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Profile of dropout students from higher education technology degrees at Instituto Federal da Bahia - Santo Antônio de Jesus *Campus*

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Abstract: This work aims to explore and describe the profile of dropout students from higher education technology degrees at *Instituto Federal da Bahia* (IFBA) - Santo Antônio de Jesus *Campus* between 2018 and 2023 while discussing the dropout phenomenon. We collected data on 853 enrolled students and 426 dropout students, which were systematized and analyzed using descriptive statistics based on Souza and Freitas (2021), Guerra, Ferraz, and Medeiros (2019), among others. The research findings show that dropout rates were higher among certain groups, including women, students from low-income families (earning up to half the minimum wage *per capita*), quota students, and those from public schools. Investigating the profiles of dropout students can inform policies and actions aimed at mitigating the problem.
Keywords: dropout; dropout student; Higher Education; Federal Institute of Education.

1 Introduction

Education is a social right ensured to all Brazilians through the 1988 Federal Constitution. The family and the State should provide it in equal conditions to also access and guarantee the necessary means for students to continue, allowing their full development, preparation to exercise citizenship, and qualification for the work market (Brasil, 1988, 1996).

Higher education, which encompasses sequential courses by knowledge field, undergraduate, outreach, and graduate education, plays a fundamental role in national development. One of its primary aims is to form students in various areas, enabling them to meet social demands, particularly those from the workforce. Furthermore, it stimulates culture, science, and critical thinking while also promoting science dissemination, research incentives, and outreach, which approximates the population to the benefits resulting from its offer (Brasil, 1996).

Due to its importance for the country's development, higher education has undergone an expansion process that began more noticeably in the late 1990s, with the involvement of the private sector, and continued to strengthen the public sector after the 2000s. Hence, over time, public policies have helped make this educational level more accessible to all Brazilians, a fact that is reflected, for instance, in the 33.8% growth in undergraduate enrollments between 2012 and 2022 (Inep, 2023). Amongst the policies that positively influenced Brazilian higher education, we highlight *Programa Universidade para Todos (Prouni), Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil (Fies)*, and the *Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais Brasileiras (Reuni*) and the creation of *Rede Federal de Educação Profissional, Científica e Tecnológica* (RFEPCT- Federal Network of Vocational, Scientific, and Technological Education).

RFEPCT, created by Law nº 11.892, on December 29, 2008, is composed by the *Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia* (IFs- Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology), which are apt to provide basic and higher education (undergraduate and graduate). Thus, they are institutions that have undoubtedly contributed to education reaching several regions in the country, considering that RFEPCT has great capillarity and is present in all states and the Federal District. There are more than 650 educational units in the country, concentrating 1,681,363 students enrolled in 12,951 courses (Plataforma Nilo Peçanha, 2024).

Despite the well-known advances in Brazilian higher education over the last decades, leading to countless benefits for all society, we need to bring to the debate that this growth in the number of places and institutions was followed by students' dropout (Oliveira; Guimarães; Santana, 2019). Hence, it is relevant and urgent to approach this problem, which also affects RFEPCT institutions, and can be seen in the documents, such as Agreements 506/2013 and 986/2024 – both from *Tribunal de Contas da União* (TCU - Federal Court of Accounts) –, which report the need to deal with dropout in the Network.

The problem of student dropout is multifactorial and common to the educational system. It is present in different levels and modalities, compromising the efficiency of institutions, considering their ends, regardless of their administrative category (private or public). However, in public institutions – such as the Federal Institutes – the high

number of dropout students could suggest an inadequate use of resources, besides negatively affecting society (Almeida Neto *et al.*, 2018). The RFEPCT Evaluation Report– written by the *Conselho de Monitoramento e Avaliação de Políticas Públicas* (CMAP- Council to Monitor and Evaluate Public Policies) in 2021 – highlights that dropout is one of the problems that outline IFs' work, which is essential to reduce students' dropout rates in several courses (Brasil, 2022b).

Consequently, this work is justified by the academic and institutional importance of this theme, as well as the belief that its results can help create and adapt strategies and actions that mitigate the problem in the studied place, thereby favoring and positively impacting the institution, RFEPCT, and society in general. The study was guided by the following question: What is the profile of students who dropped out of technological higher education courses at IFBA Santo Antônio de Jesus between 2018 and 2023? Consequently, this work seeks to explore and describe the profile of students who dropped out of technology higher education courses (technological undergraduates) at the *Instituto Federal da Bahia* (IFBA) - Santo Antônio de Jesus *Campus* (between 2018 and 2023) while discussing the dropout phenomenon. To reach this end, we collected in the institution's academic system the data from students enrolled/dropped out, which were later systematized and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Besides this introduction, this article has six more sections. The first approaches RFEPCT's origin and expansion and the dropout problem, particularly in technology higher education courses. After, we discuss fundamental aspects of the phenomenon approached here, followed by the methodology used to develop this work. In the following section, we present and discuss the results and, finally, state our final remarks.

2 The Federal Network of Vocational, Scientific, and Technological Education (RFEPCT)

To some, the origin of *Rede Federal de Educação Profissional, Científica e Tecnológica* (RFEPCT- Federal Network of Vocational, Scientific, and Technological Education) dates from 1909, when the Brazilian president at the time, Nilo Procópio Peçanha, created through the publication of the Decree nº 7.566, from September 23,

1909, the first School of Artificers Apprentices in each of the state's capitals, with the justification of easing the access of the working class to reach the ways to overcome the hardships involved in the struggle for survival; qualify the children of those "underprivileged by fortune", making them acquire the intellectual and technical preparation that would allow their participation in the work market, distancing them from "ignorant idleness, the school of addiction and crime" (Brasil, 1909). Pereira (2003) warns that, in the first decades of the Brazilian Republic, the ruling class used work training to try to contain what it considered a "social disorder." However, this "disorder" was, in fact, the consequence of strong urban growth and popular and class mobilization towards better work and living conditions.

Therefore, though the Decree signed by President Nilo Peçanha appointed the creation of education units focused on the qualification of the working class, we can infer a certain attempt at social control by the State, as there was an understanding that "[...] working-class children, [were] seen as potential individuals that could acquire addictions and harmful habits to society and the construction of the nation" (Pereira, 2003, p. 5). The author also affirmed that:

> Summing up, the beginnings of vocational education in Brazil portray a distant and fragile relationship between work preparation and the economic model in question. In several periods, circumstantial decisions stand out, mainly focused on "supporting authors and other underprivileged people" (Pereira, 2003, p. 18).

After the embryonic phase of establishing vocational and technological education, in 1909, the Schools of Artificers Apprentices underwent constant changes during their existence, almost always based on national demands for development, mainly connected to strengthening agriculture and industry. When taking 1909 as the starting point of RFEPCT, we understand that it has more than 100 years of existence. Nonetheless, it was formally established by Law nº 11.892, from December 29, 2008 – when creating the *Institutos Federais de Educação* (IFs- Federal Institutes of Education), through the transformation/integration of old Federal Technical and Agrotechnical Schools, as well as the *Centros Federais de Educação Tecnológica* (Cefets- Federal Centers of Technological Education). Nowadays, RFEPCT is composed by IFs; *Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná* (UTFPR); *Centros Federais de Educação Tecnológica Celso Suckow da Fonseca* (Cefet-RJ) and from

Minas Gerais (Cefet-MG); Technical Schools connected to Federal Universities; and *Colégio Pedro II.*

Although officially established in 2008, RFEPCT has been expanding since 2005, following the withdrawal of § 5º of Article 3º of Law No. 8,948, dated December 8, 1994, which had previously forbidden the creation of new units of federal vocational education (Brasil, 2018). Considering this, at the end of that year, the *Secretaria de Educação Profissional e Tecnológica* (Setec- Secretary of Vocational and Technological Education) created a *Proposta de Política Pública de Educação Profissional e Tecnológica* [Proposal of Public Policy for Vocational and Technological Education], having as a central element the expansion of IFs in the Brazilian territory to, consequently, help regional and local development through its units and for the formation of "[...] critical and professionally competent citizens, with ethical, political, intellectual, and technological autonomy" (Brasil, 2006, p. 4). The planned development by Setec encompassed the following phases:

> Phase I (started in 2006) aimed to establish *campi* in the federal units that still did not have any technical schools, as well as in the outskirts of large cities, in a total of 38 schools. Phase II (started in 2007) would be a landmark in the education offer, targeting the implementation of more than 150 schools. Phase III, which aimed to promote vocational education in the countryside and address social inequalities, started in 2011 and envisioned the establishment of 208 new schools (Bohrer; Fonseca; Karcher, 2023, p. 13).

As a result of this expansion, RFEPCT saiu de um total de 144 unidades de ensino em 2006, para 659 em 2018, ou seja, houve a criação de mais de 500 novos *campi*, superando a meta prevista de 400 (Brasil, 2018). Nowadays, RFEPCT is present in every state of the country, including the Federal District, which allows education to reach the countryside. In total, there are more than 650 *campi* offering basic and higher education courses in all shifts and modalities. To do so, RFEPCT has 47,990 teachers and 35,504 Education Administrative Technicians (PNP, 2024). In 2023, RFEPCT enrolled 1,681,363 students. Together with the Federal Universities, the RFEPCT answers for 99.5% of undergraduate enrollments in public higher education public (Brasil, 2022a).

We can affirm that the RFEPCT expansion policy joins others (such as Reuni, Prouni, Fies, Pnaes, SiSU etc.) that allowed the broadening/democratization of education access, in accordance with the intentions to develop the country, which

undoubtedly involve strengthening higher education. If, at the beginning, RFEPCT was perceived as a political instrument targeting the "underprivileged classes", today, it is an important structure that enables a more heterogeneous public to effectively access scientific and technological achievements (Brasil, 2018).

The dropout of RFEPCT's students has called researchers' attention for a while. Therefore, we can find several works on the phenomenon (for instance, Bressan, 2021; Cunha; Lima Filho, 2021; Pereira; Menuzzi; Pinto, 2022; and others). When mapping Brazilian scientific production (between 2016 and 2021) in *Stricto Sensu* programs about dropout in in-person undergraduate IFs degrees, Tavares and Passone (2023) found 14 studies approaching this theme, showing that, despite the decrease in dropout rates in RFEPCT higher education degrees between 2017 and 2019), the phenomenon is still a serious issue that can affect these institutions (Souza; Freitas, 2021). Because of this, in 2013, TCU pointed out the need to establish coordinated strategies to face the problem. Hence, through the Agreement 506/2013, the body recommended that the *Secretaria de Educação Profissional e Tecnológica* (SETEC-Secretary of Vocational and Technological Education) establish together with the Federal Institutes a plan to address dropout at RFEPCT, consequently including the higher education courses of technology. In that opportunity, the body recognized that:

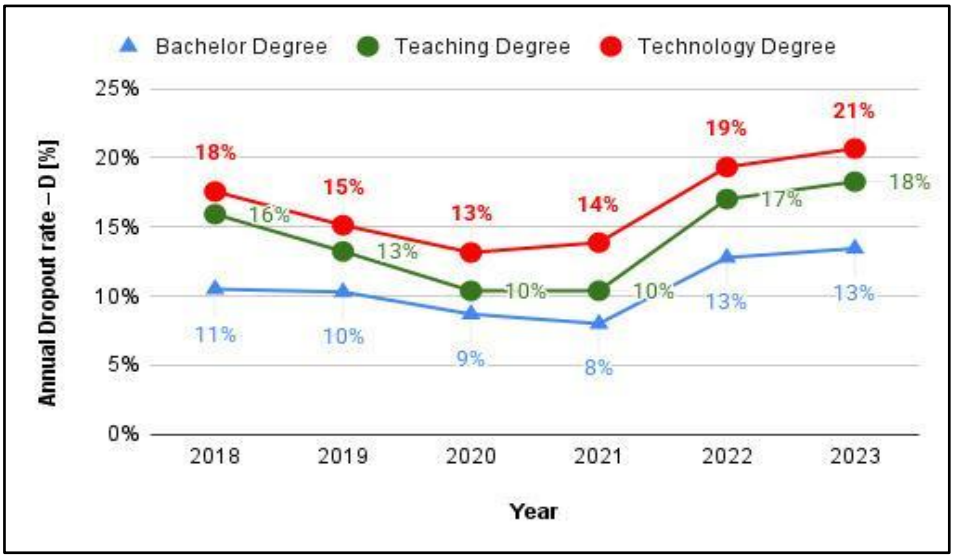
> Due to the diversity of factors affecting dropout, we can infer that designing policies or strategies to combat dropout in Federal Institutes is a complex task. First, we must consider that the Federal Institutes offer courses for very heterogeneous audiences in academic and social terms. These differences demand specific policies to be developed for each segment (TCU, 2013, p. 16).

Based on TCU's recommendation, in 2014, SETEC created the *Documento Orientador para a Superação da Evasão e Retenção na Rede Federal* [Guiding Document to Overcome Dropout and Retention in the Federal System], which proposes a development methodology for an Intervention and Monitoring Strategic Plan to Overcome Dropout and Retention at each institution. Moreover, the Secretary established in 2019 the 'Permanent Commission to Follow-up Students' Permanence and Success' to monitor the actions of the Federal Institutes regarding the follow up of Strategic Plans previously defined. Regarding this, TCU raised criticisms when claiming that:

> Due to the lack of action from the 'Permanent Commission to Follow-up Students' Permanence and Success,' there was a lack of follow-up and monitoring by Setec/MEC from the implemented actions in the strategic plans of permanence and success in the Federal System EPCT, what lead to the lack of proposals to improve and guide the improvement of such plans and the absence of channels focused on joint action, resulting in the disperse and isolated action in the teaching institutions to fight dropout (TCU, 2024, p. 10).

Despite the actions developed (and the difficulties in enacting them) to reduce the dropout problem in RFECPT, it is still present at several educational levels. When observing the Annual Dropout Rate - D [%][1] in the RFEPCT undergraduate courses, the technology higher education courses stand out (technological undergraduate degrees) when compared to other Teaching and Bachelor degrees. The graphic below shows the evolution of this indicator.

Figure 1 – Evolution of yearly dropout rate by type of undergraduate course at RFEPCT, between 2018 and 2023



Source: Created by the authors (2024) based on PNP data.

The higher education technology degrees (also known as technological degrees) have their organization and working guidelines described in Resolution CNE/CP nº 3, from December 18, 2002. They emerged between the late 1960s and early 1970s in São Paulo, connected to the federal education system and the private sector (Brasil, 2001) and are closely associated with development and technological

[1] This indicator is used by the *Plataforma Nilo Peçanha* (PNP- Nilo Peçanha Platform) to measure the percentage of enrollments that severed their connections (dropout students) with the institution in the year of reference considering the total number of enrollments (enrolled students). The following formula is used for the calculation: D [%] = D/E x 100. In which D = dropout and E = enrollments (Moraes *et al.*, 2020).

innovation, applied research, entrepreneurial development, process management, and, mainly, the work market. Through a more dynamic formation and focused on regional demands, they grant students a technology diploma, allowing them to continue their studies in the following educational levels– specialization, master's, and doctorate, as well as to participate in public calls that demand higher education.

Though in some moments of Brazilian History of Education, these types of courses had been the target of mistrust and professional and academic discrimination, as vocational education was marked by the mere instrumentalization of workers to answer the demands of the work market (Civalsci, 2011), the numbers of *Censo da Educação Superior* (Higher Education Census -Censup) show their decrease. Between 2012 and 2022, courses of this nature recorded the highest growth in incoming students, with a percentage increase of 155.5% compared to Bachelor's and Teaching degrees, reaching a total of 10,261 students in 2022. Moreover, there was a 91.9% increase in the number of enrollments in Technology undergraduate degrees between 2012 and 2022 (Inep, 2023). Nowadays, RFEPCT has 896 Technology undergraduate degrees (PNP, 2024), what would allow a greater opportunity for students seeking to gather the necessary competencies to join specific professional areas, in which technology application is essential.

We should highlight that the Federal Institutes are specialized in offering vocational and technological education (in different education levels and modalities); thus, one of their aims is to provide technology higher education courses (technological undergraduate degrees) for professional training aiming to answer the demands of different economy sectors (Brasil, 2008). In this sense, the dropout of students in these courses can distance the Institutes from one of their key objectives. Therefore, studies like this can help create strategies and actions that consider their specificities, making them more effective, which also necessarily involves understanding the profile of dropout students.

Perhaps the first discussion we should raise about the dropout theme is the debate about the various concepts associated with this term. The literature shows that this has been debated for a long time, with no absolute consensus, as there is a varied approach to the use of the term and this action depends on the meaning attributed to it (Vitelli; Fritsch, 2016). Bueno (1993) states that, in some cases, dropout can be related to an "exclusion" because it would derive from institutional inabilities to provide

the necessary elements for the student to be guided and thrive. In this case, according to the author, there is no active position of the student to leave the course, which, thus, cannot be called dropout but exclusion. This statement is connected to what Ristoff (1995) defends by highlighting that much of what is defined as "dropout" is, in fact, a student's natural movement to seek success/fulfillment/joy.

The *Comissão Especial de Estudos sobre a Evasão nas Universidades Públicas Brasileiras* [Special Commission of Studies about Dropout in Brazilian Public Universities], established in 1995, defined dropout under three concepts:

> - **Course dropout:** when students disconnect themselves from an undergraduate course in different situations, such as abandonment (does not enroll), dropout (official), transfer or re-option (change courses), exclusion due to an institutional regulation;
> - **Institution dropout:** when students disconnect themselves from the institution they are enrolled;
> - **System dropout:** when the student drops out definitely or temporarily from higher education (Andifes *et al.*, 1996, p. 16).

Over time, several studies raised different concepts for the term "dropout"; however, we can broadly affirm that it can be understood as the student leaving (the course, institution, system) before finishing the course, voluntarily or not (Baggi; Lopes, 2011; Coimbra; Silva; Costa, 2021). The *locus* of this work was a Federal Institute of Education, a term was understood from a definition found in the PNP[2] Methodology Reference Guide, which refers to dropout students as those "[...] who lost bond with the institution before finishing the course" (Moraes *et al.*, 2020, p. 27), including in this category those who abandoned (did not renovate the enrollment in the next semester); students who canceled (formalized the enrollment cancelation); disconnection (were excluded due to the rules); failure; internal or external transfer.

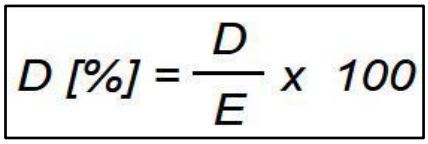
From the clear definition of what is considered dropout, it is possible to adequately measure it, as this is an aspect that needs more attention in the theme. Broadly speaking, the indicator that measures the phenomenon in Brazilian undergraduate studies is the "*Taxa de Desistência Acumulada* (TDA- Accumulated dropout rate)" from the *Censo da Educação Superior* (Censup- Higher Education Census). It refers to the percentage of students who dropped out of the course through

[2] *Plataforma Nilo Peçanha* (PNP- Nilo Peçanha Platform) is a virtual and official environment to collect, validate, and disseminate statistics from RFEPCT.

a transfer or bond interruption (dropout, abandonment, or disconnection with the institution) in a given period, considering the number of admitted students in the same course, and removing from this number the students who passed away.

Through some Censup's documents, we can perceive the profile of students who drop out from Brazilian undergraduate degrees. For instance, we see that TDA, considering a cohort of those admitted in 2013, was higher among male students (63%), in online courses (59%), non-quota students (55%), those who did not qualify for Fies (62%) or Prouni (60%), and also from Physics Teaching Degree (72%) (Inep, 2023). This context provided the first evidence of what could be found in this study. However, we should point out that in this work, whose investigation is circumscribed to a Federal Institute of Education, we used as a reference to calculate dropout the calculation involving the indicator "Annual Dropout Rate- D [%]", typical of RFEPCT and shown in the figure below.

Figure 1 - Formula to calculate Annual Dropout Rate – D [%][3]



Source: Moraes *et al.* (2020, p. 27)

A large part of the studies on higher education dropout focuses on checking the causes involved in the phenomenon. This situation was seen by Souza, Petró, and Gessinger (2012, p. 1), who conducted a bibliographical review produced between 2000 and 2011 available in the Capes database, concluding that:

> 64% of the studies seek to understand the factors that lead students to drop out of a given Higher Education Institution (HEI); 6% historically analyzed the dropout process; 6% analyzed the relationship between indicators of students' satisfaction regarding a given HEI and dropout; 12% studied the profile of dropout students; 3% analyzed which courses present the highest dropout rate; 9% develop and analyze work proposals related to technology intending to decrease repetition and dropout rates.

The bibliography on this theme shows that dropout is unquestionably multifactorial, as these factors can have an isolated or simultaneous influence on students leaving, voluntarily or not. As they are very different (transportation costs,

[3] Note: D = number of dropout students and E = number of enrolled students.

institution location, lack of emotional connection with classmates/teachers, wrong course choice, gaps from K-12 education, difficulty to adapt to the course and/or HEI), it is possible to notice that grouping dropout causes has been a widely used strategy to better understand it (see: Andifes *et al.*, 1996; Cunha; Morosini, 2014; Teixeira; Mentges; Kampff, 2019).

Considering the consequences of the phenomenon, we can see a lack of clearer investigations, thus, indicating that studies on this issue can fill a certain demand. Despite this scenario, there are exceptions, for example, Prestes and Fialho (2018), who estimated, from the number of dropout students between 2007 and 2012, the financial losses – the accumulated value was R$ 415 million. Nonetheless, it is known that dropout has social, academic, and economic consequences in the public (resources invested with no due return) or private (revenue losses) systems. For the student, it might mean postponing a dream or losing a work opportunity and/or improving income. However, it can also be the result of seeking better learning conditions or work positions (Silva Filho *et al.,* 2007; Baggi; Lopes, 2011; Cunha; Morosini, 2014; Tontini; Walter, 2014; Ristoff, 1995).

The strategies and actions to combat dropout are as varied as their causes/consequences. It is possible to find approaches regarding the use of predictive analysis (such as Paz; Cazella, 2017), psychological intervention (Peretta; Oliveira; Lima, 2019), creation of a multidisciplinary team (Mussliner *et al.*, 2021), subject intervention (Almeida *et al.*, 2019), and several others. Morosini and Cunha showed that the works developed about the theme generally propose the following as strategies to fight dropout:

> a) attention to initial training;
> b) support from students' aid;
> c) investment in faculty's continuous training and professional development;
> d) construction of a professional identity to guide choices
> (Cunha; Morosini, 2014, p. 88).

All these actions seek to mitigate the problem, showing that there is no ready formula to fight dropout as the phenomenon has diverse characteristics influenced by its context. Thus, this should be considered when creating the proposals to combat it.

3 Methodology: guidelines to seek the profile of dropout students

The *locus* of this study was the *Instituto Federal da Bahia* (IFBA) –Santo Antônio de Jesus *Campus*. The result of the Phase III of RFEPCT Expansion plan, the *campus* started to be built in 2013 and is located in one of the main cities of *Recôncavo Baiano*[4]. Its works were concluded in 2015 and authorized by Ordinance nº 378, from May 9, 2016, and the Ministry of Education (MEC). In 2018, the educational unity started to offer regular places for technology higher education in Systems Analysis and Development, Multimedia Production, and Computer Networking – chosen for this study because they are of the same type (technological undergraduate), offer classes in the same shift (night), taught in-person, using the same admission type for their students, and present a wider time frame for analysis and an annual dropout rate of 19.34% in 2023 (PNP, 2024).

This article was initially developed from a bibliographical review aiming to "[...] provide theoretical groundings to the work, as well as to identify the current state of knowledge about the theme" (Gil, 2017, p. 34). Afterward, we collected, through the academic system of the institution, the records related to students enrolled and those who dropped out of the technology higher education courses at IFBA Santo Antônio de Jesus between July 2018 and December 2023. After excluding duplicated records from the data, choosing to leave only the most recent one (if the student had enrolled or dropped out more than once), we reached the following numbers: 853 records of enrolled students and 426 dropout ones. With this data, we substituted the information that could in any way identify the students (enrollment number, complete name, etc.) to protect their privacy. After, we systematized the data collected in a Google Spreadsheet and determined 13 variables to be observed through descriptive statistics.

Summing up, considering its aim, this is an exploratory/descriptive investigation that seeks to increase familiarity with the problem and describe the characteristics of the population studied (Gil, 2017). The results of this work and the surrounding

[4] Region in the state of Bahia with a strong economic, historical, and cultural importance, compose by the cities of Cabaceiras do Paraguaçu, Cachoeira, Castro Alves, Conceição do Almeida, Cruz das Almas, Dom Macedo Costa, Governador, Mangabeira, Maragogipe, Muniz Ferreira, Muritiba, Nazaré, Salinas da Margarida, Santo Amaro, Santo Antônio de Jesus, São Felipe, São Félix, Sapeaçu, Saubara, Varzedo.

discussion are presented below.

4 Results presentation and discussion

The formula related to the calculation of the dropout rate in this work had as a reference the one used by the indicator "Annual Dropout Rate- AD [%]" (described in section 3). Hence, seeking to observe dropout in the analyzed period (between July 2018 and December 2023) was calculated in the following way:

$$AD\ [\%] = \frac{TDS}{TES} x\ 100$$

In which AD [%] = annual dropout rate; TDS = Total of Dropout Students; and TES= Total of Enrolled Students. Therefore, the difference between this formula and the Annual Dropout rate is that we consider here the accumulation of enrollments/dropouts in the whole period analyzed. That said, the first aspect observed is that in the analyzed period, the *campus* enrolled 853 students in technology higher education courses, from which 426 ended up dropping out (resulting in an AD [%] of almost 50%). We can see that Computer Networking was the course that had proportionally a higher dropout incidence. Table 1 shows this information.

Table 1 – Accumulated Dropout Rate by course

Course	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
System Analysis and Development	292	34.23%	124	29.11%	42.47%
Multimedia Production	285	33.41%	148	34.74%	51.93%
Computer Networking	276	32.36%	154	36.15%	55.80%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the author (2024).

When observing the dropout rate by sex, we can see that it reached women more. However, their presence among enrolled students was lower than men. These statements are portrayed in Table 2.

Table 2 – Accumulated Dropout Rate by sex

Sex	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
Women	253	29.66%	135	31.69%	53.36%
Men	600	70.34%	291	68.31%	48.50%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the author (2024).

These results differ from what was found in Souza and Freitas (2021), who, when analyzing the profile of undergraduate students who dropped out of the IFs, perceived a lower dropout among men. The authors added that the lower presence of women is common in courses traditionally seen as "masculine", mainly in the areas of exact sciences, engineering, and computer sciences (Melo, 2009 *apud* Souza; Freitas, 2021).

When analyzing Table 3, we can see that the education unit has enrolled a public that predominantly declared themselves as black (black and brown) (77.96%), reflecting the population of the city in which the *campus* is located, which, according to the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil, was comprised of 76. 45% black people in 2017 (Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento, 2024). Compared to the panorama recorded at RFEPCT in 2023 (47.47% of enrollments done by people self-declared black) (PNP, 2024), for example, we perceive a clear difference.

Table 3 – Accumulated dropout rate by color/race

Color/Race	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
Not declared	17	1.99%	14	3.29%	82.35%
Other	1	0.12%	1	0.23%	100.00%
Yellow	2	0.23%	1	0.23%	50.00%
White	165	19.34%	76	17.84%	46.06%
Indigenous	3	0.35%	1	0.23%	33.33%
Brown	392	45.96%	207	48.59%	52.81%
Black	273	32.00%	126	29.58%	46.15%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the author (2024).

As seen, though AD [%] has been proportionally higher among yellow people, not declared, and others, when considering whites, blacks, and browns (who represent the highest absolute/relative presence among enrolled students) it was analogous. However, when grouping browns and blacks, the dropout was 78.17%. We also highlight that this Institution has a low level of information about color/race defined as “not declared” in its records, contrary to what is seen in what studies (see Senkevics; Machado; Oliveira, 2016, for example). This situation is different when observing the data on students’ family income *per capita*, as a bit less than half of them 'did not declare', as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Accumulated dropout rate by family income *per capita*

***Per Capita* Family Income**	**TES**	**%**	**TDS**	**%**	**AD [%]**
Not declared	394	46.19%	205	48.12%	52.03%
From 0 to half a minimum wage	166	19.46%	119	27.93%	71.69%
More than a half to up to a minimum wage	159	18.64%	74	17.37%	46.54%
More than one to up to one and a half minimum wage	94	11.02%	19	4.46%	20.21%
More than one and a half to two minimum wages	29	3.40%	6	1.41%	20.69%
More than two minimum wages	11	1.29%	3	0.70%	27.27%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the author (2024).

The lack of information about RFEPCT students' income is still an aspect to be improved. According to the TCU (2024, p. 18), "[...] in 2022, 31.69% of enrollments in the undergraduate courses were recorded at the *Plataforma Nilo Peçanha* with the indication 'not declared' in the information regarding family income". Disregarding the information "Not declared" from Table 4, we notice that the dropout was higher among low-income students, mainly those with a *per capita* family income of less than a minimum wage. According to IBGE (2024), approximately 38.9% of the population from Santo Antônio de Jesus had a monthly income *per capita* of up to half a minimum wage in 2010.

The institutions that comprise the RFEPCT attend a considerable percentage of socioeconomically vulnerable students, mainly from the working class, who have low incomes, and come from public education systems in regions far from large cities and with an unsatisfactory educational development index (Brasil, 2014). Thus, the establishment of public policies focused on student permanence was an important step to minimize existing inequalities. In this sense, the *Política Nacional de Assistência Estudantil* (Pnaes- National Policy for Student Assistance), currently ruled by Law nº 14.914, from July 2024, has sought to increase and ensure the conditions of students' permanence in higher education, and vocational, scientific, and technological education in the federal institutions of education, also seeking to reduce dropout rates.

Despite the unequivocal importance of Pnaes for students to continue in federal institutions of education, including the Federal Institutes, the resources focused on this policy have decreased since 2016, a context influenced by Constitutional Amendment nº 95 from 2016. Silva and Marques (2022, p. 2) warn that the Amendment:

> [...] established limits for the primary expenses using as a reference the 2016 expenditure standard and projecting it for the following twenty years. Therefore, we can observe a double and paradoxical movement in Federal Higher Education, that is: the demands for students' assistance continue to be expanded by access democratization, however, since 2016, a fiscal austerity program was established, influencing the offer of services.

Regarding specifically the Federal Institutes of Education, TCU reported in 2004 that for the "[...] period between 2012 and 2022, the enrollments for undergraduate courses had a 105% increase while the resources for students' assistance increased only 58% (TCU, 2024, p. 33). Therefore, despite the changes in Brazilian higher education regarding the democratization of access for an increasingly diverse and representative public, there is still a need to strengthen policies focused on students' permanence.

The age of the students enrolled in the higher education courses at the institution was another aspect observed. In this sense, a young public (between 17 and 32 years old) stood out among the enrolled students, and the accumulated dropout among those between 17 and 22 years old was smaller (27.86%). In the 32 year-old age range, the dropout increased in percentage terms, as seen in Table 5.

Table 5 – Accumulated dropout rate by age range

Age range	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
17 ⊢ 22	280	32.83%	78	18.31%	27.86%
22 ⊢ 27	310	36.34%	167	39.20%	53.87%
27 ⊢ 32	116	13.60%	74	17.37%	63.79%
32 ⊢ 37	52	6.10%	40	9.39%	76.92%
37 ⊢ 42	42	4.92%	27	6.34%	64.29%
42 ⊢ 47	33	3.87%	26	6.10%	78.79%
47 ⊢ 52	8	0.94%	6	1.41%	75.00%
52 ⊢ 57	6	0.70%	4	0.94%	66.67%
57 ⊢ 62	5	0.59%	3	0.70%	60.00%
62 ⊢ 67	1	0.12%	1	0.23%	100.00%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

We also observed the relationship between students' place of residence and their dropout from the course. Table 6 describes these data.

Table 6 - Accumulated dropout rate by place of residence

Place of residence	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
Somewhere else	279	32.71%	135	31.69%	48.39%
Santo Antônio de Jesus	574	67.29%	291	68.31%	50.70%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

As seen, the rates recorded were extremely close, not showing that the fact that living in another city and having to travel daily to the *campus* had a strong influence over dropout, moving away from what Silva (2019) reported, which noticed that the distance traveled by the student (over 10 km) affects their dropout. Considering the admission type, the institution uses three different admission processes: *Sistema de Seleção Unificada* (SiSU- Unified Selection System) – for students who did the *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* (ENEM – National High School Exam) during the admission year; Degree Holder – for those who graduated an undergraduate degree and want a new one; and its own Admission Process – normally focusing on filling remaining places (including through transfers). The table below shows that the dropout was higher among students admitted by a selective process.

Table 7 – Accumulated dropout rate by admission type

Admission type	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
Degree Holder	20	2.34%	4	0.94%	20.00%
Own Admission Process	303	35.52%	160	37.56%	52.81%
SiSU	530	62.13%	262	61.50%	49.43%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

The results regarding this aspect differ from the ones reported by Li (2016 *apud* Souza; Freitas, 2021), which indicated SiSU as one of the determinant factors for dropout, increasing the probability of it happening in the first year of the course in 4.5 percentage points. In general, Silva Filho *et al*. (2007, p. 643) state that “Worldwide, the dropout rate in the first year of the course is twice or three times higher than in the following years”. Guerra, Ferraz, and Medeiros (2019, p. 1) state that “In the Federal Institutes of Brazil, the annual dropout rate varies from 24% to 28% and can reach, at the end of three years, around 70% of incoming students." This aspect was seen in this study, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – Distribution of dropout rate by course percentage completed before dropping out

Course percentage completed (%)			D	%
0	⊢	25	370	86.85%
25	⊢	50	48	11.27%
50	⊢	75	7	1.64%
75	⊢	100	1	0.23%
Total			**426**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

As the courses investigated have a regular duration of three years, this means that 98.12% of students dropped out within one year and a half after enrolling. This fact corroborates other studies that also pointed out this situation (for example, Brasil, 2024). Moreover, we should highlight that within the time analyzed in this work (from 2018 to 2023) there was the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to a series of consequences and restrictions in different sectors, including education. Coincidently, students admitted in the year Covid-19 started in Brazil (2020) evaded the most, as shown in the table below.

Table 9 - Accumulated dropout rate by admission year

Admission year	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
2018	82	9.61%	55	12.91%.	67.07%
2019	172	20.16%	120	28.17%	69.77%
2020	92	10.79%	72	16.90%	78.26%
2021	144	16.88%	95	22.30%	65.97%
2022	166	19.46%	72	16.90%	43.37%
2023	197	23.09%	12	2.82%	6.09%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

According to Araújo and Lima (2021), the context of Covid-19 unveiled and increased educational inequalities, hindering learning, mainly students from the public system, which had more problems accessing the necessary communication means to follow remote activities. Furthermore, the social context created by the pandemic could have negatively influenced the feeling of belonging to a course/institution, as this sensation is strengthened by the daily relations built during students' academic trajectory and that, at that time, were suspended.

The period in which dropout students were admitted was also analyzed. About this, we perceived that students who joined the institution in the second semester of the year dropped out more than those admitted in the first semester, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10 - Accumulated dropout rate by admission semester

Admission semester	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
1st semester	257	30.13%	100	23.47%	38.91%
2nd semester	596	69.87%	326	76.53%	54.70%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

The school background before higher education can be a determinant for students' dropout. As mentioned in this text, students from less efficient educational systems may have more difficulties to continue in the course until the end. So, regarding the administrative category of the institution before being admitted to the course, we see in Table 11 that students from public schools are more likely to drop out.

Table 11 - Accumulated dropout rate by type of institution previous to the course

Type of previous institution	TES	%	TDS	%	AD [%]
Private	103	12.08%	37	8.69%	35.92%
Public	750	87.92%	389	91.31%	51.87%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

The highest proportion of dropout students from public schools was also portrayed by Souza and Freitas (2021), who observed that 76.85% of students that dropped out of undergraduate courses at federal institutes in 2018 had finished high school in public institutions. This study also shows hat students who used the reserved places (quotas) at the moment of enrollment evaded the most in the following semesters, as shown in Table 12.

Table 12 – Accumulated dropout rate by type of place

Type of place	TES	%	TDs	%	AD [%]
Broad competition	451	52.87%	219	51.41%	48.56%
Quota	402	47.13%	207	48.59%	51.49%
Total	**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

This result contrasts with others that noticed a different situation from the one experienced in this education unity, pointing out a higher dropout among students admitted outside place reservation (broad competition) (see Cardoso, 2008; Andrade; Silva; Silva, 2021; and Guerra; Ferraz; Medeiros, 2021). The accumulated dropout rate was also higher among students who had finished high school after a longer time, indicating that the time between graduating at that level and admission in the higher education courses on this *campus* had some relation to dropout. Table 13 shows this situation better.

Table 13 - Accumulated dropout rate by time between finishing high school and admission to higher education

Time (in years)			TES	%	TDS	%	D [%]
Not declared			9	1.06%	4	0.94%	44.44%
0	⊢	5	551	64.60%	243	57.04%	44.10%
5	⊢	10	159	18.64%	94	22.07%	59.12%
10	⊢	15	66	7.74%	36	8.45%	54.55%
15	⊢	20	39	4.57%	28	6.57%	71.79%
20	⊢	25	18	2.11%	13	3.05%	72.22%
25	⊢	30	7	0.82%	5	1.17%	71.43%
30	⊢	35	1	0.12%	1	0.23%	100.00%
35	⊢	40	1	0.12%	1	0.23%	100.00%
40	⊢	45	2	0.23%	1	0.23%	50.00%
Total			**853**	**100.00%**	**426**	**100.00%**	**-**

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

Based on the collected and systematized data, we can perceive that dropout occurred more pronouncedly in some students' groups, either confirmed by other studies or moving away from their results, thus providing dropout characteristics influenced by the context. Below, we present the final remarks of this work, resuming its main intentions, results, and pointing out the limitations in its development.

5 Final remarks

This study aimed to explore and describe the profile of the dropout students from technology higher education courses at IFBA - Santo Antônio de Jesus *Campus* between 2018 and 2023. To achieve this goal, we collected and analyzed the academic

records of enrolled/dropout students during this period and sought, through descriptive statistics, to bring elements that allowed us to reach the proposed objective.

As raised in the text, dropout is a multifactorial problem, which still requires best conceptualization to represent the nuances involved when students leave (voluntarily or not) the course. As it raises serious consequences for society, the academic interest in this theme can be noticed in the existing bibliography. Within RFEPCT the phenomenon is a challenge that has been observed for a while, resulting in various studies and warnings on the need to combat it, because dropout directly interferes with the main objectives of the Federal Institutes. When we observe the dropout in the RFEPCT undergraduate, it noticeably affects more students in technology higher education courses.

Based on the data collected, we notice that during the analyzed period, the course with the highest dropout rate was Computer Networking. Regarding dropout students' sex, we can see that women evade more than men do. Considering color/race, black students (which encompass black and brown) were the ones that dropout more. As pointed out in other studies, the lack of more precise information about students' income compromises a more truthful analysis of the situation. However, we perceive that dropout was higher among low-income students (until half a minimum wage).

Among the youngest students (17 to 22 years old), dropout rate was much lower than that recorded among older students. Regarding dropout students' place of residence, we notice little interference, considering that the accumulated dropout rate of students living in the same city as the campus was very close to those from other cities. Regarding the type of admission of dropout students, we perceived a higher incidence among those admitted through a selective process. The time of permanence in the course until their dropout was approximately one year and a half among the public of this study.

Students admitted in 2020 evaded more. Similarly, the dropout rate was higher among those admitted in the 2nd semester of that year. Concerning dropout and the type of institutions before higher education, the relationship was stronger amongst public-school alumni. About the type of place (quota or broad admission) of dropout students, it was perceptible that quota students dropped out slightly more. The time between high school graduation and admission to the course at the *campus* affected

dropout, considering that the students who had less time between one educational level and the other dropped out less.

The study also allowed other observations: though the Computer Networking course enrolled fewer students, it proportionally recorded more dropouts. A similar situation can be seen when observing that the number of male students enrolled is much higher than women, but this scenario did not continue when considering the proportionally higher dropout rate amongst female students.

It is important to note that, due to the limitations of an exploratory/descriptive approach, this work did not provide a deeper analysis of the variables studied. This perspective can be better approached in future studies that observe how their relationships influence dropout occurrence (or not). We can also try to understand better the motivations involved in dropout by questionnaires and interviews with dropout students. Finally, we reinforce that investigating the profile of students who dropped out of RFEPCT can be one of the strategies to think of policies and actions focused on facing the problems that permeate, among other things, the observation/concern with the public that, due to its own characteristics (personal, economic, educational, etc.), is more vulnerable to dropout.

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