Examining Dropout Factors in Master's Programs: A Comprehensive Analysis in the Field of Tourism

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Abstract

Choosing higher education is a significant life decision, demanding substantial commitment. Master's level dropout, a complex issue since Tinto's pioneering studies in 1975, involves intricate interactions among psychological, social, economic, psycho-pedagogical, institutional, and pedagogical factors. Departure seems inevitable due to diverse challenges, necessitating preventive measures within higher education institutions. In 2021, 28% of the 18.5 million European Union higher education students pursued master's degrees, facing challenges that highlight the need for addressing master's level dropout. Despite increasing enrolment in postgraduate programs, existing studies predominantly focus on the undergraduate level. Master's students, assumed to possess maturity and experience, exhibit lower completion rates (12% dropout). Dropout results in economic and psychological repercussions, hindering career advancement and causing operational inefficiencies for institutions. This paper focuses on tourism master's students, crucial field for countries but usually lacking qualified workers. The aim is to understand determinants influencing dropout and students' perceptions of the economic consequences. Results suggest that master's degree motivation is more tied to personal satisfaction over economic factors. Upon entering the labour market, a master's degree may not be appreciated and could hinder career advancement, as higher-level colleagues without the degree may perceived them as a threat, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive analysis in the field.

Keywords: Higher education, master degree dropout, economic consequences, tourism labour market