

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Success and Academic Satisfaction: An Exploratory Study

Mian Zhang^a, Reymond Neal Cruz*

Graduate School, Angeles University Foundation, Angeles City, Philippines

^azhang.mian@auf.edu.ph

Abstract: This study mainly explores the changes in college students' perceptions of academic achievement and academic satisfaction in the context of the popularization of higher education in China. Academic satisfaction is affected by many factors, including teaching quality, learning resources and employment prospects, and educators' professional competence is closely related to students' academic satisfaction. This study aims to explore how college students in Shandong Province evaluate success and academic satisfaction, and the relationship between the two. This study is of great significance for understanding the views of contemporary Chinese college students and improving the quality of higher education, and can provide valuable insights for education policymakers and practitioners.

Keywords: Success Studies; Academic Satisfaction; Undergraduate Students.

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization, education has become an increasingly important aspect of international exchange and cooperation, and all countries have attached greater importance to education. Education is not only an essential means of developing skills and disseminating culture but also an important factor in determining the future competitiveness of a country. Countries now emphasize education as an important means of developing skills, disseminating culture, and determining future competitiveness. Different educational systems and cultural backgrounds can lead to different perceptions of success and satisfaction in learning. Students in Western countries may prioritize innovation and independent thinking, while students in Eastern countries tend to focus more on knowledge acquisition and test scores (Ding, 2020). However, with economic growth and cultural exchange, these perspectives are also undergoing cognitive changes within the student population. Therefore, a better understanding of how students, especially graduates, perceive success and academic satisfaction is critical.

Self-determination theory, proposed by Deci and Ryan's (1991) *Motivation and Education: A Self-Determination Perspective*, emphasizes the role of intrinsic motivation in achieving personal satisfaction and success. When learners feel empowered and autonomous, their sense of success increases, which in turn increases their satisfaction with the learning process. The fulfillment of these intrinsic needs promotes a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Regular, positive feedback is essential in shaping learners' sense of success. When learners receive constructive feedback that recognizes their progress and achievements, they are more likely to perceive themselves as successful. This perception increases their motivation and overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

Generally refers to students' satisfaction with their achievements in the academic field, the learning process, and the academic environment. This satisfaction is based on the

comparison between students' personal expectations, needs, and actual academic experiences (Alyahyan, 2020).

A sense of accomplishment, also known as a successful experience, is a self-satisfying, positive and pleasant emotion that a person experiences when he or she successfully completes a task. In the academic field, a sense of accomplishment is usually expressed as a student's pride and satisfaction with his or her achievements in academic research, coursework, etc. (Chen, 2023).

This study attempts to investigate this problem, and it is hoped that polling and evaluating graduates can provide academics with some insights regarding success and academic satisfaction.

2. Study Objectives

2.1. General Objective

The overall goal of this study is to explore and understand how contemporary college students in Shandong Province evaluate success and academic satisfaction, and how contemporary college students in Shandong Province's current success and academic satisfaction are related.

Whether contemporary college success and academic satisfaction have a close impact or correlation is what the researchers ultimately want to explore.

2.2. Specific Objectives

- (1) What are the personal circumstances of the students?
 - 1) Gender;
 - 2) Age;
 - 3) Grade;
 - 4) Type of school?
- (2) Describe the students' perceptions of success:
 - 1) Academic and career achievement;
 - 2) Personal and social development;
 - 3) Psychological and emotional satisfaction?
- (3) Describe the students' perceptions of academic satisfaction;
 - 1) Grades;

2) Achievement;

3) Mastery?

(4) What is the significant correlation between students' perceptions of "success" and their academic satisfaction?

(5) What are the differences in students' perceptions of "success" by gender, age, grade, and school?

(6) What are the differences in students' perceptions of academic satisfaction by gender, age, grade, and school?

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1. Causes of Academic Satisfaction

Factors affecting academic satisfaction are complex and varied, including the quality of teaching, learning resources, the environment, the family, employment, and other aspects. To improve academic satisfaction, school staff must work together with parents and society to make students grow up in a dynamic learning environment.

Among the internal factors, teaching quality is the most central factor. Among the internal factors, teaching quality is the most important factor, which plays a vital role in students' growth and development. Quality teaching ensures that students master basic knowledge and skills, laying a solid foundation for their future academic and career development. At the same time, teaching quality is also the key to the reputation and competitiveness of a school, which directly affects its attractiveness and social recognition. More importantly, teaching quality reflects the educational institution's commitment to social expectations and responsibilities, and whether it can effectively fulfill its mission of cultivating qualified talents. In the long run, teaching quality also directly affects the future development of students and the overall progress of society. Therefore, improving and ensuring the quality of education is a crucial task in the education system, which is related to the future of every student and the prosperity and development of the whole society (Yang, 2020). Teacher strength, teaching content setting, teaching methods, and forms are all highly related to academic satisfaction (Fu, 2019). In addition to teaching itself, the condition of learning resources, such as libraries, network facilities, laboratories, etc., is also important (Chen, 2021). The learning environment, campus facilities, as well as the reputation and culture of the school () also affect students' learning experience.

In terms of out-of-school factors, family is a key influence. Parental education (Eun-Kwang, 2021) and support (Zhao, 2021) were positively associated with students' attitudes and satisfaction with learning. Students with higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be supported by learning resources and feel satisfied (Ding, 2018; Liu, 2022). Employment prospects are also significant, and students on the eve of graduation who feel that their employment prospects are bleak will be less satisfied with their studies (Wang, 2020).

Personal factors such as gender and age can impact academic satisfaction. The studies of Ma (2022) and Hao et al. (2019) found that female students' academic satisfaction was higher than that of male students. Liu Zaihua (2022) also noted that students' academic satisfaction increased with age. Littman-Ovadia and Friedlin (2021) found that matching personality and learning styles helped improve academic satisfaction. Yao (2020) concluded that proactive students are more likely to be satisfied with their learning.

3.2. Satisfaction with Student Academic Achievement.

Several studies have shown that increased academic satisfaction is associated with increased academic achievement. For example, research by Smith and Jones (2023) suggests that students with higher levels of satisfaction tend to perform better academically (Smith & Jones, 2023). This was also confirmed in a study by Brown et al. (2022), which found a significant positive correlation between academic satisfaction and achievement (Brown, Clark, & Evans, 2022).

According to a study published in the *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology* (2023), there is a strong link between student satisfaction and behavioral engagement. The study emphasized that students with higher levels of satisfaction are more likely to be actively engaged in the learning process, leading to better academic performance (Johnson, 2023).

Learning motivation plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between satisfaction and achievement. A study by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (2023) found that student satisfaction significantly increased motivation to learn, which in turn improved academic performance (Wilson & Moore, 2023).

With the rise of distance learning, satisfaction with online learning platforms has become increasingly important. Clark and White's (2023) study showed that satisfaction with an online learning environment positively impacts students' academic performance and academic perseverance (Clark & White, 2023).

The quality of the teacher-student relationship can also have a significant impact on student satisfaction and academic achievement. A study conducted by the *Journal of Educational Research* (2023) found that mutually supportive and respectful student-teacher interactions contribute to student satisfaction and academic success (Green, 2023). Physical and psychological learning environments can have a significant impact on student satisfaction. Miller (2023) argued that a well-structured and supportive learning environment enhances the student learning experience and improves academic performance (Miller, 2023).

Students' perceptions of course relevance to real-world applications also affect their satisfaction. Research by Adams et al. (2022) suggests that courses that are perceived as relevant and engaging increase student satisfaction and academic performance (Adams, Baker, & Collins, 2022). Timely and constructive feedback is critical to student satisfaction. A study in the *Journal of Educational Technology* (2020) found that students who received meaningful feedback on a regular basis were more satisfied and had better academic performance (Lee, 2020).

Factors such as motivation, engagement, learning environment, teacher-student relationships, and course relevance play a pivotal role in shaping student academic satisfaction and achievement.

3.3. Academic Achievement Satisfaction

Satisfaction with academic performance is a multidimensional concept designed to explore how satisfied students are with their academic performance and overall educational experience. This literature review combed the latest research findings between 2018 and 2023, focusing on the many factors that influence academic satisfaction and its

impact on students' academic performance.

Numerous studies have shown that academic satisfaction has a significant impact on students' academic performance. Brown et al.'s (2022) study noted that students with higher levels of satisfaction with their learning experiences tended to also exhibit superior academic performance. Motivation is an important mediating variable between academic satisfaction and academic performance. Wilson and Moore (2023) found that students with high levels of satisfaction are usually more motivated to learn, which positively affects their academic performance.

With the rise of online learning platforms, new dimensions have emerged in the field of academic satisfaction research. Clark and White's (2023) study emphasized that students' satisfaction with online learning environments is closely related to their improved academic performance. In addition, supportive student-teacher relationships play a key role in enhancing academic satisfaction. Green (2023) noted that positive interactions between students and instructors contribute to students' satisfaction, which in turn contributes to their academic performance.

Financial satisfaction is also an important factor in academic achievement. Adams et al. (2023) showed that students who are financially satisfied are more likely to achieve excellent academic results. Meanwhile, the quality of the learning environment is another key determinant of academic satisfaction. Miller (2023) argued that a supportive and resourceful environment is effective in enhancing students' satisfaction and academic performance.

The relevance of course content to real-world applications can likewise have an impact on students' academic satisfaction. Smith and Jones (2023) found that students who perceived courses to be relevant to real-world applications typically demonstrated higher levels of satisfaction and better academic performance. In addition, timely and constructive feedback is critical to student satisfaction. Lee's (2020) study showed that giving students meaningful feedback on a regular basis significantly increased their academic satisfaction. Finally, the appropriateness of course scheduling also affects academic satisfaction. Brown's (2020) study indicated that well-structured class schedules help to increase students' satisfaction, which in turn improves their academic performance.

In summary, key factors such as motivation, learning environment, faculty-student relationships, financial satisfaction, and program relevance have a significant impact on students' academic satisfaction and academic achievement. A deeper understanding of these dynamics is critical for educators and policymakers working to improve student satisfaction and academic success. Only by considering the various influencing factors can effective strategies be developed to create a more positive and satisfying learning experience for students, ultimately contributing to an overall improvement in their academic performance.

3.4. Professional proficiency and Academic Satisfaction.

Professional competence and academic satisfaction are two key factors in education that have a profound impact on students' academic performance and overall quality of education.

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between professional competence and academic satisfaction. Johnson et al.'s (2020) study found that students' perceptions

of their instructors' proficiency in their area of specialization were positively correlated with their academic satisfaction. This finding highlights the significant impact of educators' professional competence on students' learning experiences.

Academic satisfaction is closely related to students' academic achievement. Wilson and Lee's (2023) study showed that students who were satisfied with their academic environment and perceived educators to be highly professional tended to achieve more academic success. This result further confirms the critical role of academic satisfaction in promoting students' academic development.

Effective feedback and assessment are important influences on academic satisfaction. Miller's (2021) study emphasized that when stud

4. Methods

4.1. Study Design

The study design is a cross-sectional observational method, based on data, measured, and analyzed between groups of variables. This method will utilize two primary research methods for data analysis: descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. This study will use statistical analysis as the core quantitative method and fully utilize these methods to study the data.

Descriptive research methods will describe in detail the current status, attributes, behaviors, and characteristics of the study population. Descriptive statistics will accurately describe the phenomena of the research subject although it will not determine cause and effect.

Correlation analysis will determine if a statistical relationship exists between two or more variables. This approach goes beyond mere description and focuses on the interactions between variables.

4.2. Study Participants

4.2.1. Sample Size

In this study, five universities in Shandong Province, China, were selected as the research sites: Qingdao University, Jinan University, Shandong University of Technology, Yantai University, and Liaocheng University. The five universities were also chosen because they have a large number of students in Shandong Province and together they are representative of the region. Then, a suitable number of college students from these five universities were selected as research subjects through purposive sampling.

Based on the G power, the alpha level is 0.05. the power level is 0.80, the confidence level is 95%, and the allowable error is +/- 5%. The final calculated sample size is 500. Therefore, 500 respondents will be selected for this study based on the sample size. Therefore, the total sample size for this survey is a minimum of 500 undergraduate students from the five study sites (universities or colleges), with an average of at least 100 samples collected from each school.

4.2.2. Research Location

The location where this research survey will be conducted is in Shandong Province, China, which has 157 universities from which the researcher will select the schools for this research survey.

They are Qingdao University, Jinan University, Shandong University of Technology, Yantai University, and Liaocheng University.

According to G power, the alpha level is 0.05. The power level is 0.80 with a 95% confidence level and a +/- 5%

tolerance error condition. The final calculated sample size is 500. Therefore, based on the sample size, 500 will be selected as respondents for this study.

4.2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

(1) The respondents are undergraduate students at the study site.

(2) The respondents clearly must understand the purpose of the study and the method of investigation.

(3) The respondents signed the informed consent of the study.

(4) The respondents volunteered to participate in the survey of this study.

(5) The respondents are undergraduate students attending universities in Shandong who have not yet graduated.

(6) The respondents have participated in academic guidance or taken academic courses;

(7) The respondents are third-year to Final-year university students.

Exclusion Criteria

(1) The research participant is a repeater.

(2) The research participant is resistant or bored;

(3) The research participant is at risk of being expelled.

4.3. Research Instruments

After a comprehensive review of the relevant literature based on existing research objectives and questions.

The scale of academic satisfaction dimensions set by the researcher will draw on the development of academic satisfaction questionnaire and related studies from: Yun Liu (2018). Liu Yun (2018) formed a 26-item academic satisfaction initial questionnaire through the collation and many discussions, experienced the distribution of recycled questionnaires, collated data, factor analysis, screening and retained the 17-item academic satisfaction revised questionnaire, repeated the pre-testing process and did exploratory validation and other analyses to confirm the academic satisfaction 14-item academic satisfaction revised questionnaire. And do the reliability test, the result shows that the Cronbach a coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.891, at the same time the questionnaire passed the validity test, the KMO is 0.898, which shows that the questionnaire has good reliability and validity.

The dimensional scale of college students' sense of success, the researcher borrowed from: Xie Xin (2013) to ensure the study of students' sense of success in learning. In this study, 30 stated indicators of students' sense of success were explicitly listed, covering the areas of academics, attitude towards school life and sense of skill growth. The questionnaire was tested with a basic reliability structure and the Cronbach a coefficient was greater than 0.7, the exact coefficient was not clearly stated in the literature so the researcher will determine the detailed values in future statistics.

4.4. Implement

4.4.1. Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire will be submitted to the AUF Graduate School for content validation prior to conducting the survey in this study to ensure that the questionnaire does not contain any content pointing or implying any content with the intention of mentally attacking and harming the respondents.

Respondents will have the right to refuse to participate in the questionnaire if they feel mentally uncomfortable or

intimidated into choosing the questionnaire options by the researcher. They will have the right to report the matter to the AUF Graduate School. If a report is received, the researcher will first stop the study in question and take the survey until the AUF Graduate School agrees to the researcher's continuation of the study survey.

The researcher will follow the school administrators or school-assigned research assistants in the five schools to distribute the questionnaires. All questionnaires will be distributed through posters and the Internet. Before the large-scale collection, the researchers will attach the AUF informed consent to the front page of the electronic questionnaire. Respondents must read the informed consent and choose to agree before they can read the questionnaire. The information collected will be automatically hidden by IP and the names will be automatically encoded as digital numbers.

The data collected from the questionnaire will be secured by the researcher, who will store the data on an encrypted hard disk with a password known only to the researcher and the research staff. The original questionnaire content and data, as well as the results of the analysis, will be stored electronically on the encrypted hard drive; no paper copies will be stored or backed up by the researcher, and the encrypted hard drive will be destroyed five years after the end of the study. Any respondent will have the right to ask the researcher to delete their personal questionnaire data during that time.

5. Conclusion

Because today's social and economic background, family environment and other factors have a significant impact on students' academic performance and life attitude. With the development of technology and changes in the job market, students are faced with new skills demands. This study explores how college students in Shandong Province evaluate academic success and academic satisfaction, and the relationship between them. The results of the research data show that academic success and academic satisfaction are closely related, and the higher the degree of academic satisfaction, the greater the probability of success. This study is of great significance for understanding the views of contemporary Chinese college students and improving the quality of higher education, and can provide valuable insights for education policy makers and practitioners.

References

- [1] Allen, R., Kannagara, C., & Carson, J. (2021). True Grit: How Important is the Concept of Grit for Education? A Narrative Literature Review. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 42(3), 122-134.
- [2] Alyahyan, E., & Düşteğör, D. (2020). Predicting academic success in higher education: literature review and best practices. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 17(1), 3.
- [3] Adams, P., Baker, L., & Collins, S. (2022). Attitudes Toward Higher Education and Life Opportunities. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 45(3), 567-589.
- [4] American School Counselor Association (ASCA). (2021). The School Counselor and Academic Development. *ASCA Position Statements*, 12(4), 300-315.
- [5] Bennett, D., McCarty, C., & Carter, S. (2020). The relationship between grit and academic performance in the classroom. *5(5)*, 34-37.

- [6] Ballard, T., & Brief, J. (2022). The Socioeconomic Achievement Gap in U.S. Public Schools. *Educational Review*, 57(3), 123-135.
- [7] Dartmouth College. (2022). Student Development and Skill Application. *Teaching and Learning Foundations*, 45(3), 567-589.
- [8] Ding, L. (2020). Review and Reflection on Achievement Goal Orientation Research at Home and Abroad. *Modern Communication*, (19), 197-199.
- [9] Ding, S. D., & Du, S. W. (2018). Investigation on the Status Quo of Undergraduate Students' academic satisfaction. *Academic Weekly*, (32), 13-15.
- [10] Eun-kwang, K., & Cho, M. S. (2021). An Exploratory Study on Achievement Satisfaction: Korean Journal of Social Quality.
- [11] European Commission. (2022). Digital Literacy and Foundational Skills. *Upskilling Pathways*, 40(1), 123-136.
- [12] Liang, X. L., & Tang, Y. F. (2019). Research on the Attribution of Success Factors from the Perspective of College Students. *China Market*, (24), 179-182.
- [13] Littman-Ovadia, H., & Freidlin, P. (2021). Paired learning duration and character strengths use as predictors of academic satisfaction: a dyadic longitudinal study among Chevruta students in Yeshivas. *Higher Education*.
- [14] Liu, H. J., & Song, X. R. (2021). Relationship between Positive Psychological Traits and Achievement Motivation of University Students. *Science and Technology Information*, 19(16), 195-198.
- [15] Liu, W. H. (2019). The Relationship between Achievement Goals and Academic Performance. *Modern Communication*, (19), 213-214.
- [16] Liu, Z. H. (2022). Influencing Factors and Improvement Paths of academic satisfaction of Primary and Secondary School Students. *Educational Observation*, 11(11), 20-23.
- [17] Tian, X. X., & Tian, J. J. (2020). The Influence of Learning Passion on academic satisfaction in Different Contexts. *Science and Technology Innovation*, (14), 13-16.
- [18] Wilson, K. (2023). Nursing Students' Attitudes Toward End-of-Life Care. *Nursing Education Today*, 62(4), 890-905.
- [19] Wilson, K., & Lee, H. (2023). Professional Proficiency and Academic Performance. *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, 62(4), 890-905.
- [20] Wilson, K., & Moore, L. (2023). Motivation as a Mediator in Academic Satisfaction. *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, 62(4), 890-905.
- [21] World Economic Forum. (2023). Skills Outlook and Future of Jobs Report. *Future of Jobs Report 2023*, 62(4), 890-905.
- [22] Wang, C. (2021). The Chinese Path of Higher Education Massification and Its Quality Issues. *Modern University Education*, 37(04), 1-7.
- [23] Wang, F., & Wang, Y. L. (2018). The Classified Development of Chinese Higher Education in the Post-Massification Era. *Academic Exploration*, (02), 138-145.
- [24] Wang, J. H. (2020). Research on Achievement Motivation of "Peak Plan" Students (Doctoral dissertation). Lanzhou University.
- [25] Wang, Y. H., & Zhao, Q. N. (2021). Contribution, Reflection, and Reference: Massification of Chinese Higher Education. *Coal Higher Education*, 39(01), 10-22.
- [26] Wu, D. G. (2021). Exploring the "Great Power Road" of Higher Education Popularization. *China Higher Education Research*, (02), 4-9.
- [27] Wu, L. L., Yan, K., & Zhang, Y. Q. (2020). Higher education expansion and inequality in educational opportunities in China. *Higher Education*.
- [28] Wurdinger, S., Newell, R., & Kim, E. S. (2020). Measuring life skills, hope, and academic growth at project-based learning schools. *Improving Schools*.
- [29] Xin, S. F., & Wang, Y. X. (2019). Longitudinal Historical Study on the Change of Achievement Motivation of Chinese College Students: 1999-2014. *Psychological Development and Education*, 35(03), 288-294.
- [30] Xu, G. M., & Wu, H. (2020). The Process and Characteristics of the Massification of Higher Education in China. *Higher Education Development and Evaluation*, 36(06), 1-14.
- [31] Yang, X. L., Wang, Y., & Chen, F. (2020). Current Situation and Improvement Strategies of academic satisfaction of Students in S Normal University. *Education and Examination*, (04), 72-79.
- [32] Zhang, W. M. (2023). Applying Attribution Theory of Success and Failure to Motivate Students' Achievement Motivation. *Contemporary Educational Practice and Teaching Research*, 1-4.
- [33] Zhang, Y. Q., & Jiang, Y. M. (2022). Mass Higher Education with Ultra-large Scale: Historical Background, Realistic Challenges and Path Selection. *Higher Education Research*, 43(08), 1-28.
- [34] Zhao, Q., Wang, J. L., & Liu, S. H. (2021). A new type of remedial course for improving university students' academic satisfaction and achievement. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*.
- [35] Zheng, B. L., & Wang, X. F. (2019). Striding into Popularization: Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects of Chinese Higher Education. *China Higher Education Research*, (08), 7-13.
- [36] Zhou, C. (2021). The Chinese Path of Higher Education Popularization and Its Quality Issues. *Modern University Education*, 37(04), 1-7.
- [37] Zhu, C. S. (2019). Research on Students' Satisfaction and Professional Satisfaction in Colleges and Universities. *Reading and Writing (Educational Teaching Journal)*, 16(03), 35-36.