



# Why do students drop-out of doctoral degrees?

## Institutional and personal factors

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DE ECONOMÍA Y  
COMPETITIVIDAD

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# OBJECTIVES

## Why do students drop-out of doctoral degrees?

1. Describe the **characteristics** of SS doctoral students who intended to drop out compared to those who did not.
2. Analyse the **motives** underlying the decision to drop out of doctoral studies, from students' perspective.
3. Analyse the **relationship between the motives and some research conditions:**
  - a. Modality of enrolment
  - b. Funding
  - c. Incorporation into a research group
  - d. The thesis format
  - e. Discipline
  - f. Gender and age

# METHOD

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## Participants

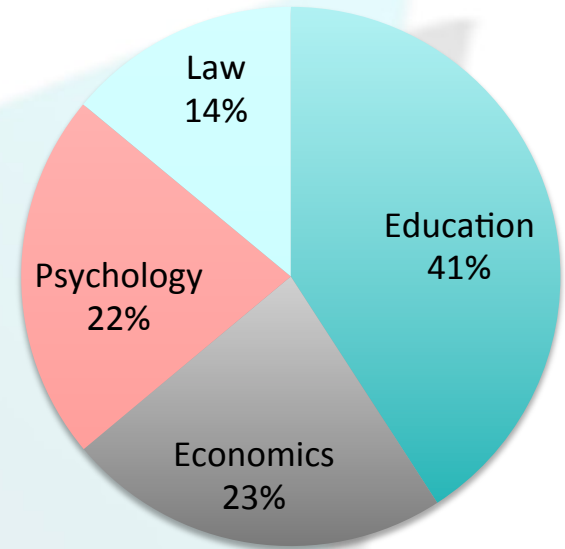
n= 724 doctoral students (rate 38.6%)

## Instrument

FINS questionnaire

## Variables

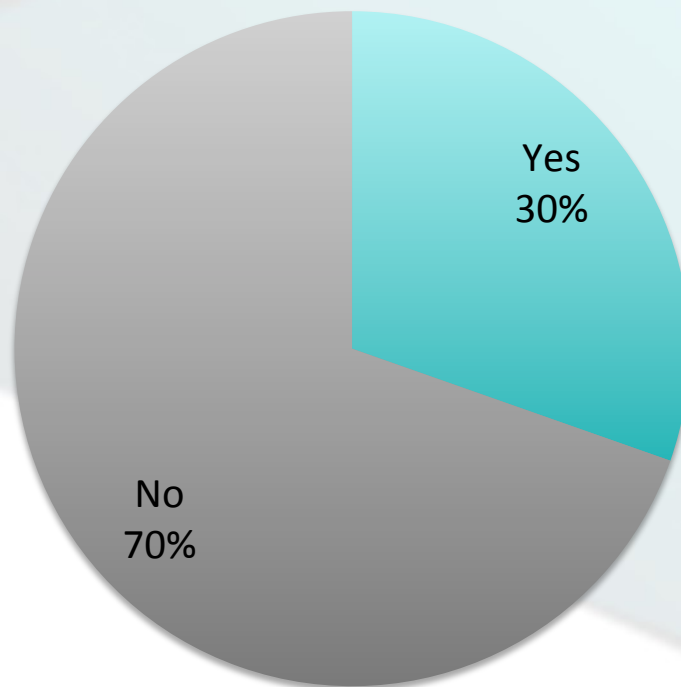
- Sociodemographic: *gender and age*
- Research conditions: *discipline, thesis format, type of enrolment, work modality and funding*
- Intentions to drop-out
- Motives



# RESULTS

## 1. Characteristics of doctoral students who intended to drop out compared to those who did not

Intention to drop-out



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# RESULTS

## 1. Characteristics of doctoral students who intended to drop out compared to those who did not

	Not drop out	Drop out		
	Mean (DS)	Mean (DS)	t	gl
Age	37.52 (9.44)	35.70 (8.32)	2.45*	722

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

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# 1. Characteristics of doctoral students who intended to drop out compared to those who did not

		Considered dropping out	
		No	Yes
<b>Gender*</b>	Female	295 (67.5%)* z= -2.2	142 (32.5%)* z= 2.2
	Male	216 (75.3%)* z= 2.2	71 (24.7%)* z= -2.2
<b>Discipline*</b>	Psychology	102 (61.4%)* z= -3.0	64 (38.6%)* z= 3.0
	Education	214 (70.2%)	91 (29.8%)
	Economy	126 (73.7%)	45 (26.3%)
	Law	86 (81.9%)* z= 2.7	19 (18.1%)* z= -2.7
<b>Time commitment*</b>	Part-time	227 (66.6%)* z= -2.2	114 (33.4%)* z= 2.2
	Full-time	284 (74.2%)* z= 2.2	99 (25.8%)* z= -2.2

Note. z: corrected standardized residuals \* p <.05

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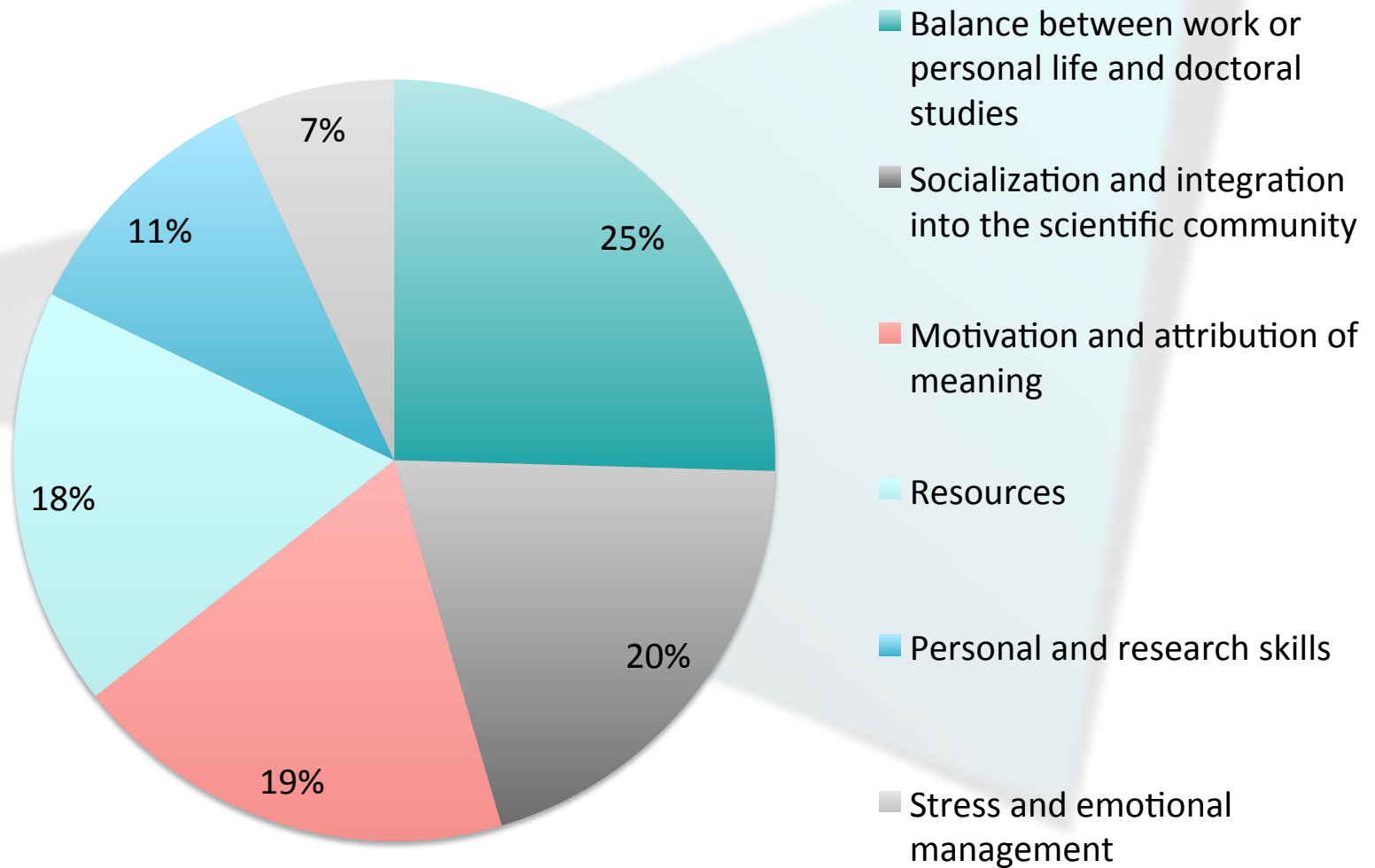
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## 2. Motives underlying the decision to drop out of doctoral studies



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### 3. Relationship between the motives and research conditions.

#### Discipline

Discipline	Balance	Socialization and community	Motivation and meaning	Resources	Personal abilities	Stress
<b>Psychology</b>	16 (30.8%)	13 (25.0%)	15 (28.8%)	17 (32.7%)	16 (30.8%)* z=3.2	4 (7.7%)
<b>Education</b>	37 (48.7%)	30 (39.5%)* z= 2.1	21 (27.6%)	21 (27.6%)	9 (11.8%)	7 (9.2%)
<b>Economics</b>	11 (26.8%)	13 (31.7%)	17 (41.5%)	7 (17.1%)	4 (9.8%)	7 (17.1%)
<b>Law</b>	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.3%)* z= -2.2	4 (25.0%)	4 (25.0%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (6.3%)

*Note.* z: standardized residuals. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .



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Con

### 3. Relationship between the motives and research conditions.

#### Type of enrolment

Type of enrolment	Balance	Socialization and community	Motivation and meaning	Resources	Personal abilities	Stress
<b>Part-time</b>	47 (51.6%)** z= 3.5	26 (28.6%)	23 (25.3%)	22 (24.2%)	14 (15.4%)	7 (7.7%)
<b>Full-time</b>	23 (26.1%)** z= -3.5	29 (33.0%)	29 (33.0%)	27 (30.7%)	16 (18.2%)	12 (13.6%)

*Note.* z: standardized residuals. \* p< .05. \*\* p <.001.

Obj

Met

Res

Dis

Con

### 3. Relationship between the motives and research conditions.

#### Work modality

Work modality	Balance	Socialization and community	Motivation and meaning	Resources	Personal abilities	Stress
<b>Individual</b>	56 (38.4%)	54 (37.0%)** z= 3.5	45 (30.8%)	34 (23.3%)	27 (18.5%)	16 (11.0%)
<b>Team</b>	14 (35.9%)	3 (7.7%)** z= -3.5	12 (30.8%)	15 (38.5%)	4 (10.3%)	3 (7.7%)

Note. z: standardized residuals. \* p< .05. \*\* p <.001.

Obj

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### 3. Relationship between the motives and research conditions.

#### Funding

Funding	Balance	Socialization and community	Motivation and meaning	Resources	Personal abilities	Stress
Contract within the university	8 (36.4%)	3 (13.6%)	9 (40.9%)	9 (40.9%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)
Grant	10 (21.7%)** z= -2.9	10 (21.7%)	18 (39.1%)	9 (19.6%)	10 (21.7%)	11 (23.9%)* z= 3.3
Contract outside the university	44 (59.5%)** z= 4.5	24 (32.4%)	19 (25.7%)	12 (16.2%)** z= -2.9	11 (14.9%)	4 (5.4%)* z=-2.0
No income	8 (23.5%)** z= -2.2	15 (44.1%)	5 (14.7%)	19 (55.9%)** z= 4.1	6 (17.6%)	2 (5.9%)

Note. z: standardized residuals. \* p< .05. \*\* p <.001.

# DISCUSSION

Obj

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- Younger, female and part time students were more likely to consider dropping out.
- Lower dropping-out rates (30%) than previous studies (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Gardner 2009; Lovitts 2001; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000), but only students who were still enrolled.
- Similar motives (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Fuentes *et al.*, 2015; Gardner 2009; Lovitts 2001; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Manathunga 2005) but different rates:
  - Difficulties in achieving a balance (especially those working outside university and part-time)
  - Problems with socialization (especially education and those working individually).

# DISCUSSION

Obj

Met

Res

Dis

Con

- Younger, female and part time students were more likely to consider dropping out.
- Lower dropping-out rates (30%) than previous studies (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Gardner 2009; Lovitts 2001; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000), but only students who were still enrolled.
  - Only intentions, not actual drop-out.
  - Difficult to determine the representativeness of the sample
- Similar motives (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Fuentes *et al.*, 2015; Gardner 2009; Lovitts 2001; Lovitts & Nelson, 2000; Manathunga 2005) but different rates:
  - Difficulties in achieving a balance (especially those working outside university and part-time)
  - Problems with socialization (especially education and those working individually).
  - Need to collect in-depth qualitative data.

# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Obj

Met

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Con

- ✓ **Analysis of motives and causes from students' perspective.**

# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Obj

✓ Analysis of motives and causes from students' perspective.

Met

✓ **Need to rethink the requirements and demands of part-time enrolment.**

Res

Dis

Con

# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Obj

✓ Analysis of motives and causes from students' perspective.

Met

✓ Need to rethink the requirements and demands of part-time enrolment.

Res

✓ **Need to promote socialization of students.**

Dis

Con



# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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✓ Analysis of motives and causes from students' perspective.

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✓ Need to rethink the requirements and demands of part-time enrolment.

Res

✓ Need to promote socialization of students.

Dis

✓ **Dropping out motives cannot be reduced to isolated factors, but to an interplay of personal, interpersonal and institutional factors.**

Con

# CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

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✓ Analysis of motives and causes from students' perspective.

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✓ Need to rethink the requirements and demands of part-time enrolment.

Res

✓ Need to promote socialization of students.

Dis

✓ **Dropping out motives cannot be reduced to isolated factors, but to an interplay of personal, interpersonal and institutional factors.**

Con

Future on-line community (3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the project) to help students with socialization and isolation.

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Thank you.