

First-Year University Dropout in Algeria: Implications of Tutorat, Student Motivation, and Entrepreneurial Pathways for Academic Integration and Student Retention

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Dep. Day : 15/3/2026

Acc. day: 2/5/2026

Pub. day: 2/6/2026

Abstract :

This research explores first-year university dropout as a multifaceted issue shaped by institutional support, student motivation, and opportunities for entrepreneurial learning. The aim is to investigate how tutoring practices, motivational processes, and entrepreneurial pathways influence student persistence in higher education. The study adopts a mixed conceptual-exploratory approach, combining literature synthesis with initial empirical evidence from first-year students at Naama University. The results indicate that while institutional tutoring is officially recognized, its irregular application undermines its potential to aid academic integration. Moreover, the findings suggest that student motivation plays a crucial role in maintaining engagement and persistence, serving as a mediating factor between institutional support and learning involvement. Additionally, exposure to entrepreneurial learning opportunities enhances students' perception of academic relevance and strengthens their future orientation. The study concludes that coordinated integration of tutoring systems and entrepreneurial pathways can improve engagement and reduce first-year dropout rates.

Keywords: University dropout; first-year retention; tutorat; student motivation; entrepreneurial pathways



1. Introduction

University dropout, especially in the first year, continues to be a persistent global issue due to its academic, institutional, and socio-economic implications. It is generally conceptualized as a complex phenomenon shaped by the interaction of academic preparedness, social integration, motivation, and institutional conditions (Tinto, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985). First-year students are particularly at risk as they move from a structured secondary education system to independent learning environments that demand greater self-regulation and autonomy, where a lack of adequate support frequently results in disengagement and withdrawal (Braxton et al., 2004; Robbins et al., 2004).

Recent studies indicate that persistence is not determined solely by academic ability but is significantly shaped by institutional support and engagement processes (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Engagement is therefore conceptualized as a dynamic process that results

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from the interaction between motivation and institutional practices, highlighting the essential role of structured academic and psychosocial support during transitional phases.

In Algeria, the dropout rate remains a significant challenge despite the expanded access to higher education, particularly at the first-year level. In response to this issue, recent reforms by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research have introduced tutoring systems (tutorat) and entrepreneurial pathways, reflecting a transition towards a student-centered and competence-based approach to higher education aimed at enhancing retention and employability.

Tutoring systems are formulated to assist with academic integration through guidance, mentoring, and the creation of learning strategies, and they have been shown to improve engagement, belonging, and persistence (Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Strayhorn, 2012). However, their effectiveness is often reduced by inconsistent implementation. In addition, entrepreneurial pathways—through incubators, innovation hubs, and project-based learning—connect academic knowledge with practical applications and future career opportunities, fostering autonomy, problem-solving, and engagement (Rae, 2010; Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Holmes et al., 2021).

In spite of their significance, tutoring, motivation, and entrepreneurial participation are often analyzed separately rather than as interconnected facets of persistence. Additionally, there has been a lack of emphasis on how these factors interact within policy-driven settings such as Algeria, where reforms in higher education are actively altering institutional practices. This underscores a gap in understanding the integrated functioning of institutional support, motivational processes, and experiential learning.

To fill this gap, the present study employs a conceptual-exploratory methodology that integrates literature synthesis with initial empirical findings. It investigates the interplay between tutoring, student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways, assessing their impact on engagement and persistence during the first year of university. The focus is on tutoring as a form of academic integration support, motivation as a mediating factor, and entrepreneurship as a dimension of future-oriented learning.

Overall, this research contributes to a holistic understanding of student persistence as a context-sensitive and evolving process molded by the interaction of institutional, psychological, and experiential influences. It further establishes a conceptual framework for future empirical validation and institutional initiatives aimed at enhancing student retention in Algerian higher education and related contexts.

2. Understanding First-Year University Dropout: Literature and Policy Context

2.1. University Dropout: Definitions and Causes

The concept of university dropout is often interpreted as the early cessation of studies before the completion of a degree (Tinto, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985). However, recent research perceives it as a gradual, multifactorial process influenced by academic, social, motivational, and institutional factors. Therefore, persistence is not merely an individual decision but a continuous interaction between students and their environment. First-year students are particularly vulnerable due to their need to adjust to new academic demands, independence, and unfamiliar social contexts that require cognitive and emotional adaptation (Gale & Parker, 2014; Thomas, 2012). In the absence of adequate support, this transition may lead to disengagement and withdrawal.

This process arises from a combination of interconnected factors. In academic terms, poor preparation and limited self-regulated learning skills hinder students' ability to adapt to university expectations (van Rooij et al., 2018). Socially, feelings of low belonging and inadequate interaction with peers and faculty can weaken institutional attachment (Strayhorn, 2012; Ahn & Davis, 2020). Motivation is also a significant factor, as unclear objectives and low self-efficacy can diminish sustained engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Additionally, these factors are influenced by institutional conditions, including academic support and program flexibility (Tinto, 2017).

The relationship between academic, social, and motivational aspects creates pathways that either promote persistence or lead to disengagement.

Key Causes of University Dropout

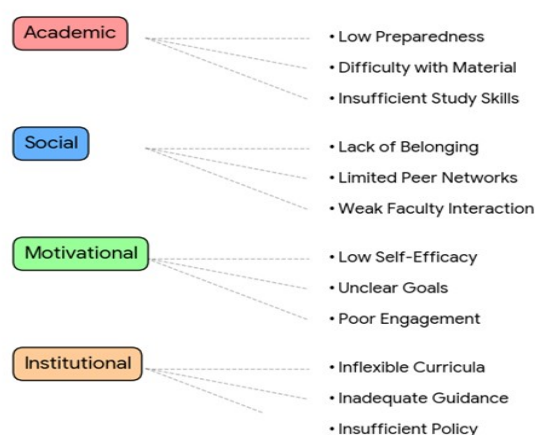


Figure 1 . Key causes of University Dropout

The importance of early interventions that enhance both academic and psychosocial elements of student life is underscored by research, indicating that structured approaches such as mentoring and academic assistance can effectively lower dropout rates when applied at the start of university studies (Thomas et al., 2017). Nonetheless, there exists a gap in knowledge concerning how these interventions function within distinct and reforming institutional contexts, which necessitates a closer examination of tutoring systems (tutorat) and their effectiveness in addressing student dropout.

2.2. Tutorat (Academic Tutoring)

The tutoring system is an institutional support initiative designed to help students transition into higher education by offering structured academic guidance, mentoring, and individualized support (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). Beyond its role in remediation, it also contributes to the development of learner autonomy, academic confidence, and improved institutional integration.

In this regard, current research underscores its significance in enhancing student persistence by developing essential academic skills such as time management, self-regulation, and effective study methods (Karp & Hughes, 2008; Tinto, 2017). These benefits are most substantial when tutoring is consistent, interactive, and responsive to students' changing needs. Under these circumstances, tutoring not only aids academic

success but also alleviates isolation and promotes engagement (Colvin & Ashman, 2019; Dawson et al., 2019). This relational dimension naturally leads to its psychosocial impact, particularly in strengthening students' sense of belonging, which is a key predictor of retention (Strayhorn, 2012).

In light of this perspective, the effectiveness of tutorat is not a function of its design but is largely determined by how it is implemented. Variations in practice can thus have a considerable impact on its outcomes. In the context of higher education in Algeria, although tutorat has been officially incorporated as part of extensive reforms aimed at improving first-year retention, its implementation is uneven across various institutions and departments. This inconsistency creates a divide between the policy's intentions and the actual practices observed.

In conclusion, this situation prompts essential questions about how tutorat interacts with various dimensions of the student experience, especially regarding motivation and engagement. To accurately assess its real impact, it is important to frame it within a larger context that considers the motivational processes that underpin student participation in academic life.

2.3. Student Motivation and Engagement

Student motivation plays a crucial role in determining academic engagement and persistence, as it encompasses the internal mechanisms that initiate and maintain learners' efforts towards their educational objectives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Rather than being an unchanging trait, motivation is influenced by the interaction of personal characteristics and the learning environment, which makes it highly context-sensitive (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). This underscores the critical need for supportive educational settings that enhance students' willingness to engage.

According to the principles of self-determination theory, motivation is reinforced when learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled, which leads to greater commitment and active participation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In this context, engagement is defined as the observable demonstration of motivation through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in educational activities (Fredricks et al., 2019). Research findings indicate that increased engagement is strongly linked to academic success and lower dropout rates (Kuh, 2009; Tinto, 2017).

In Algeria, recent reforms have sought to improve motivation via initiatives like tutorat and entrepreneurial pathways. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of empirical evidence regarding how students genuinely experience and react to these motivational strategies in real-world settings. This gap indicates a necessity to investigate further mechanisms that could bolster students' sense of purpose and future orientation, especially through entrepreneurial learning opportunities.

2.4. Entrepreneurial Pathways and Future Orientation

Entrepreneurial pathways embody a developing dimension of higher education that advocates for experiential and future-centric learning by involving students in innovation, problem-solving, and the practical application of knowledge (Rae, 2010). This approach signifies a significant shift in higher education from the mere transmission of knowledge to the nurturing of transferable skills and competencies.

Investigations into entrepreneurship education suggest that these strategies cultivate creativity, initiative, and the capacity to recognize opportunities, which are essential for

success in both academic and professional settings (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Additionally, recent studies illustrate that engaging in entrepreneurial activities fosters motivation, self-efficacy, and ongoing commitment by enabling students to associate their learning with real-world significance (Nabi et al., 2017; Lackéus, 2020). These pathways are put into action through mechanisms such as start-up incubators, innovation hubs, and project-based learning, which encourage teamwork and the synthesis of theory with practice. This not only makes academic learning more impactful but also strengthens students' resolve towards their studies.

In Algeria, the significance of entrepreneurial education has risen notably in recent reforms of higher education, initially focusing on master's students but now reaching earlier levels of study. This broadening seeks to enhance students' future orientation and employability. Furthermore, the effectiveness of entrepreneurial pathways is amplified when paired with institutional support like tutoring, underscoring the necessity of perceiving these components as interconnected rather than as separate elements.

2.5. Synthesis of the Literature and Identification of the Research Gap

Research indicates that the phenomenon of university dropout stems from a multifaceted interaction of academic, social, motivational, and institutional elements. Even though tutoring, student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways are widely recognized as essential determinants of student persistence, they are typically examined independently, which limits a holistic understanding of their combined effects on student trajectories.

Additionally, much of the current research is based in Western higher education contexts, which may not fully represent the realities of reform-oriented systems such as Algeria. This contextual limitation creates a gap in understanding how institutional initiatives like tutorat and entrepreneurial programs operate within specific policy-driven environments. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies that explicitly link student retention theories with the recent reforms in Algerian higher education, resulting in an insufficient exploration of the relationship between institutional intentions and actual student engagement.

In order to fill these gaps, the current study employs a conceptual-exploratory methodology that combines these dimensions into a cohesive framework, bolstered by initial empirical findings. It aims to investigate the dynamics between tutoring, motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways in a coherent and context-sensitive manner, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of student retention and establishing a foundation for future research.

3. Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the assumption that the persistence of first-year students cannot be accounted for by isolated factors; instead, it arises from the dynamic interaction of institutional, psychological, and experiential dimensions. Thus, dropout is interpreted as a gradual process influenced by students' changing responses to their academic environment throughout their transition to university.

For this reason, this perspective is backed by key retention theories. Tinto (1993) indicates that persistence is influenced by academic and social integration, while Bean and Metzner (1985) highlight the synergistic effects of academic demands, environmental factors, and psychological influences. Recent studies further support that

engagement and institutional practices are central to student persistence (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Tinto, 2017; Thomas et al., 2017).

Based on this theoretical foundation and in light of the ongoing reforms in Algerian higher education, the research puts forward a framework that merges tutoring (tutorat), student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways as interconnected components that impact the persistence of first-year students.

3.1. Rationale for an Integrated Perspective

Based on this theoretical framework and in the context of the current reforms in Algerian higher education, the study presents a framework that incorporates tutoring (tutorat), student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways as interrelated factors that influence the persistence of first-year students.

Recent studies advocate for more thorough models that encompass institutional, psychological, and experiential dimensions. The effectiveness of institutional support is heightened when it is part of broader engagement frameworks that consider both cognitive and emotional elements of learning (Tight, 2020; Thomas et al., 2017). From a psychological perspective, Self-Determination Theory explains student persistence through the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, which significantly boost engagement and retention (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Simultaneously, research in entrepreneurship education illustrates that experiential learning enhances motivation by raising the perceived relevance of academic content (Lackéus, 2020; Nabi et al., 2017). However, a gap still exists in the formulation of unified models that link institutional support, motivation, and entrepreneurial learning, particularly in reform-oriented contexts like Algeria.

3.2. Institutional Support as a Foundation: Tutoring (Tutorat)

Tutoring serves as the primary institutional component of this framework. It is designed as a systematic support mechanism intended to aid first-year students in their transition to university life by enhancing academic adaptation, reinforcing learning strategies, and fostering institutional integration. In this regard, it seeks to facilitate students' adjustment to the challenges of higher education.

Research consistently illustrates that tutoring and mentoring systems significantly contribute to student persistence by enhancing academic performance, nurturing self-regulated learning skills, and reinforcing a sense of belonging within the university atmosphere (Tinto, 2017; Strayhorn, 2012; Thomas et al., 2017). When tutoring is implemented in a continuous and responsive manner, it also helps to alleviate feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and academic stress, which are particularly prevalent during the first year of study (Colvin & Ashman, 2019; Dawson et al., 2019). These findings underscore its role in facilitating both academic and psychosocial adjustment.

In this study, tutoring is thus not restricted to remedial intervention; it is perceived as a proactive institutional strategy aimed at fostering early academic integration and reinforcing students' ties to university life. However, its success is influenced by its relationship with motivational and psychological aspects, rather than acting as a separate support system.

3.3. Student Motivation and Engagement as a Mediating Mechanism

Student motivation functions as a psychological mechanism that translates institutional support into sustained academic engagement, as it involves the internal

processes that initiate, guide, and maintain learning behavior over time (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Self-Determination Theory provides the central explanatory framework for this process, contending that motivation is fortified when students experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their learning environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these conditions are met, students are more likely to invest effort in their studies and persist despite academic difficulties. Engagement, in turn, represents the observable expression of motivation and is understood as a multidimensional construct involving behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in learning (Fredricks et al., 2004; Fredricks et al., 2019). Empirical studies consistently confirm that engagement is a strong predictor of academic success and persistence in higher education (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Kuh, 2009). Within this framework, motivation serves as a mediating factor that connects institutional support, particularly tutoring, to student engagement and persistence, indicating that tutoring influences persistence indirectly by shaping motivational experiences that determine engagement levels.

3.4. Entrepreneurial Pathways and the Construction of Future Orientation

Entrepreneurial pathways represent the experiential and future-oriented aspect of this conceptual framework by connecting academic learning to real-world applications. They encompass structured educational environments such as innovation projects, start-up initiatives, incubators, and problem-based learning activities that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. Research in entrepreneurship education demonstrates that these experiential learning opportunities promote creativity, initiative, and self-efficacy, while also enhancing student motivation and engagement (Lackéus, 2020; Nabi et al., 2017). In addition, meta-analytical studies confirm that entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on learning outcomes and contributes to the development of students' entrepreneurial intentions and future aspirations (Bae et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2013). Within this framework, entrepreneurial pathways are understood as mechanisms that strengthen students' future orientation by helping them perceive academic learning as meaningful, relevant, and aligned with long-term career goals, which is particularly important during the first year of university when academic identity and professional aspirations are still being formed.

3.5. Interaction Between Components: A Cyclical Model of Persistence

The interplay between tutoring, motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways is most effectively understood as a cyclical and self-reinforcing process rather than a linear progression. Within this model, student persistence is framed as a dynamic system where institutional, psychological, and experiential elements are in constant interaction. The cycle commences with tutoring, which delivers academic guidance, emotional support, and social integration, thereby aiding students' acclimatization to university life and bolstering their initial sense of competence, belonging, and confidence. As Tinto (2017) points out, such institutional support serves as a stabilizing mechanism that mitigates uncertainty and encourages a successful transition into higher education. This initial support has a profound influence on student motivation, as learners who perceive institutional commitment to their success tend to establish clearer academic goals, stronger self-efficacy, and a greater willingness to engage in learning activities. Motivation, in this sense, is viewed as a fluid and context-dependent process that evolves

through interaction with the learning environment, leading to increased academic and entrepreneurial engagement.

In Figure 2, this cyclical process is represented

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of First-Year University Persistence

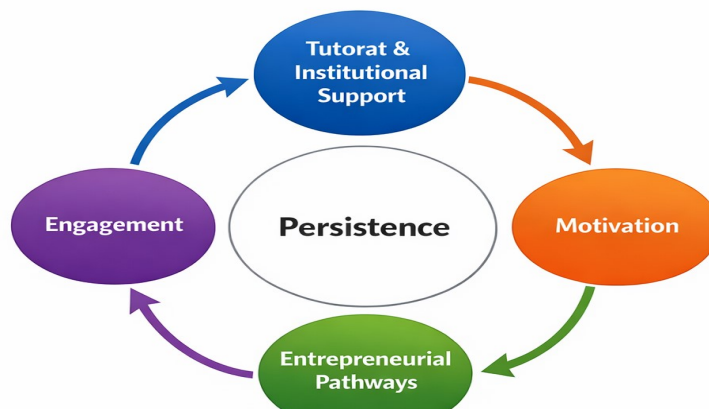


Figure 2. The Study's Conceptual Framework

In this context, engagement denotes the behavioral demonstration of motivation, which is evident through active participation in academic endeavors, collaborative learning, and independent study, including entrepreneurial experiences that link theory to practice. Entrepreneurial pathways assume a particularly crucial reinforcing role, as engagement in experiential or project-based activities enhances students' awareness of the relevance and applicability of their academic learning. This perceived relevance, in turn, fortifies motivation by linking academic endeavors to real-world results and future opportunities, ensuring that entrepreneurial engagement operates not as a conclusion but as a reinforcing mechanism within the cycle.

Over time, these recursive interactions establish a perpetual developmental cycle where institutional support nurtures motivation, motivation boosts engagement, engagement facilitates entrepreneurial learning, and these experiences subsequently strengthen motivation and persistence. This understanding corresponds with Tinto's (2017) focus on academic and social integration, as well as Kahu and Nelson's (2018) perspective that engagement arises from the interplay between psychological processes and institutional contexts, affirming that student persistence is most accurately viewed as a dynamic system of interconnected factors rather than separate components

3.6. Expected Outcomes of the Framework

The integrated framework is expected to lower first-year dropout rates by addressing both academic and psychological aspects through the interaction of tutoring, motivation, and entrepreneurial learning. It is also anticipated to enhance student engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, thereby promoting more active participation in the learning process. Additionally, this interaction is likely to support the development of key transferable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Ultimately,

the framework is expected to strengthen students' future orientation by linking academic learning to meaningful professional pathways and long-term career aspirations.

3.7. Policy Relevance and Institutional Alignment

This conceptual framework is closely associated with the ongoing reforms in Algerian higher education, which are increasingly emphasizing tutoring systems and entrepreneurship education as fundamental strategies for improving student retention and employability. This aligns with broader international trends towards student-centered, competence-based, and innovation-oriented higher education systems (OECD, 2021; European Commission, 2020). In this context, the framework highlights that successful institutional practices rely on coherence and integration rather than fragmentation. It posits that tutoring, motivational support, and entrepreneurial learning should operate as interrelated elements of a cohesive strategy designed to enhance the persistence of first-year students.

4. Methodology

This research adopts an exploratory mixed-method design to investigate the interplay between institutional support (tutoring), student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways in influencing first-year university persistence in the Algerian higher education context. This design is particularly suitable for examining context-sensitive and under-explored phenomena, where the focus is on generating analytical depth and conceptual insight rather than on statistical generalization.

Following the methodological tenets outlined by Creswell and Creswell, exploratory mixed-method research facilitates the integration of quantitative trends with qualitative insights, thus enhancing interpretive validity. In this research, qualitative data are given precedence in analysis to address the limitations of the small sample size and to enrich the explanatory depth of the results.

4.1. Research Design

The analysis is structured with a two-layered approach:

- A conceptual layer, based on an extensive review of literature regarding student retention, motivation, and entrepreneurship education, which informs the establishment of a unified analytical framework.
- An empirical exploratory layer, crafted to gather insights into students' experiences and perceptions as they move into university.

This design aligns with modern interpretations that conceptualize student persistence as a dynamic and context-sensitive process shaped by the interaction of institutional, psychological, and experiential factors (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Tinto, 2017).

4.2. Research Context and Participants

The research was carried out at the Faculty of Letters and Languages, University of Naama (Algeria), which is presently experiencing national reforms that focus on tutoring systems and entrepreneurship-oriented education.

A total of 30 first-year undergraduate students were involved in the study, encompassing the Arabic, English, and French departments. The focus on first-year students is theoretically validated, as this stage denotes a significant transition period characterized by a heightened risk of disengagement and dropout.

Participants were selected via convenience sampling, which is in line with exploratory research that aims to acquire contextually rich insights rather than achieving

statistical representativeness. Despite the limited sample size, the inclusion of multiple disciplines contributes to greater data diversity and interpretive relevance.

4.3. Instrument Design and Validation

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, which was explicitly aligned with the conceptual framework of the study and its three fundamental dimensions:

- Institutional support (tutorat)
- Student motivation and engagement
- Entrepreneurial pathways and future orientation

The instrument consisted of two parts:

• Part A: Closed-ended items (Likert scale)

Aimed at capturing quantifiable trends in students' views on the effectiveness of tutoring, their motivational engagement, and their awareness of entrepreneurial initiatives.

• Part B: Open-ended questions

Designed to draw out comprehensive qualitative insights regarding students' experiences, challenges, and perceptions of academic relevance.

To ensure the content's validity, the items of the questionnaire were crafted based on established theoretical constructs, particularly Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and models of student engagement.

The instrument underwent a two-step validation process:

- **Expert review:** Two teachers with expertise in educational research assessed the instrument for clarity, relevance, and its alignment with the research objectives.
- **Pilot testing:** The questionnaire was administered to a small group of students (5 students not included in the final sample) to identify ambiguities and improve item formulation.

These procedures bolstered the trustworthiness and uniformity of the data collection instrument, responding to concerns regarding methodological rigor.

4.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were obtained during regular academic sessions with the necessary institutional consent. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and completed the questionnaire anonymously to promote authentic and unbiased responses. The use of both structured and open-ended items allowed for the collection of standardized data as well as rich narrative accounts, thus ensuring methodological complementarity.

4.5. Data Analysis Strategy

The investigation adopted an integrated descriptive–thematic analytical framework, incorporating quantitative alongside qualitative techniques.

4.5.1. Quantitative Analysis

The evaluation of closed-ended responses involved the use of descriptive statistics, which included:

- frequency distributions
- percentages
- comparative response patterns

These strategies were utilized to recognize broad patterns in students' perceptions of tutoring, motivation, and their exposure to entrepreneurial activities

4.5.2. Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data, following a methodical and iterative process:

1. Repeated reading of responses
2. Identification of recurring meanings and patterns
3. Coding of responses into thematic categories
4. Alignment of themes with the conceptual framework

To improve the analytical depth, representative excerpts from students were integrated into the analysis, which allows the voices of participants to reinforce essential interpretations. This qualitative focus mitigates the limitations posed by the small sample size and bolsters the interpretive validity and empirical richness of the study.

4.6. Analytical Framework and Interpretation

The analysis was directed by a framework-based interpretive strategy, in which the findings were analyzed through the interaction of three primary dimensions:

- institutional support (tutorat),
- student motivation (mediating mechanism),
- entrepreneurial pathways (experiential reinforcement).

The study did not focus on testing causal relationships; instead, it aimed to conceptually validate the proposed model by investigating whether these relationships are reflected in the experiences reported by students. Particular emphasis was placed on the mediating role of motivation, consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that motivation arises from the interaction between individual needs and contextual factors (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

4.7. Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards in educational research.

- Participation was voluntary
- Informed consent was obtained
- Responses were anonymous and confidential
- No identifying personal data were collected

Participants were assured that their responses would be utilized solely for academic purposes and would not have any effect on their academic standing.

4.8. Methodological Limitations

Despite its contributions, the study presents certain limitations.

- The small sample size limits generalizability
- Convenience sampling may introduce selection bias
- Reliance on self-reported data may affect objectivity

Nonetheless, these constraints align with the exploratory nature of the study, which emphasizes conceptual insight and contextual comprehension rather than statistical inference. It is advisable for future research to implement larger-scale, longitudinal, and multi-institutional designs to empirically validate and expand upon the proposed framework.

5. Results and Discussion

This analysis explored first-year university dropout as a multifaceted issue shaped by the interaction of institutional support (tutoring), student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways. The results reveal that student persistence does not stem from isolated factors but from a dynamic and interrelated system, where institutional, psychological, and experiential elements continuously engage with one another.

This interpretation is compatible with theories regarding student retention, which conceptualize persistence as the result of academic and social integration processes (Tinto, 2017). It also reflects more recent perspectives that emphasize the role of engagement as a context-dependent construct shaped by institutional practices and student experiences (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

5.1. Overview of Key Findings

The analysis uncovered three key patterns:

- The implementation of tutorat is inconsistent, which diminishes its effectiveness as a reliable support mechanism.
- Student motivation is largely context-dependent, varying based on the quality of institutional support.
- Entrepreneurial pathways enhance the perceived relevance, thus strengthening students' future orientation.

These findings are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Synthesized Student Perceptions Across Core Dimensions

Dimension	Key Observed Patterns	Interpretive Meaning
Tutorat	Irregular implementation; limited visibility	Weak institutional consistency undermines integration
Motivation	Fluctuates with support quality	Context-dependent psychological process
Entrepreneurial pathways	Positive perception; growing awareness	Reinforces relevance and future orientation

Table 1 shows that persistence is most accurately interpreted as a relational process, in which institutional practices determine motivation, which in turn affects engagement and academic continuity.

5.2. Tutorat and Academic Integration

The results suggest that tutorat, despite being formally established within institutions, suffers from a lack of consistency and visibility, which greatly restricts its effectiveness in facilitating student integration.

Several students pointed out this concern:

- *“Tutoring sessions are not regular, so we cannot really depend on them.”*
- *“Sometimes we hear about tutorat, but it is not clearly organized.”*

These responses indicate that institutional support is viewed as fragmented instead of cohesive, which diminishes its potential to facilitate academic adaptation. This conclusion aligns with Tinto's assertion that institutional support must be ongoing and integrated into students' daily academic experiences to effectively promote persistence. As Tinto (2017) highlights, inconsistent support mechanisms do not create the sense of stability and belonging necessary for successful integration.

Therefore, the effectiveness of tutoring is not defined by its formal presence but rather by its practical application and availability, highlighting that the discrepancies between policy and practice continue to be a significant concern in contexts focused on reform.

5.3. Motivation as a Mediating Mechanism

The research findings offer substantial evidence that student motivation serves as a mediating mechanism linking institutional support to academic engagement. Responses from students reveal that motivation is not a constant individual attribute but a process that is sensitive to contextual factors influenced by institutional settings:

- *“When teachers guide us and explain clearly, I feel more motivated to study.”*
- *“If there is no support, it becomes difficult to stay engaged.”*

These insights correspond with Self-Determination Theory, introduced by Deci and Ryan, which posits that motivation is amplified when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In this study, tutoring contributes to:

- Competence (academic guidance)
- Relatedness (interaction and support)

Nevertheless, when tutoring is inconsistently applied, these psychological needs are not satisfied, which leads to reduced motivation and increased disengagement. Therefore, motivation plays a role as a psychological bridge that converts institutional conditions into student behavior, reinforcing its significant role in student persistence.

5.4. Entrepreneurial Pathways and Future-Oriented Engagement

The results suggest that entrepreneurial pathways significantly contribute to improving students' views on academic relevance and their future orientation. Students demonstrated favorable attitudes towards initiatives related to entrepreneurship:

- *“Entrepreneurship helps us see how our studies can be useful in real life.”*
- *“It gives us ideas about future projects and careers.”*

These responses imply that entrepreneurial learning is instrumental in meaning-making, empowering students to associate academic content with real-world contexts. This corroborates research in entrepreneurship education, which points to its role in enhancing self-efficacy, initiative, and long-term commitment (Nabi et al., 2017; Lackéus, 2020). Significantly, entrepreneurial pathways do not function independently; they enhance motivation by raising the perceived significance of academic learning, thereby indirectly supporting persistence.

5.5. Interaction Between Core Dimensions: A Reinforcing System

The research indicates that tutoring, motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways operate as an interconnected system instead of separate factors. This relationship is encapsulated in Table 2.

Table 2. Functional Interaction Between Core Dimensions

Dimension	Core Function	Contribution to Persistence
Tutorat	Institutional support	Facilitates academic integration
Motivation	Psychological mechanism	Sustains engagement
Entrepreneurial pathways	Experiential learning	Enhances relevance and future orientation

The findings indicate a cyclical process:

1. Tutorat provides academic and social support
2. This support influences motivation
3. Motivation drives engagement
4. Entrepreneurial experiences reinforce motivation
5. Reinforced motivation sustains persistence

This model reflects cohesive perspectives on student engagement, which assert that persistence stems from the interaction of institutional frameworks and individual experiences (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

5.6. Theoretical and Contextual Implications

This study's results contribute to the understanding of student retention by extending both theoretical frameworks and contextual relevance.

First and foremost, the research reinforces the idea that student persistence is a multidimensional and dynamic process that results from the interaction of institutional, psychological, and experiential factors. The findings illustrate that tutoring, student motivation, and entrepreneurial pathways do not function separately; instead, they create a mutually reinforcing system. This discovery supports established retention models that emphasize academic and social integration (Tinto, 2017), while also broadening them through the explicit inclusion of entrepreneurial learning as an experiential dimension, thus expanding the explanatory framework of persistence.

Secondly, the findings reveal the mediating role of motivation as a vital mechanism that connects institutional support with student engagement. Drawing from Self-Determination Theory, established by Deci and Ryan, the research shows that motivation is not a stable individual trait but a process that is influenced by the context of institutional conditions. In particular, well-organized and accessible tutoring enhances students' feelings of competence and relatedness, thereby increasing engagement and persistence. This broadens the scope of Self-Determination Theory by situating it within a reform-focused higher education context, where institutional practices are evolving.

Thirdly, the research offers insights tailored to the context of Algerian higher education, highlighting a disparity between the formulation of policies and their execution. Despite the introduction of tutorat and entrepreneurial pathways aimed at enhancing student retention, their efficacy is hindered by irregular application and insufficient coordination among institutions. This observation emphasizes the necessity of synchronizing policy efforts with consistent and enduring institutional practices.

In summary, the findings advocate for a cohesive and integrated understanding of student persistence, emphasizing the interplay between institutional support, motivational processes, and experiential learning as vital elements of a dynamic system.

5.7. Implications for Future Research

Given the conceptual-exploratory nature of this study, it does not aim to establish causal relationships. Instead, it proposes an integrated framework that is supported by initial empirical insights. Therefore, multiples directions for future research can be identified.

Initially, subsequent research ought to empirically evaluate the suggested cyclical model of student persistence, with a specific focus on the mediating function of motivation between institutional support and student engagement. This can be accomplished through extensive quantitative studies utilizing inferential statistical methods.

Secondly, it is essential to implement longitudinal research designs that track students across their academic journey, particularly in their first year, to effectively capture the changing dynamics of motivation, engagement, and institutional integration over time.

Thirdly, it is advisable to conduct comparative and multi-institutional studies to investigate how differences in the implementation of tutoring and entrepreneurial pathways affect student persistence across various disciplines and institutional settings.

Fourth, upcoming research should further investigate the qualitative elements of student experiences, particularly through extensive interviews and classroom-based inquiries, to improve understanding of how students perceive institutional support and create meaning around their academic engagement and future direction.

Ultimately, further research is required to explore the correlation between institutional policies and classroom practices, as the current findings indicate a disparity between formal reform initiatives and the experiences of students.

Overall, this investigation lays a conceptual groundwork for future empirical inquiries that seek to improve and put into practice integrated models of student persistence.

6. Recommendations

Reflecting on the outcomes of this study, several actionable and policy-based recommendations can be offered to improve student retention in Algerian higher education, particularly in the first year of university.

To begin with, there is a necessity to standardize and fortify tutoring systems (tutorat) across different departments. The research findings reveal that inconsistent execution greatly hampers its effectiveness as a means of academic integration. Therefore, institutions should implement structured tutoring frameworks that feature clearly defined roles, regular scheduling, and systematic follow-up. As Tinto has pointed out, sustained and organized institutional support is vital for enhancing student persistence (Tinto, 2017).

In the second place, student motivation should be considered a key element of pedagogical practice rather than an isolated trait. As motivation is found to be greatly dependent on context, teaching strategies must actively encourage autonomy, competence, and relatedness through continuous feedback, guided learning, and student-focused methods, in accordance with the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Thirdly, educational institutions ought to reinforce the incorporation of entrepreneurial learning pathways into undergraduate programs. The results indicate that these pathways improve students' understanding of the significance of their studies and foster engagement with a future-oriented perspective. This can be accomplished through project-based learning, innovative activities, and partnerships with entrepreneurship support systems.

Fourth, the research emphasizes the significance of institutional coordination and collaboration. Effective student support necessitates alignment among tutors, lecturers, and entrepreneurship program coordinators to guarantee that academic guidance, motivational support, and experiential learning operate as interconnected components rather than separate initiatives.

In conclusion, it is essential for universities to create monitoring and evaluation frameworks to evaluate the effectiveness of tutoring systems, student engagement approaches, and entrepreneurial initiatives. These frameworks would promote data-informed decision-making and aid in closing the divide between policy development and practical application.

In summary, these suggestions highlight that enhancing student retention necessitates a cohesive and integrated institutional strategy, wherein academic support, motivational processes, and experiential learning are systematically coordinated within a singular educational framework.

7. Conclusion

The issue of university dropout is a complex and ongoing challenge, particularly in the first year of higher education, where students face a significant transition involving academic adaptation, social integration, and increasing institutional demands. As highlighted in the literature, this phenomenon cannot be explained by a single factor; it results from the interaction of academic, motivational, social, and institutional dimensions (Tinto, 1993; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). In the Algerian context, recent reforms that have introduced tutoring systems and entrepreneurial learning initiatives signify a transition towards a student-centered and employability-focused higher education framework. The findings of this study suggest that tutoring enhances academic integration, motivation acts as a mediating mechanism that influences engagement, and entrepreneurial pathways improve future orientation and learning relevance, with all three dimensions operating as an interconnected system that affects student persistence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Strayhorn, 2012; Rae, 2010; Nabi et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the study affirms a conceptual interpretation of dropout as a dynamic process that emerges from the interaction of institutional support, psychological engagement, and experiential learning, rather than from independent factors. While it is exploratory, it establishes an initial framework for understanding student persistence in the Algerian higher education landscape. Thus, future research is encouraged to empirically evaluate and enhance this model through larger-scale, longitudinal, and comparative studies to deepen the understanding of how institutional reforms can more effectively improve student retention and success.

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