

Chapter 1 Indigenous youth in the Monterrey Metropolitan Area. Risk factors for their university careers

Capítulo 1 Jóvenes indígenas en la Zona Metropolitana de Monterrey. Factores de riesgo para sus trayectorias universitarias

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DOI: 10.35429/H.2021.2.1.21

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A. Marroquín, J. Olivares, D. Ventura and L. Cruz (Coord) Social Sciences. Handbooks-©ECORFAN-México, Querétaro, 2021.

Abstract

This investigation's objective is to understand the risk factors that play a role in the formation and consolidation of college-level educational trajectories of indigenous youth. Via a qualitative approach based on the biographical method and in-depth interviews, we reconstructed the life courses of 10 indigenous young adults who study, completed or had been dropped out their university careers at conventional universities in the Monterrey Metropolitan Area. We find that the lack of cultural, economic, and emotional capital generates risk factors during pre-University education. These factors are strengthened or minimized by the characteristics of the family environment and the pre-University educational trajectories. Therefore, once enrolled in university, indigenous students have differing types of conditioning that either hinder or facilitate their university trajectories. We conclude that, the risk factors that threaten university educational trajectories are the low volume of emotional, cultural, and economic capital. In addition, the lack of social capital difficult that youth people create the support networks that make it possible to reduce the threats associated with the three types of capital. Therefore, it becomes a key risk factor that increases the chances of abandonment of school.

Higher education, Indigenous youth, Educational trajectories

Resumen

El objetivo general de la investigación es comprender los factores de riesgo que intervienen en la conformación y consolidación de las trayectorias educativas universitarias de jóvenes indígenas. A través de un trabajo cualitativo basado en el método biográfico y entrevistas a profundidad se reconstruyeron los cursos de vida de 10 jóvenes indígenas universitarios que estudian, finalizaron o que truncaron su carrera universitaria en la Zona Metropolitana de Monterrey. Se encontró que el bajo volumen de capital cultural, económico y emocional genera factores de riesgo durante la formación preuniversitaria. Estos factores se minimizan o recrudecen en función de las características familiares y las trayectorias preuniversitarias. Por tanto, al ingresar a la universidad las y los jóvenes presentan diferentes tipos de condicionamientos que dificultan o facilitan sus trayectorias universitarias. Se concluye que, los factores de riesgo que amenazan las trayectorias educativas universitarias son el bajo volumen de capital emocional, cultural y económico. Además, la falta de capital social dificulta que las y los jóvenes creen redes de apoyo que les permitan reducir las amenazas asociadas a los tres tipos de capitales. Por lo tanto, la falta de capital social se convierte en un factor de riesgo clave que incrementa las posibilidades de abandono escolar.

Educación superior, Jóvenes indígenas, Trayectorias escolares

1. Introduction

Higher education in Mexico continues to be accessible only to privileged sectors of the population. In an Oxfam study, Solís et al. (2019) find that 25% of the non-indigenous population have university degrees, while only 8% of the indigenous population have access to higher education. The number drops to 6% in the case of populations who, in addition to identifying themselves as members of a certain indigenous group, speak the corresponding language. This low access to higher education becomes even more complicated when ethnic ascription intersects with other factors such as socioeconomic class, skin-tone, and gender (Solís et al., 2019). The percentage of indigenous youth enrolled in universities across the country has risen since 2000, when indigenous students represented only 1% of total enrollment (Didou, 2018). Yet, the disparity in enrollment between non-indigenous and indigenous populations continues to be alarming.

Additionally, although the Mexican government has made efforts to increase access to higher education in indigenous young adults, it is important that it also implement strategies that contribute to student success and completion programs, not just enrollment (Buendía, 2021). For this reason, studies that explore the different experiences and trajectories of indigenous students at university are especially relevant. Some of this research has focused on how the socialization process in university influences the change or reconfiguration of ethnic identity (Gallegos et al., 2020; Mendoza, 2018; Meseguer, 2015; Pérez, 2015). Other investigations center on the conflicts indigenous students have with their non-indigenous peers (Cruz & Sartorello, 2013; Orтели & Sartorello, 2011).

Additionally, studies have documented the experiences of violence and discrimination indigenous young adults face (Bermúdez, 2013; Chávez, 2008; Czarny, 2012; Funes, 2012), and how these hinder their success and permanence at university, and sometimes lead to them abandoning their studies. Due to the importance of higher education and the adverse conditions indigenous youth face when accessing it, there are also studies that explore their educational trajectories, focusing primarily on the factors that threaten or hinder university enrollment (Carnoy et al., 2002; Casillas et al., 2015; Fernández et al., 2006). For example, in a study with students from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (National Pedagogic University, UPN by its Spanish acronym), Hernández (2013) found that the lack of infrastructure and adequate teaching personnel during the pre-University education led to a learning gap that hindered enrollment.

In that same vein, the work of Bustillos et al. (2018) and Gómez et al. (2018) identify that indigenous youth start university education with less knowledge and skills in the field of information technology. This hinders their ability to perform certain tasks and affects their academic success. It has also been found that the personal and academic challenges indigenous youth experience affect how they view the possibility of continuing their studies and influences their choice of university and professional career (Pérez, 2019).

The described research provides valuable information that allows us to identify not only the different experiences of indigenous youth at university, but also the risk factors that contribute to the abandonment of their studies. It is identified that indigenous youth with a marginalized social background, meaning with a reduced economic and cultural capital and with parents whose average school years oscillate between five and eight, present higher social disadvantages. These become risk factors to their enrollment, permanence, and eventual completion of higher education degrees. Nonetheless, it is also important to study why indigenous youth with similar socio-economic backgrounds can have different educational trajectories at the university level. In other words, it is important to identify what risk factors are present or absent in cases with differing trajectories, and with that, have a holistic view of the problem.

Until now, most of this research has focused on intercultural universities located in the center and south of Mexico (Bermúdez, 2017). These institutions have the greatest number of indigenous student enrollment. Yet, it is critical to diversify the geographic scope of this body of work, as well as include universities with conventional pedagogical models. These institutions also receive indigenous enrollment, especially those located in states that have become migratory destinations for both the general population, but especially the indigenous population, as is the case with Nuevo León (Sordo, 2020).

Indigenous students are a minority in Nuevo León's universities. Yet, this should not preclude them from their right to access policies that can benefit the success of their educational trajectories. In order for that to happen, further knowledge on the issues present is required. From this need stems the principal objective of this investigation: To identify the risk factors involved in the conformation and abandonment of university-level educational trajectories of indigenous youth in Nuevo León.

This study is organized into five sections: The first is composed of a brief contextualization of Nuevo León, focusing on the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey (AMM, by its Spanish acronym). The second handles the theoretical background utilized to approach the issue of topic; this study uses the theory of habitus of Bourdieu as a theoretical anchor.

The third section details the methodological strategies utilized before, during, and after data collection, including the principal characteristics of the participating individuals. The fourth section details the study's results, focusing on the risk factors identified and how these relate to economic, cultural, emotional, and social capital, as well as how they impact a student's educational trajectory at university. The final section corresponds to the study's conclusions.

Identifying the risk factors that are present or absent in the consolidation of university-level educational trajectories for indigenous youth in Nuevo León contributes to our understanding of higher education in Mexico. This is especially true considering that most of the research regarding this topic has been limited in geographic scope within the country, and has focused mostly on intercultural universities (Bermúdez, 2017).

Creating a more robust understanding of the experiences of indigenous students at universities with conventional educational models can contribute towards the consolidation of programs and policies that not only seek to increase indigenous enrollment at universities, but also help ensure student permanence and academic success.

2. Social context

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, by its Spanish acronym) Nuevo León has a population upwards of 5.8 million (INEGI, 2021). The majority of this population is concentrated in the municipalities that form the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey (AMM, by its Spanish acronym), where the main industrial and business centers are located, as well as residential spaces and academic institutions.

Nuevo León has a Human Development Index score of 0.699 in access to educational services and a score of 0.905 in access to healthcare, ranking it second place in Mexico and above national averages (INEGI, 2017). The state's high scores in these indicators might contribute to, it being the fourth state to receive the most temporary and permanent migrants, coming after Quintana Roo, Baja California, and Queretaro (INEGI, 2021).

Particularly, indigenous migration has increased in the last couple of years. Of Nuevo León's total population, 1.4% speak an indigenous language, meaning the state has an indigenous population of almost 78 thousand people (INEGI, 2021). Nonetheless, if indigenous households, not language, is considered as a criteria factor, the indigenous population increases to 160 thousand people. Jáuregui (2017) points out that, if the last two criteria are considered alongside that of indigenous auto-adscription, the population quadruples, totaling at around 650 thousand, composing 13% of the population of Nuevo León.

It is important to note that 26% of Nuevo León's indigenous population falls between the ages of 20 and 29, meaning Nuevo Leon has a majoritively young indigenous population (INEGI, 2021). Available data indicates that the most spoken indigenous language is Náhuatl, being spoken by almost 60% of the population, followed by Tenék (Huasteco) and Hña hñu (Otomí). Most of the population is concentrated in the municipalities of Monterrey, García, Escobedo and San Pedro Garza García (Durin et al., 2007). Occupation-wise, on average, only 20% of the population that speaks an indigenous language works as a professional. The rest are employed in the service sector, in commerce or informal business, and have salaries of mid to low remuneration (Ávila & Jáuregui, 2019).

In respect to education, policies focused on the indigenous school population came into force at the end of the 1990s. These policies focused only on schools that had been identified to have students that spoke an indigenous language (Durin, 2007). A year after the initial implementation, these efforts were further formalized under a program pushed for by the Department of Indigenous Education and expanded to other primary schools with indigenous students that had not been previously targeted.

The program's objective is to promote and value the linguistic diversity in Nuevo León. Bilingual teaching personnel periodically visit participating schools and carry out classes in an indigenous language (Martínez, 2014). Said program represents an important effort in broadening access to indigenous education. Yet, it only exists in certain primary schools, and in some of them, only indigenous students that already speak the language receive its teaching. Ideally, these programs would be present in all of the state's primary schools, whether there is an identified indigenous presence or not (Martínez, 2014).

In the same vein, it is important to propose similar actions in other educational levels, not just primary school. Current policy revolves around offering economic aid in the form of a monthly 1000 Mexican peso stipend to indigenous youth that are enrolled in high school or university (Durin & García-Tello, 2011). The importance of this aid is not overlooked, but it is also necessary to intervene with initiatives that visibilize, value and take into account the cultural diversity that exists in Mexican classrooms. This considering that economic marginalization only represents one of the structural causes of inequality that indigenous populations confront (Ruiz, 2015).

In that sense, one of the conflicts indigenous youth face is related to discrimination, exclusion, and other forms of belittlement in academic and urban spaces. This has its roots in stereotypes first developed during Colonial Mexico. Moreno (2010) pinpoints this via a hermeneutic and hemerographic analysis that identifies the prejudices associated with indigenous individuals in the AMM. In their investigation, Moreno (2010) found that indigenous people are stereotyped as being inferior, dangerous, ill-intended or in need of aid. In summary, the perception of the indigenous population is negative and dismisses their capacity and agency.

Another conflict is the result of the educational gap present in indigenous youth. National indicators created by the Instituto Nacional de la Evaluación de la Educación (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education, INEE by its Spanish acronym) indicate that 38.1% of individuals that speak an indigenous language present an educational lag of 18.6% when compared to the other sectors of the population (INEE, 2017). This is also reflected in illiteracy rates and academic grades, as well as in access to quality didactic and infrastructure resources that contribute not only education permanence, but also to the acquisition of necessary skills and knowledge to continue educational trajectories.

Some of the implemented policies have tried to make up for these social inequalities and disadvantages indigenous youth face by broadening the educational offering higher education and offering more preparatory courses for certain careers and subjects (Buendía, 2021). Nonetheless, said actions have not had the expected results. These policies have focused on increasing student enrollment while ignoring the different challenges and difficulties indigenous students face during their university careers. Addressing these factors is critical towards ensuring student success and graduation (Diez & Mateos, 2013).

This is not to invalidate the importance and impact of compensatory policies, for these address real situations and needs. Rather, given the complexity and multidimensional nature of the issue, bridging the educational inequalities indigenous youth face, and helping them consolidate their educational trajectories, requires holistic approaches that also address other roots of the issue (Ruiz, 2015). An example of a more holistic approach was the Programa de Apoyo a Estudiantes Indígenas en Instituciones de Educación Superior (Support for Indigenous Students at Higher Education Institutions, PAEIIES, by its Spanish acronym), which ran from 2001 to 2009 and was funded by the Ford Foundation. The program had 16 participating institutions located across 14 states in Mexico (Velasco, 2012).

In contrast to other initiatives, PAEIIES did not grant financial resources. The program's central strategy was to create centers of academic support staffed with personnel to assist indigenous students during their studies in each participating institution (Gómez, 2010; Velasco, 2012). This assistance included help with administrative procedures within the university, guidance for accessing government issued scholarships or from other institutions, academic support, and personal and emotional counselling. Although the implementation of these centers was carried out differently within each participating institution, each location reported positive results (Gómez, 2010; Velasco, 2012).

In regards to Nuevo Leon, there are currently no government-lead policies such as the PAEIIES program. Additionally, one of the challenges of creating relevant policies is the lack of data about student body composition in different high schools and universities within the state (Olvera et al., 2011). Data provided by the INEE (2017) indicates that in 2015, close to 37% of indigenous youth between 20 and 24 years old had completed high school. Yet, it is unknown whether this percentage enrolled in university. If that is the case, it would mean there are almost 20 thousand indigenous youths currently enrolled in higher education in Nuevo León. The lack of certainty in the above information highlights the need to obtain more robust quantitative and qualitative data about indigenous students in different educational levels within the state, especially those enrolled in high school and university.

3. Theoretical conceptual framework

A risk factor is defined as any situation that can negatively affect one or more aspects of an individual's life (Ríos, 2013). Risk factors can play out differently for each individual, depending on the individual's access to the necessary resources to confront them. Just as well, there are risk factors that are intergenerational, meaning, they are passed down from one generation to another as a result of social positioning (Filgueira & Fuentes, 1998).

Risk factors related to higher education bring together the inequalities and disadvantages accumulated via class and generation (Filgueira & Fuentes, 1998), and in the case of indigenous youth, those related to ethnicity. These threaten their ability to pursue education, especially higher education. To understand and identify the risk factors implicated in the creation and desertion of educational pathways, we used the habitus theory of Bourdieu (2007). This theory posits that individuals have a combination of features, attitudes and abilities learned via their interactions with others throughout their lifetimes. As a result of these learning processes, individuals perceive the world, and behave in a conditioned way before different situations. In other words, they form the habitus which influences, but does not determine, how they act (Bourdieu, 2007).

The habitus, according to Martínez (2017), is the “combination of principles, or schematics of forms of thinking, acting and feeling produced by the position occupied in a social structure, while also producing socially structured practices” (p.6). The habitus of individuals manifests in the different social camps where they develop.

A social camp is determined by the relationship and interactions between diverse agents that cooperate or clash amongst themselves to obtain a symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2007). In the case of this study, the social camp is the university, and the symbolic capital to be obtained is a university degree. With the concept of habitus, Bourdieu establishes that the structure that conforms a social camp does not wholly determine the individuals that act within it. Individuals have certain capacity to modify their habitus and therefore change the structures that surround them (Bourdieu, 2000). Individuals might have a habitus that seems paralyzed, but, in reality, can be mobilized towards the social structures and social camps that surround them. Thus, they are capable of strategizing and taking action to obtain objectives that they consider important, or towards obtaining a symbolic capital.

For that to happen, it is necessary that individuals possess certain capitals, in addition to the knowledge that allows them to utilize their available capitals in the most efficient manner and even convert them into new types of capitals towards their goals (Bourdieu, 2007). It is in this process that an individual’s agency is revealed. Both the volume and structure of capitals influence the position an individual has within a social camp (Bourdieu, 2000). There are three types of capital: social, economic, and cultural. Economic capital refers to monetary resources at someone’s disposal, both in terms of access, as well as the liberty to use them. Economic capital can be passed onto future generations (Bourdieu, 1988). Meanwhile, social capital refers to the benefits a person can obtain from the relationships and support structures that they establish with others (Bourdieu, 1988).

Putnam (2000) makes a distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. The former refers to an individual’s relationships with others that form part of their same community, and therefore have similar access to resources. Meanwhile, bridging social capital refers to relationships with people beyond an individual’s community, meaning, they have less in common with an individual, but possess different and necessary resources that might be unavailable in bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Cultural capital can be identified in any of the following three states: Objectified, embodied, and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1988). Objectified cultural capital can be any type of “cultural good, paintings, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines,” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 15). It is obtained via economic capital or can be inherited. Institutionalized cultural capital is “a very particular form of objectified capital. It can be exemplified with an educational degree, it confers cultural capital... and to its recipient a conventional, constant value that is legally recognized” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 16).

Finally, embodied cultural capital is all of the lessons that are acquired throughout a person’s life, mainly, through formal education and via different formative activities, but also in non-formal spaces. In addition to economic capital, it requires the individual to invest time and effort for its acquisition (Bourdieu, 1987).

Bourdieu does not provide a definition for emotional capital. Yet, the concept is described by Pava (2013), who, in accordance with the theory of habitus, points out that emotional capital comprises the emotions derived from lived-experience and how these affect individuals and predispose them to confront future situations. This capital gives people the faculty to identify, express and use their emotions towards the process of thought, motivation and decision making (Pava, 2013).

Magna (2016) compliments this perspective by pointing out that emotional capital implies that individuals are capable of regulating and controlling their emotions. Therefore, they can adapt themselves to difficulties or changes. Said abilities position individuals towards mobilizing other capitals, making decisions, and taking actions towards modifying their surrounding social structures. Therefore, an individual's agency is promoted.

Emotional capital is considered an embodied capital, for it is not tangible. Additionally, in contrast to economic capital or objectified cultural capital, emotional capital cannot be inherited (Pava, 2013), and must be built by each generation.

The conceptual elements of the theory of habitus allow us to approach the situation of indigenous students in Nuevo León's universities, taking into consideration the social structures and capitals that influence their educational trajectories. Via this theory, we are able to identify what risk factors played a role in the abandonment of studies, and which were absent from cases where the students successfully completed their degree. By comparing these trajectories, it is possible to create a comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand and fit it into our current theories and knowledge.

4. Methodology

The general objective of this investigation was to identify the risk factors involved in the consolidation and abandonment of the university-level educational trajectories of indigenous youth in Nuevo León. To this end, we designed a qualitative and interpretive research design with the aim of extensively exploring the issue. We chose to rely on the biographical method, for, it was necessary to reconstruct situations and experiences that have had an influence in education trajectory throughout an individual's lifetime.

The biographical method allows us to explore different happenings and place special emphasis on situations or key time-periods of investigation (Mallimaci & Giménez, 2006). Additionally, we are able to capture the perception individuals have regarding their experiences, as well as incorporate the socio-temporal context into our analysis (Sautu, 1999).

In order to compliment the biographical method, we utilized theoretical-methodological elements drawn from the life course perspective. This perspective aims to analyze and understand the relationship between social context and personal-level changes (Blanco, 2011; Hutchinson, 2011), taking into consideration the history and motivations that influence how individuals make decisions (Martínez, 2014).

From this perspective we take the concepts of trajectory, transition and turning point. Trajectory refers to situations and experiences that a person lives in the different environments in which they develop, including the familiar, educational, and working environments. Transition is defined as any significant change that demarks the end or beginning of a stage, for example, migration, marriage, or the enrollment in an educational program (Blanco, 2011; Elder, 1994; Hutchison, 2011). Transitions may imply a change in an individual's role or social status, or in how they are perceived, and the expectations associated with their behavior. This leads to behavioral and cognitive modifications as individuals assume new roles and functions. Therefore, transitions also imply changes in the trajectories of individuals (Elder, 1994).

Finally, a turning point refers to any change that causes significant modifications in an individual's life trajectory (Blanco, 2011; Hutchison, 2011; Martínez, 2014; Roberti, 2012). Through these concepts, the life course perspective aims to understand the changes individuals undergo during their lifetimes. Additionally, this perspective emphasizes the importance of incorporating into analysis: a) the sociocultural context in which an individual develops, b) the positive and negative influence of others in an individual's life, and c) the actions and choices each individual realizes to modify their trajectories (Blanco & Pacheco, 2003; Elder, 1994).

In conjunction, the biographical method and the life course perspective allow us to approximate the experiences of indigenous youth, focusing our attention on the different trajectories, transitions and turning points that represent risk factors for their university-level educational trajectories.

As an information-gathering technique we used the in-depth interview. This technique allows us to understand the opinion and perspective of individuals in respect to the situations they confronted (Robles, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1994). Through this, we sought to understand the diverse trajectories, transitions and turning points that influenced, either directly or indirectly, the educational trajectories of our study's participants.

Due to the amplitude of information which we sought to collect with the in-depth interview, it was necessary to carry out, on average, three sessions of approximately one hour each. This in order to not exhaust the interviewees, as well as respect their schedules. Although, as Robles (2011) suggests, sessions took place once a week to avoid losing the narrative flux of the interview.

In regard to the profiles of the participants, our selection criteria were the following: that they auto-described themselves as members of an indigenous group within Mexico, regardless of whether they spoke the group's language, and that they had migrated to Nuevo Leon, or were children of migrants. We looked for indigenous young adults that, in addition to the above criteria, had abandoned their studies, were currently studying, or had graduated from university. Additionally, we included individuals from both public and private universities.

In order to find participants, we used snowball sampling, in which we contacted different institutions that worked with indigenous young adults in the AMM. From there, we identified key members, from whom we obtained the contacts of other possible participants (Bernard, 2006). The information collection process occurred during the months of May 2020 to February 2021.

The number of participants was determined with the criterion of theoretical saturation. This way the process of recollection was finalized when newly obtained information no longer generated new categories of analysis (Blasco & Otero, 2008; Hernández, 2010; Quecedo & Castaño, 2002; Quintana, 2006). In total, 10 indigenous young adults participated. This group was composed of individuals from 18 to 31 years of age, including seven women and three men. Of this group, three were currently studying, four had graduated, and three had abandoned their studies. The breakdown of the study group is detailed in Table 1.1, along with their defining characteristics.

Table 1.1 Participant characteristics

Code	Sex	Age	Ethnicity*	Time in the city	Status of educational trajectory	Career
E1	Female	21	Bats'í k'op (Tsotsil)	5 years	Active	Industrial Engineering Private University
E2	Female	29	Náhuatl	10 years	Completed	Nursing Private University
E3	Female	22	Hña hñu (Otomí)	12 years	Completed	Law Public University
E4	Male	18	Náhuatl	2 years	Abandoned	Architecture Private University
E5	Male	28	Hña hñu (Otomí)	22 years	Completed	Education Public University
E6	Female	21	Rarámuri (Tarahumara)	4 years	Active	Social work Public University
E7	Female	22	Wixárika (Huichol)	4 years	Active	Civil Engineering Public University
E8	Female	23	J ñatio (Mazahua)	18 years	Completed	Law Public University
E9	Male	19	Hña hñu (Otomí)	15 years	Abandoned	Systems Engineering Public University
E10	Female	31	Náhuatl	13 years	Abandoned	Business Administration Private University

Source: Data in table gathered from interviews

*We use each ethnic group's auto-denomination. Nonetheless, in parenthesis we also specify the name this ethnic group is known by in Spanish.

For the information analysis, we used the grounded theory as our technique. One of the characteristics of this theory is the simultaneous nature of data collection and analysis. This aims to make constant comparisons between data to analyze similarities, differences and relationships that can be found in the information provided (Bonilla-García & López-Suárez, 2016).

The grounded theory follows three steps in order to organize and standardize data: open, axial and selective coding. Open coding refers to assigning codes to the interview data, these are then grouped into categories and subcategories in line with the thematic and conceptual relationships identified between them (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). Afterwards, relationships are established between different categories and subcategories (axial coding) to finally compare the found relationships within the theoretical framework (selective coding) and generate theoretical conclusions that answer the questions (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). All information processing was done with the Atlas.Ti v.8 program.

5. Results

This investigation's results allow us to determine the risk factors present in the experiences of indigenous students, as well as identify the structural characteristics and accumulated inequalities that played a role in the abandonment of their studies. Below, we present each risk factor.

Economic capital

Economic capital refers to the quantity of monetary resources and goods an individual, or their family, has access to, as well as the freedom to spend or invest it in what they consider important (Bourdieu, 1988). In the case of our study participants, the volume of available capital fluctuates between scarce and limited. By scarce, we refer to the fact that on more than one occasion, the individual's family had difficulty covering a basic need, mostly food. Meanwhile, limited is understood as situations in which basic needs were covered, but there lacked sufficient funds for school-related spending.

We found that, during the greater lifespan of individuals in our study, their access to economic capital was limited, and during some time periods it became scarce, especially during their childhoods and adolescence. This situation meant that families were unable to make any school-related expenses. This economic situation was mostly due to the parents' profession, given that, in most cases, individual's parents held jobs of low remuneration in the service sector as informal sellers and agricultural fieldworkers.

The lack of economic capital meant our participating individuals had to begin working at young ages in order to contribute to their family's income. They were mainly employed as informal sellers alongside members of their family or as assistants in businesses. This situation meant they dedicated less time to their studies, which impacted their academic success.

Well yes, I began to work since secondary school with my parents. My parents' job was not stable, so there were periods of time with more work than others. So, there were times when I had exams the day after having to go to work, or two days after a very exhausting work-day. So, I always blamed that, like -for this reason I got a 6, or for this reason I didn't do the homework- and I mean because of my parents' job (E8, personal communication, October 22, 2020).

Those that were not employed at a young age had to stay at home taking care of their younger siblings, which is why they were also unable to fully dedicate themselves to their schoolwork. A significant turning point that impacted the volume economic capital available was the death of a father, which occurred in five cases. This meant less family income, which resulted in the students either taking on more employment or starting work for the first time in order to cover home as well as school expenses. In our studied cases this occurred between the last years of secondary school and the beginning of high school. Limited economic capital impeded students from accessing certain types of cultural capital, especially those related with the acquiring of necessary materials to complete schoolwork or to attend extra courses to complement their learning. This matter is further explored in the next section.

In all of our study cases, the lack of economic capital presented a risk to the continuation of studies, especially during their pre-University education. The lack of this capital also hindered their enrollment and permanence at university, given that it not only implied a significant investment to cover school quotas, but also involved covering costs at the migratory destination, in this case in the AMM. In some cases, this meant individuals delayed enrolling in university by one or two years in order to save up money. Or, that they combine studying with employment in order to cover costs, complicating their ability to carry out academic tasks. In addition, individuals that abandoned their studies cite the lack of money as one of their main reasons for leaving school.

Cultural capital

For our study participants, access to cultural capital also falls into scarce and limited. Limited cultural capital implies difficulty and on occasions impossibility, in accessing educational material, extracurricular activities that are formative towards developing skills and institutions with adequate educational levels. Meanwhile, scarce refers to situations in which the access to cultural capital is not enough for a student to acquire the necessary skills during each stage of their education. Participating individuals went through their primary and secondary education with scarce cultural capital in all three of its forms (embodied, objectified, and institutionalized). During these stages of their education, they lacked access to material such as books, encyclopedias, and computers, which would have allowed them to expand on their classroom learning. On the other hand, while they might have had access to cultural and sporting activities, they lacked access to activities that would have complimented their learning, for example, going to the theatre, museums, or libraries.

In this regard, research realized by Hernández (2013) documents the impact that the schooling conditions within indigenous communities have in educational formation. The lack of teachers that speak the community's language, as well as the lack of didactic resources and adequate infrastructure, at both primary and secondary education, were identified as being particularly impactful. Such situations complicated educational trajectories, especially that of university education.

Starting in high school, the main difficulties were related to the lack of technological ability, given that, before high school, students had not utilized a computer or the internet. Additionally, during high school, they did not have access to their own computers and had to complete their schoolwork in cyber cafes, which also implied an economic investment.

Although they received computer classes during this stage in their education, these were not enough to acquire the technological knowledge necessary that would allow them to realize the required tasks. Studies with indigenous youth by Bustillos et al. (2018) and López et al. (2015) evidence the gap in digital skills in this population group. The limited physical access to computers and the internet hindered the use and appropriation of technology. Therefore, not only was there a lack of objectified cultural capital (computers) but also a lack of embodied cultural capital (digital skills).

Once enrolled in university, the lack of digital skills was more evident, given that the schoolwork assigned required the use of computer software and the internet. During the first months of university, the lack of embodied cultural capital meant a greater time investment in completing schoolwork, or that academic performance was not adequate, which converted the situation into a risk factor.

I mean, for me starting to use the computer was a huge challenge, because well, you don't have a choice, where else can you get information from without it? And I always tried to use good sources, so imagine, I would take a very long time and I barely knew how to use it, so that was also a big challenge for me (E2, personal communication, July 30th, 2020).

On the other hand, most participants pointed out that they felt they began university with a lesser educational level than their peers who had completed their schooling in the city. They identified this situation by the kind of language utilized by their peers, or rather, how they would express themselves.

Well during the first days I barely talked, I was embarrassed to comment because, for example, I would see my peers that well... I felt that they knew much more than I did and that I was missing something, I mean, in the way they expressed themselves, how they talked and at times I could not understand everything... for example, if they were explaining something, some concept, sometimes I did not understand (E7, personal communication, September 24, 2020).

It is important to point out that the perception about the lack of knowledge can be attributed to the fact that there effectively exists a learning gap between urban and rural populations. Actually, the four individuals who migrated during their early ages do not express experiencing the same learning gap. Nonetheless, we must avoid supposing, or confusing, the learning gap and its consequences during university, with the belittlement of traditional knowledge related to culture and life in rural communities. Additionally, we find that the feeling of a learning gap was most expressed by students who, before migrating, communicated primarily in their maternal language. They did learn Spanish during their childhood, but during the first months in the city they experienced new levels of complexity while expressing themselves and understanding new concepts in that language.

Bridging and bonding social capital

Social capital is composed of the networks and relationships that are established with others and from which determined benefits can be obtained. It can be bonding or bridging, depending on the make-up of the web of relationships, and therefore, the resources received vary in function to each kind of capital (Putnam, 2000). The bonding social capital of the students fluctuated between limited and scarce during their pre-University years. In some cases, support from family members (mothers, sisters) and friends was identified. Meanwhile, in others, fathers refused to support the continuation of studies. Such situations contributed to the lack of economic and cultural capital, as well as the reduction of emotional capital.

And they told me -no, why should we give you studies if you won't study- and well pretty much within my own family many pretty much doubted that I would become something and well that also affects you (E5, September 27, 2020).

In line with this is the work of Byun et al. (2012) and Dufur et al. (2013), which explores the importance of family in educational formation. They find that parental support is crucial to increasing student confidence and motivation, which is then reflected in academic performance and later enrollment in university.

In that sense, Suárez & Vásquez (2021) identify that the extended family presents a strong source of social capital, both in how they were a part of the migratory networks of the students and provide them with a place to live and financial support, as well as how they help them adapt to their new surroundings. Therefore, a lack of this kind of capital became a risk factor that threatened enrollment, permanence, and graduation from university. Additionally, a lack of bridging social capital was identified in individuals that abandoned their studies which made it impossible to access other, tangible resources that would have helped them confront the challenges and threats created by the lack of other capitals, and therefore pushed them to abandon their studies.

And then I had a lot of time alone, so I did need the support of my parents or friends in order to be able to grow as a person, right? So, I think that was also something that complicated my continuing to study... not having anyone, not even support from family, or friends, and like that... I think I did lack that, getting to know people or having friends (E10, personal communication, February 02, 2021).

In contrast to individuals who had to abandon their studies, those that graduated or continue to study were able to expand their bridging social capital and were therefore able to build support networks with people around them (teachers, peers, employers) or institutions, through which they received economic and emotional support. In other words, individuals used said capital to obtain other kinds of resources.

I already sort of made friends, so before all of the pandemic, well what we did is that we got together with my classmates, and we did study groups to explain ourselves things and do the homework together and support each other and like that. And if someone didn't understand something well someone else helps them and like that between each other, between all of us we help each other (E7, personal communication, September 24, 2020).

The above constitutes a conversion of capitals, strategy in which a certain volume of capital is invested in actions in order to obtain other kinds of benefits. In said example, it is evident that via social capital (classmates), embodied cultural capital was obtained (knowledge for completing schoolwork and exams), as well as scholarships that contributed to covering costs and increasing economic and cultural capital. Nonetheless, individuals that abandoned university did not count with bridging social capital to convert and obtain new benefits. Therefore, in such cases, the scarcity of both types of social capital accumulated and led to a situation that intensified the threats to their university careers, as it hindered their access to the necessary resources to confront risks and was a decisive factor in them abandoning their studies.

Emotional capital

Self-acknowledgement and inner speech are considered part of emotional capital. Inner speech refers to the instructions, reinforcements, and words that an individual says to themselves during different moments or situations during their lifetimes (Sánchez et al., 2016). For example, before an exam, a job interview, or another moment of tension and challenge. Depending on the type of inner speech, the motivation and self-confidence one has in their abilities can increase or decrease. This is then reflected in performance. In its own regard, self-acknowledgement refers to the characteristics that each person is able to recognize within themselves, both positive and negative (Giménez, 2007).

Although we do not delve deep into the process of building self-acknowledgement, given that that implies having a different research goal, it is important to understand its interactions with inner speech and its influence on emotional capital. This also affects thought processes, motivation, and how an individual makes decisions, particularly those related to their university trajectory. This makes it a risk factor.

A constructive emotional capital facilitates, via self-acknowledgement, that an individual identifies positive characteristics within themselves, and that their inner speech mobilizes them towards making decisions that benefit their success. Nonetheless, when this type of capital is scarce, self-acknowledgement is principally conformed by negative characteristics and an inner speech that hinder the planning and making of decisions, which, in conjunction, diminishes self-confidence.

A lack of emotional capital was identified in participating individuals who frequently experienced family violence, alcoholic tendencies in their fathers, and misogynistic practices. Said experiences affected their self-acknowledgement, causing them to view themselves as having less capacity for academic activities and affecting their academic performance.

We are not loved there [in the community] because we are women and well the men... the difference with them I think is that they have more strength, maybe it's that, but well, we do work in the fields, we help equally. But well, I do remember that my father would say "women aren't good for anything" and that, I don't know, it always made me sad to hear him say that and well it did affect me a lot because I also thought: well, yes, it is true, we aren't good for anything (E1, personal communication, May 29, 2020).

To the above situation, it is added that in many instances, individuals were victims of bullying for their ethnicity, especially those that attended primary and secondary school in the city. Individuals systematically described that they received verbal and physical abuse for their way of speaking and dressing. The response to these situations was varied. While some individuals opted to defend themselves and even responded aggressively, others preferred to distance themselves or not do anything. In whichever case, bullying minimized their emotional capital, affecting their academic performance and resulting in the abandonment of school activities. In some cases, students refused to attend classes. Ayala-Carrillo (2015) and García & Asencio (2015) point out that, in addition to these consequences, those that were victims of bullying experienced difficulty focusing and alterations to their sleep patterns.

Situations of bullying did not present themselves in high school. Nonetheless, at university, individuals described excluding and infantilizing practices that also had a misogynistic edge. Individuals pointed out that on various occasions their non-indigenous peers excluded them from schoolwork teams and recreational activities. They also experienced disrespectful comments about their way of speaking and dressing.

These types of practices were also carried out by faculty who, through infantilizing comments, perpetuated stereotypes associated with indigenous populations, particularly those related to their supposed lack of intellectual capacity or misogynistic comments that alluded to the fact that certain careers were not appropriate for women.

In that regard, Rojas-Cortés & González-Apodaca (2016) emphasize that one of the challenges for indigenous students at universities has to do with the interactions of different people involved in the educational space, not only between students, but also teaching and administrative staff. The creation of policies that seek to regulate these interactions must have as a goal putting an end to the perpetuation of practices of violence and inequality towards the indigenous population (Rojas-Cortés & González-Apodaca, 2016).

The consequences of not intervening in order to eradicate these practices in university spaces represent factors of risk that minimize emotional capital. This has varied consequences in the academic sphere, for example, some individuals opted for changing their professional career and recognized that their academic performance was affected.

The decision to switch careers did affect me and my reaction was also to exclude me, even during the first semester I did not go to classes, it was like -I don't want to go, I don't want to go in-. I only left the house because my family knew I had to go to university and if I didn't, they were going to ask me why I was not going therefore I would leave home and I would go to the park or whatever place that was not school. I took that attitude, that was my reaction, the first semester I failed five of the seven courses I took (E6, personal communication, October 10, 2020).

Also, when I just enrolled, the part of presenting in front of everyone was very hard for me because I remember I could not do it, I would become paralyzed, I felt that everyone looked at me and that they were going to laugh at me (E3, personal communication, August 02, 2020).

In accordance with these findings, it has been documented that the motivation of indigenous students, as well as their ability to organize themselves and realize academic tasks, diminishes before situations of harassment and violent practices that target their ethnicity (Hernández et al., 2007). In this sense, Velasco (2012) points out that the emotional consequences of bullying experienced at different stages, occasions “blocks and emotional isolations that can demerit their capacity of adapting and their academic performance” (p 67). In their investigation of indigenous youth from Chapingo, Chávez (2008), found that the permanence and completion of university is related to personal matters, just as much as academic ones. Personal matters influence academic performance, and therefore, it is critical to take actions that not only level the academic field for indigenous students, but that also intervene in emotional and personal aspects.

In the present case, we find that scarce emotional capital derived from different situations of harassment and lived violence represents a risk factor towards the consolidation of academic trajectories. The lack of emotional capital diminishes academic motivation and influences the making of decisions before adversity, as well as the strategies an individual undertakes to confront said adversity. This results in less positive self-acknowledgement and inner speech, which diminishes self-confidence in academic capacity.

Educational trajectories at university: abandoned, active and completed

In contrast to other studies that focus on understanding the social origin and structure of capitals, particularly that of economic and cultural capitals, as factors that influence in educational trajectories of indigenous youth, our work also focuses on identifying the risk factors present in the case of abandonment of studies, and the risk factors that are absent in cases where individuals are currently studying or have graduated. We argue that the lack of certain risk factors is what facilitated student permanence and completion of a professional career.

Additionally, we sought to identify and understand the accumulated inequalities throughout a person's lifetime, in other words, the risk factors that threatened the formation and continuation of education, and that were present since childhood. Based on the former, it was possible to build a deep and holistic understanding of the consolidation of educational pathways, as well as of the risk factors present in the abandonment of studies, and those absent in successful or active cases.

During the childhood and adolescence of the participating individuals, the volume of the four forms of capital fluctuated between scarce and limited. Equally, the characteristics of the family trajectory and social context of the AMM represented risk factors that hindered the completion of each educational stage and their plans to enroll in university. This caused a persistent inequality that hindered their ability to expand the capitals they lacked. In other words, the agency of individuals was conditioned by determined social structures and volume of capitals, limiting the actions they could take towards a desired symbolic capital (university degree).

When analyzing and comparing educational pathways and life-experiences of the study subjects that abandoned their studies, versus those that finished them or are currently continuing them, we found that in the three cases, there existed risk factors and difficulties associated with emotional, cultural, and economic capital. In other words, their pre-university educational trajectories were similar in terms of the volume and structure of those three capitals. The main identified difference between the three outcomes lay in the volume of social capital. Individuals who abandoned their studies lacked social capital, specifically, bridging social capital.

In contrast are the individuals that were able to complete their studies. These individuals had the opportunity to know and establish support networks with governmental institutions and civil associations that granted them scholarships to cover living costs, educational costs, or personal investments. With these they were able to navigate the threats that arose from their lack of other capitals. Similar factors were pointed out by participating individuals that are currently studying. These students have received support from different people in the city (teachers, employers), and in some cases government institutions. Individuals who abandoned their studies did not have access to this kind of capital and the opportunities and benefits it brings. This complicated their educational trajectories at university and was an obstacle to their permanence at school.

Via testimonies, we also find that the access, permanence, and graduation from university has required participating individuals to make many sacrifices. From leaving home and migrating to a different cultural context, to combining work and study and therefore lack enough time for rest and recreation. Nonetheless, all of them point out that enrolling at university was a turning point in their lives, and that, without a doubt, they would opt for the same decision. This includes individuals that abandoned their studies. For participants, the university space becomes a social camp in which they struggle for a determined symbolic capital: a university degree. The individuals who graduated refer to the benefits derived from finishing their professional studies, and how these influence in the positive recognition from their families, friends and community members, social circles where they are seen as having higher social status due to their degrees.

Additionally, at least in the case of those who were interviewed, a degree has meant having a better paid job over their peers who did not study. In this regard, it is important to clarify that, of the participants who graduated, three are working at institutions that work for indigenous populations. It is also important to note that they began to work at these institutions before graduation, as part of internships and their social service. We point this out in order to avoid making conclusions based on the situations of these individuals, knowing that in the national context, work for indigenous individuals with professional degrees continues to be scarce (Sordo, 2020).

On the other hand, the importance of university level studies was also identified in the experiences of individuals who deserted their studies. These individuals reiteratively pointed out the collateral benefits of university, even when they had to abandon their studies. Enrolling at university allowed them to have a different perspective about their future and what they wish to accomplish. Through the interactions with others and the access to formative activities the institutions offer, it was possible for them to expand their goals and objectives, both personally and professionally. Therefore, their intention is to retake their studies and graduate whenever personally possible.

6. Conclusions

Our findings allow us to conclude that many risk factors are present in the formation and consolidation of educational trajectories for indigenous young adults in Nuevo León, and that these accumulate throughout their lifetimes. These findings about the importance of economic and cultural capital in education trajectories coincide with studies done at intercultural universities. We also identify the relevance of other factors in the conformation of educational trajectories, which allows us to broaden our understanding on the topic, specifically about the processes at conventional universities.

We conclude that the risk factors present during early educational stages of indigenous young adults are related to the structure and volume of capitals, which creates an obstacle to the continuity of their educational trajectories. The threats are associated with a scarce or limited volume of economic, cultural, and emotional capital. Nonetheless, we also conclude that the lack of social capital is the fundamental risk factor that threatens educational continuity. This given that indigenous young adults that do have social capital receive tangible and intangible benefits from it that help them confront educational risk factors caused by the lack of other capitals.

In other words, individuals who graduated or currently continue studying during the time of the interview were able to overcome economic obstacles and the lack of cultural and emotional capital via the use of bridging social capital. Through bridging social capital, they found scholarships for their living and education costs, as well as flexible work hours that alleviated economic pressure. Nonetheless, in the educational trajectories of those who abandoned their studies, this type of capital was not present.

In addition, it is critical to point out that the educational trajectories of indigenous youth present greater risk factors than their non-indigenous peers. Non-indigenous students might come from similar social backgrounds, but they do not have to deal with stereotypes and violence due to their ethnicity. In other words, indigenous students have even more complicated educational trajectories at university than their peers because they must confront the accumulated disadvantages created by the intersection of class, ethnicity, and in some cases, gender.

In regards to the above, it is essential to emphasize that indigenous youth have been successful in mobilizing their agency in order to enroll at university, this including individuals who had to abandon their studies, demonstrating that they are not passive, nor incapable of taking action. Nonetheless, by identifying the incidence of the lack of capitals in educational continuity, we argue that the efforts realized by indigenous students, as well as their agency, must be complimented by integral policies that aim to transform structures and reduce not only economic and cultural risk factors, but also those associated with emotional capital and the lack of support networks, or social capital.

Additionally, it is crucial that these politics be implemented in different educational stages. This given that risk factors begin to accumulate since childhood, and they exacerbate during educational formation. Particularly, we emphasize the importance of implementing programs of enrollment and retention during the transition to higher education, and in the first semester at university.

The transition from high school to university is a crucial moment, given that it is during this process when complicated contrasts are experienced. This not only involves adapting to a new educational system that demands higher levels of knowledge and differences in administrative processes, but also, in the case of those who have migrated, it implies a process of adapting to a new city, with all the complications that involves.

In the same vein, during the first semester of university, it is crucial for indigenous students to access tools to help them adapt themselves to their new environment, lest they become overwhelmed by its changes, new demands, and lack of resources, endangering their permanence. Because of this, it is fundamental to intervene with pertinent programs both during the transition from high school to university, as well as during the first semester of university.

The presented conclusions represent a recommendation for universities, government, and non-governmental institutions to generate programs destined towards indigenous students, or, at least, to innovate and better the existing ones. Additionally, it is important to emphasize that the challenges and problems indigenous students face change in function to historic happenings, which is why this matter requires a constant and evolving investigation.

Meanwhile, it is essential to broaden research in other universities with conventional pedagogical models, and in other states of the republic with the finality of comparing our found results. Additionally, it is timely to identify if all of the universities count with programs of pre-enrollment for new students, or if high schools have transition programs towards higher education, as well as revise their curriculums in light of the presented conclusions and incorporate themes and actions that strengthen monetary support (economic capital), academic (cultural capital), and personal (emotional and social capital) and corroborate their incidence at university.

Finally, it is fundamental to deepen research about social and emotional capital's role in indigenous young adults and their educational trajectories. As it is evidenced, these are crucial elements in their educational journeys, but probably also in other aspects of their lives.

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