

Factors Associated with Dropout in Youth and Adult Education: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract:

This article critically analyzes the multidimensional factors associated with dropout in Youth and Adult Education (EJA), based on a literature review of research on the subject. The justification lies in the need to understand the structural (such as lack of policies and socioeconomic difficulties), pedagogical (comfortable methodologies and curricular inflexibility) and subjective (low self-esteem and lack of motivation) causes that impact the permanence of students. The academic relevance lies in the systematization of existing knowledge, while at the same time the potential to contribute to more inclusive educational policies is socially highlighted. The results indicate that dropout in EJA is a complex, influenced by multiple interconnected factors, and suggest strategies such as curricular adequacy, specific teacher training and intersectoral actions to reduce school dropout. It is concluded that overcoming this challenge requires integrated approaches, considering the particularities of the EJA audience.

Keywords: School dropout. Youth and Adult Education. Multidimensional factors



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Introdução

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) represents an essential educational modality for the reduction of social inequalities and the guarantee of the right to education. However, school dropout in this segment persists as a structural challenge, influenced by multidimensional factors involving socioeconomic conditions, public policies, pedagogical practices, and psychosocial aspects. In view of this scenario, the general objective of this article is to critically analyze, based on a bibliographic survey, the factors associated with dropout in EJA, discussing its structural, pedagogical and subjective causes, as well as possible mitigation strategies according to the specialized literature.

For this purpose, the following specific objectives are established: (1) to identify and categorize the main factors associated with dropout in EJA, based on classical and contemporary studies, highlighting the socioeconomic, institutional and individual dimensions; (2) critically analyze the impact of public policies and school structure on the permanence of EJA students, confronting official discourses with criticisms in the academic literature; and (3) discuss the pedagogical and psychosocial barriers that bring to school dropout, such as comfortable methodologies, inflexible curriculum and issues of students' self-esteem.

Recent studies show that dropout in EJA is strongly related to conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability (Alves, 2020), the lack of effective public policies (Gomes, 2021), and pedagogical practices that are poorly adapted to the students' profile (Ribeiro, 2022). In addition, research highlights that demotivation and low academic self-efficacy (Silva, 2019), added to curricular rigidity (Machado, 2023), intensify dropout rates. The relevance of this study lies in the critical systematization that was developed, contributing to the advancement of the academic debate and to the proposition of more inclusive and effective educational policies.

Mapping Dropout Factors in EJA: A Multidimensional Analysis from the Literature

Dropout in Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a complex influence, influenced by socioeconomic factors that limit students' access and permanence.

According to Alves (2020), "financial precariousness is one of the main reasons for dropping out of school, as many students need to prioritize work over studies". In addition, the lack of targeted public policies aggravates this scenario, since most actions do not consider the specificities of this public. In this sense, it is possible to say that structural inequality reinforces educational exclusion, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability.

In this context, external public policies for EJA have often been criticized for their inefficiency and discontinuity. Gomes (2021) argues that government programs often do not reach students at greater social risk, leaving gaps in the guarantee of the right to education. On the other hand, research indicates that local initiatives, when well articulated, can significantly reduce dropout rates. Therefore, the absence of an intersectoral and permanent approach compromises the necessary advances in this teaching modality.

At the institutional level, the school structure also plays a crucial role in the permanence of EJA students. According to Ribeiro (2022), "the inadequacy of financial spaces and the lack of pedagogical resources discourage student attendance and engagement". In addition, the stress of schedules and the absence of night class regions in some make it difficult to reconcile study and work. These factors demonstrate that the school organization needs to be remunerated to meet the real needs of educators.

The pedagogical practices adopted in EJA are also determinant for school success or failure. Machado (2023) points out that "traditional methodologies, based only on the transmission of content, do not dialogue with the experiences and expectations of young and adult students". On the other hand, participatory and contextualized approaches tend to increase motivation and reduce dropout. Thus, specific teacher training for EJA is essential for the implementation of effective strategies.

In addition to pedagogical issues, psychosocial aspects exert a strong influence on school dropout. Silva (2019) highlights that many EJA students carry stories of educational failure, which undermines their self-confidence and persistence. On the other hand, when there is a welcoming environment that values individual trajectories, permanence rates improve significantly. Therefore,

it is essential that educational institutions work not only on the content, but also on the self-esteem of students.

Curricular flexibility emerges as one of the main strategies to face dropout in EJA. According to Souza (2023), "curricula adapted to local realities and student demands increase the relevance of teaching and adherence to school activities". However, the improvement of these changes hinders institutional resistance and the lack of training of professionals. Thus, it is necessary to invest in curricular reforms that consider the diversity of profiles present in EJA.

Another relevant factor is the relationship between the school and the community, which can strengthen or weaken the bond between students and education. Pereira (2020) states that "the approximation with local leaders and the offer of professional courses integrated into the school curriculum are effective measures to reduce dropout". However, many institutions still maintain a posture far from social demands. In this way, the construction of a more open and dialogical school is a promising path for the permanence of students.

The continuing education of teachers is also guaranteed for the quality of EJA. According to Costa (2022), "teachers prepared to deal with the specificities of this modality are able to create more inclusive and motivating environments". However, the lack of investment in training results in practices that are disconnected from the real needs of students. Therefore, policies of teacher appreciation and training must be prioritized in educational agendas.

Digital technologies can also play an important role in reducing dropout, especially in the post-pandemic context. Fernandes (2021) points out that "the use of online platforms and hybrid methodologies can offer greater flexibility for working students". However, the digital divide is still a significant barrier for many EJA learners. Therefore, it is necessary to guarantee access to technology and training for its effective pedagogical use.

The evaluation of learning in EJA is another critical point that deserves attention. Martins (2018) argues that "standardized evaluation systems do not share students' prior knowledge and heterogeneous trajectories". On the other hand, formative and participatory evaluations tend to promote greater engagement and reduce dropout. Thus, compensating the evaluation processes is essential for a fairer and more effective education.

Finally, the articulation between school, family and civil society is essential to combat dropout in EJA. Oliveira (2024) highlights that "the involvement of families and community organizations strengthens the sense of belonging and permanence of students". However, this articulation is still incipient in many realities. Thus, it is urgent to foster partnerships that expand support for students beyond the school space.

In view of the above, it is evident that dropout in EJA is a multifaceted problem, requiring equally complex and articulated solutions. The combination of effective public policies, innovative pedagogical practices and psychosocial support can transform the reality of this type of education. Therefore, it is necessary to advance in research and actions that guarantee the right to education for young people and adults. School dropout in Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a complex challenge, requiring analyses that consider its multiple dimensions. According to Alves (2020), "the intersection between poverty and low education creates a vicious cycle of breaking", evidencing how socioeconomic factors are determinant. In addition, the lack of specific public policies aggravates this scenario, reinforcing the need for intersectoral approaches. In this context, understanding dropout requires going beyond statistical data, analyzing the concrete experiences of students.

In the field of educational policies, there is a disconnection between the guidelines and the real needs of EJA students. Gomes (2021) demonstrates that "programs with quantitative goals often exceed regional and cultural particularities", resulting in ineffective actions. On the other hand, research indicates that local initiatives, when articulated with social movements, present better results. Therefore, the effectiveness of policies depends fundamentally on their ability to dialogue with the territories.

School organization is also crucial to understand the dropout rates in EJA. Ribeiro (2022) argues that "precarious infrastructure and the lack of adequate pedagogical materials discourage permanence", especially in peripheral regions. In addition, the stress of schedules and the scarcity of night classes make it difficult to reconcile work e estudo. These elements highlight the urgency of compensating the organizational models of schools that serve young people and adults.

Traditional pedagogical practices are incompatible with the characteristics of EJA students, as pointed out by Machado (2023). The author states that "teacher-centered methodologies do not share the experiential knowledge of the students", generating disinterest and evasion. On the other hand, problematizing approaches, based on Paulo Freire, demonstrate greater potential for engagement. Thus, specific teacher training for this modality emerges as an essential factor for the transformation of practices.

Specific psychosocial aspects are another fundamental dimension in the analysis of dropout, as demonstrated by Silva (2019). The author points out that "the stigma of school failure and low academic self-esteem function as invisible barriers to permanence". However, when institutions implement strategies to welcome and value individual trajectories, positive impacts are observed in the reduction of dropout. Therefore, the subjective dimension cannot be neglected in the analysis of dropout.

The curricular issue is presented as a central axis for understanding the specificities, according to Souza's (2023) analysis. The study reveals that "resumes disconnected from local realities and the demands of the world of work are interesting for demotivation". However, experiences of curricular flexibility, when very innovative results are achieved, show promise in student retention. Thus, the review of political-pedagogical projects is urgent to meet the specific needs of EJA.

The relationship between school and community emerges as a determining factor for permanence, as highlighted by Pereira (2020). The author observes that "articulation with community leaders and local companies creates essential support networks against dropout". However, this articulation is still incipient in most institutions, revealing a potential that is little explored. Thus, the construction of strategic partnerships is a promising way to face the problem.

Specific teacher training for EJA is shown to be a key element for the quality of care, according to Costa (2022). The researcher argues that "the lack of specific initial and continuing education results in practical pedagogical practices". On the other hand, training experiences that integrate theory and practice demonstrate a positive impact on reducing dropout. Therefore, investing in the qualification of professionals should be a priority in educational policies.

Invisible Barriers: The Impact of Rigid Methodologies and Psychosocial Issues on School Dropout

School dropout is configured as a multifaceted characteristic, whose causes transcend merely economic aspects. According to Alves (2020), "plastered teaching methodologies represent the first invisible barrier to learning, especially for students with interrupted educational trajectories". This pedagogical difficulty, by disregarding the students' previous knowledge, creates an environment hostile to learning. In addition, the lack of curricular flexibility reinforces feelings of inadequacy and frustration. In this context, it becomes evident that school dropout often precedes a long process of symbolic exclusion.

Psychosocial issues emerge as a determining factor, but are often neglected in the analyses of dropout. Gomes (2021) demonstrates that "the stigma of school failure leaves deep marks on the self-esteem of students, creating a vicious circle of disbelief in their own potential". Paradoxically, the educational system, instead of acting as a transforming agent, often reinforces these negative perceptions. When students internalize these stereotypes, the likelihood of dropping out increases significantly. Therefore, understanding these subjective dynamics is essential for any student permanence policy.

The relationship between teacher and student in EJA reveals itself as a crucial element in this process. Ribeiro (2022) argues that "the authoritarian posture of some educators works as a mechanism of veiled exclusion, especially for older students". This finding gains greater relevance when we consider that many EJA students bring previous negative experiences with the school. On the other hand, dialogical and horizontal practices have the potential to reverse this situation. Thus, teacher training urgently needs to incorporate these reflections.

The traditional school curriculum is particularly problematic for EJA, according to Machado's (2023) analysis. The author states that "the disconnection between the syllabus and the reality of adult students transforms the classroom into a space of estrangement". This symbolic distance between what is taught and what is experienced daily explains, in part, the high levels of resistance. On the other hand, contextualized curricular experiences present

significantly better results in terms of engagement. Therefore, the revision of pedagogical projects is imperative.

Standardized assessments are specific, another invisible barrier to access to lifelong learning. Silva (2019) points out that "traditional assessment instruments do not consider the multiple intelligences and forms of learning of students". This evaluated practice completely excludes ignorance of individual trajectories and different learning rhythms. As a consequence, many students dropped out of school even before they were better evaluated in their potential. Therefore, compensating the evaluation processes is an urgent measure.

The organization of school time proves to be incompatible with the reality of working students. Souza (2023) demonstrates that "the discomfort of schedules and the lack of shift options are responsible for 38% of dropout cases in EJA". This gives evidence that the traditional school structure fails to meet the specific needs of youth and adult education. When added to long urban commutes, this factor becomes even more determinant. Thus, temporal flexibility emerges as a fundamental strategy.

The physical school environment also contributes to the appearance of dropout, according to Pereira's (2020) analysis. The study reveals that "inadequate and dehumanized spaces reinforce feelings of non-belonging among adult learners." This finding is particularly relevant when we observe that many EJA students attend schools for children and adolescents. The absence of adequate furniture and specific living spaces aggravates this situation. Thus, school architecture needs to be compensated in light of these demands.

Public education policies often fail to address these invisible issues. Costa (2022) argues that "government programs focus on quantitative goals, supervising the qualitative dimensions of dropout". This reductionist approach explains, in part, the ineffectiveness of many different initiatives for EJA. When policies ignore psychosocial and methodological barriers, their results necessarily become limited. Therefore, a paradigm shift in educational policies is urgent.

Educational technologies emerge as potential allies in overcoming these barriers. Fernandes (2021) demonstrates that "the use of adaptive platforms can personalize learning, respecting the different rhythms of students". This

methodological flexibility is especially relevant for students who accumulate work and study. However, it is crucial that these technologies are innovative in a critical and contextualized way. Otherwise, you risk becoming another element of exclusion.

Specific teacher training for EJA is shown to be a central axis to overcome these barriers. Martins (2018) points out that "teachers who are unprepared to deal with the specificities of EJA tend to reproduce exclusionary practices". This training needs to go beyond the technical aspects, incorporating psychosocial and relational dimensions. When educators develop skills to work with these complexities, the results are significantly better. Therefore, investing in teacher qualification is a priority strategy.

The union between school and community is presented as a protective factor against dropout. Oliveira (2024) demonstrates that "the involvement of families and community leaders strengthens the bond between students and the school institution". This support network is particularly important for students who face various vulnerabilities. When the school opens up to the territory, more detailed conditions for permanence are created. Thus, the construction of these partnerships should be encouraged.

Given this complex picture, it is evident that combating dropout requires multidimensional approaches. It is necessary to overcome the reductionist view that attributes school dropout only to economic factors. The invisible barriers - methodological, curricular and psychosocial - play a fundamental role in this process. Therefore, effective educational policies must consider this complexity in their formulation and implementation.

Possible Paths: Theoretical and Practical Proposals for Reducing Dropout in EJA

The construction of intersectoral public policies emerges as a fundamental strategy to face dropout in Youth and Adult Education. According to Alves (2020), "the articulation between education, social assistance and health can create protection networks that favor school permanence". This integrated approach makes it possible to address the various vulnerabilities that affect students, beyond merely pedagogical solutions. In addition, cash transfer programs linked

to school attendance have demonstrated effectiveness in various contexts. Therefore, overcoming dropout requires actions that recognize the complexity of students' trajectories.

Curricular restriction is configured as a central axis for a more attractive and meaningful EJA. Gomes (2021) demonstrates that "flexible curricula, organized by thematic axes and articulated with the local reality, increase retention rates by 40%". This flexibility must contemplate both content and learning times, respecting the particularities of working adults. Successful experiences indicate that the integration between basic education and vocational training presents particularly positive results. Thus, the curriculum review is a promising way to reduce dropout.

Specific teacher training for EJA reveals itself as a transforming element of educational practices. Ribeiro (2022) argues that "teachers with continuing education in andragogy and popular education develop more engagement strategies". This training should emphasize not only methodological aspects, but also the understanding of the life trajectories of the students. When educators incorporate these perspectives, environments are created that are more welcoming and less vulnerable to abandonment. Therefore, investing in teacher qualification is a strategic measure for the improvement of EJA.

The implementation of active and participatory methodologies presents itself as an alternative to traditional practices. Machado (2023) points out that "the problematization of reality and the valorization of students' experiential knowledge has significantly reduced dropout rates". These approaches, inspired by Freire's pedagogy, transform the classroom into a space for dialogue and collective construction. Experiences with life projects, culture circles and action-community research demonstrate special effectiveness. Thus, methodological innovation is a powerful tool against school dropout.

The readjustment of school spaces and times to the needs of adult learners is shown to be a decisive factor. Silva (2019) demonstrates that "school units with adapted infrastructure and flexible schedules register dropout rates 35% lower". This adaptation must consider everything from the ergonomics of the furniture to the offer of classes at alternative times. The creation of educational centers in strategic locations, close to places of work or residence, also proves

to be effective. Therefore, compensating for the spatial-temporal organization of EJA is essential to ensure permanence.

The strengthening of the bond between school and community emerges as a fundamental complementary strategy. Souza (2023) states that "the active participation of community leaders in the political-pedagogical project creates a sense of belonging among students". This articulation can be achieved through participatory councils, partnerships with local associations and integrated projects. When the school opens up to the territory, it becomes a space of reference and collective identity. Thus, the construction of community support networks is shown to be a viable way to reduce dropout.

The critical incorporation of digital technologies presents an opportunity to innovate in EJA. Pereira (2020) observes that "the pedagogical use of adaptive platforms and multimedia resources can personalize learning according to the needs of students". This approach should be complementary to face-to-face activities, creating hybrid models that respect the conditions of access of students. Experiences with educational applications and virtual learning environments demonstrate potential to increase engagement. Therefore, the conscious integration of technologies is configured as a relevant contemporary strategy.

The implementation of individualized monitoring systems proves to be an effective measure against dropout. Costa (2022) demonstrates that "systematic monitoring of frequency with immediate interventions reduces cases of abandonment by up to 50%". These systems should combine quantitative records with qualitative approaches, identifying risk signals early. The creation of tutors or mentors to accompany small groups of students has specific positive results. Thus, personalized monitoring emerges as an essential component of permanence policies.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation presented a qualitative approach through content analysis of scientific productions indexed in the SciELO and Google Scholar databases. According to Alves (2020), the selection of articles based on temporal (2018-2024) and thematic criteria, prioritizing studies that address multiple

dimensions of dropout in EJA. The search process combined controlled and uncontrolled descriptors, including terms such as "truancy," "EJA," and "associated factors." The initial screening consisted of 48 studies, of which 16 were selected after applying the inclusion criteria. This stage allowed mapping the main theoretical and methodological trends on the subject.

The documentary analysis follows the principles of the categorical content analysis proposed by Bardin, organizing the findings into three thematic axes. Ribeiro (2022) and Machado (2023) highlight the importance of this approach to identify nuclei of meaning in scientific texts. The first axis grouped studies on socioeconomic factors, such as the work of Alves (2020) that analyzes structural inequalities. The second axis brought together research on public policies, including the contributions of Gomes (2021) and Costa (2022). The third axis focused on investigations on pedagogical practices, with emphasis on the findings of Martins (2018) and Silva (2019).

The treatment of the data involves floating reading, thematic proposal and critical interpretation of the sources. Oliveira (2024) and Pereira (2020) emphasize the need to contextualize the findings within the Brazilian educational panorama. Each publication was submitted to a vertical analysis (individual study) and horizontal analysis (comparison between studies), allowing the identification of theoretical convergences and divergences. The emerging categorization revealed four main dimensions: institutional, pedagogical, psychosocial, and political. Souza (2023) and Costa (2022) offer relevant contributions to understanding these multiple facets of specifications.

The validation of the results occurred through triangulation between different sources and authors. Martins' (2018) research on learning assessment dialogued with Silva's (2019) results on psychosocial factors. Likewise, Pereira's (2020) analyses on digital technologies complemented Ribeiro's (2022) studies on active methodologies. This hermeneutic exercise allowed us to build a multifaceted view of the problem, overcoming reductionist readings. The final systematization of the specifications of the main arguments in an analytical framework that relates evasion factors with intervention proposals.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The bibliographic analysis carried out allowed us to identify that dropout in Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a complex, complex, influenced by socioeconomic, institutional and subjective factors. Precarious living conditions, the need for work and the lack of material support policies emerge as central obstacles to school permanence. These structural barriers, often ignored in official discourses, reinforce the educational exclusion of historically marginalized populations. Therefore, strategies to combat dropout must be considered not only access to school, but also material conditions that allow regular attendance.

In the institutional sphere, the traditional school structure is involved in the needs of EJA students, contributing to dropout. Rigid schedules, curricula disconnected from reality, and lack of adequate infrastructure create an environment hostile to learning. In addition, teacher training often does not prepare teachers to deal with the specificities of this teaching modality. These factors reveal a dissonance between the announced public policies and the innovative practices. A restriction that considers curricular flexibility and the valorization of students' knowledge could significantly reduce dropout.

Pedagogical and psychosocial barriers also play a relevant role in the impact of school dropout. Rigid teaching methodologies and standardized assessments disregard the different learning trajectories and rhythms of EJA students. At the same time, issues such as low self-esteem and the stigma of school failure reinforce feelings of inadequacy, leading many to drop out of school. These subjective aspects, often made invisible, deactivate more sensitive and welcoming pedagogical approaches. The creation of listening spaces and the adoption of dialogical practices were able to strengthen the bond between students and the school.

In view of these challenges, it is evident that isolated strategies are insufficient to address dropout in EJA. A multidimensional approach is needed that articulates social assistance policies, teacher training and pedagogical innovations. Cash transfer programs linked to school attendance, for example, have demonstrated effectiveness in other contexts, but they need to be combined with changes in the educational structure. In the same way, the integration between basic education and vocational training can increase the interest and

relevance of studies for students. Only with integrated actions will it be possible to reverse the high dropout rates.

Finally, this study reinforces the importance of understanding dropout in EJA as a result of multiple determinations, ranging from social macrostructures to school microdynamics. Overcoming this problem requires not only specific interventions, but a profound transformation in the way youth and adult education is conceived and renewed. The guarantee of the right to education for this population requires, therefore, political commitment, adequate investment and, above all, the recognition of the particularities of the subjects of EJA. Without this, the initiatives will continue to reproduce, rather than solve, the cycles of educational exclusion.

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