:

- 1) The instrument used here be applied with a larger sample so that findings' reliability is increased.

2. A quantitative study be carried out

3. A follow-up longitudinal study be carried out to prove if some of the students who participated in this research actually decided to drop out and if they did to verify that they did it because of the reasons they mentioned here.

#### **5.4 Limitation**

This study succeeded at fulfilling its research objectives and at answering its research questions. However, the biggest limitation in this study was not having enough resources to be carried out with a larger sample of at least 30 students, for instance. Yet, as it was mentioned in chapter III and as Martinez (2012) stated when regarding the saturation principle; a study can be considered worth it when it has something significant to highlight, and this study has served as a vehicle through which 9 students at the LEI bachelor's program program were able to make their voices be heard. These students expressed their concerns and problems about why they started considering dropping out. Hopefully, in the future, this study will serve and contribute to increase the graduation rate at the LEI bachelor's program.

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# Appendix

Appendix A: students prone to dropout questionnaire

## **CUESTIONARIO PARA EXPLORAR LAS CAUSAS QUE INFLUENCIAN A LOS ALUMNOS DEL PROGRAMA LEI A CONSIDERAR LA DESERCIÓN.**

Antes que nada, muchas gracias por brindarnos de tu tiempo para trabajar en este proyecto. Me gustaría recordarte que la información que proporcionas será completamente confidencial. Y si en algún punto de la entrevista no te sientes cómodo(a) para contestar, no tienes que hacerlo.

1. ¿Cómo te llamas? ¿Cuántos años tienes? ¿De dónde eres? ¿Has vivido siempre en Puebla?
2. ¿Te gusta la carrera? ¿Qué opinas de ella? ¿Te gusta? ¿Qué te gusta y qué no te gusta de ella?
3. ¿Estabas seguro(a) al haber ingresado a esta carrera?
4. Sabemos que has pensado en dejar la carrera ¿qué es lo que te ha motivado a pensar así?
5. ¿En qué momento pensaste en abandonar la carrera?
6. ¿Tuviste alguna experiencia en específico que te haya hecho pensar en abandonar la carrera?
7. ¿Qué te ha motivado a seguir dentro de esta carrera?

8. ¿Crees que la universidad o facultad podría hacer algo al respecto para cambiar tu pensamiento?
9. Si al final decidieras dejar la carrera ¿qué harías posteriormente?
10. Finalmente ¿te gustaría comentar algo más sobre el tema en cuestión?