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# Is the educational process satisfactory? The perspective of students in the Slovak Republic

Czy proces kształcenia jest satysfakcjonujący?
Obraz z perspektywy studentów Republiki Słowackiej

**Słowa kluczowe:** satysfakcja z kształcenia, kształcenie akademickie, wybór, ocena.

**Streszczenie:** Badanie satysfakcji studentów jest istotnym narzędziem, które pozwala na ocenę jakości usług edukacyjnych świadczonych przez instytucje akademickie. Zrozumienie opinii studentów na temat różnych aspektów ich doświadczenia edukacyjnego może prowadzić do lepszego dostosowania oferty edukacyjnej do ich potrzeb i oczekiwań.

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie wyników badań dotyczących odczuwania satysfakcji z kształcenia studentów z obszaru Republiki Słowackiej. Zaprezentowane tutaj dane są częścią badań prowadzonych od listopada 2023 roku do kwietnia 2024 roku na terenie Polski, Republiki Czeskiej oraz Republiki Słowackiej. Z powodu znaczących różnic w liczebności respondentów ze Słowacji podane dane nie zostały uwzględnione w poprzednich analizach i są prezentowane niezależnie. Badania przeprowadzone zostały metodą sondażu diagnostycznego z wykorzystaniem techniki kwestionariuszowej oraz narzędzia w formie kwestionariusza ankiety online. Wśród respondentów słowackich znalazły się 43 osoby.

W toku analiz wykazano, iż większość studentów deklarowała odczuwanie satysfakcji z obranej ścieżki kształcenia na wyższym niż średni poziomie. W publikacji zaprezentowano ponadto dane dotyczące powodu podjęcia kształcenia akademickiego oraz powodu wyboru konkretnej uczelni.

**Key words:** satisfaction with education, academic education, choice, evaluation.

**Abstract:** The student satisfaction survey is an important tool to assess the quality of educational services provided by academic institutions. Understanding students' opinions on different aspects of their educational experience can lead to better tailoring of educational provision to their needs and expectations.

The aim of this article is to show the results of a study on the perceived satisfaction with education of students from the area of the Slovak Republic. The data shown here are part of

research conducted from November 2023 to April 2024 in Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. Due to significant differences in the number of respondents from Slovakia, the data presented here were not included in previous analyses and are presented independently. The research was conducted using a diagnostic survey method, with a questionnaire technique and an online survey questionnaire tool. There were 43 Slovak respondents.

The analyses showed that the majority of students declared a feeling of satisfaction with their chosen educational path at a higher than average level. In addition, the publication presents data on the reason for undertaking academic education and the reason for choosing a particular educational unit.

## Introduction

According to Eurostat data, published on 13 June 2024, there is a decline in people with tertiary education aged 25-34 in Slovakia. The figure was 39.5 per cent in 2021 and 39.1 per cent in 2022. It should be noted that the result is below the average for the European Union, which was 41.4% in 2021 while an increase to 42% was recorded in 2022 (Eurostat, 2024).

It should be noted that Slovakia is taking concrete steps to support higher education. According to the European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Slovakia is implementing an ambitious programme of reforms to improve the quality of higher education and research. A key element of this effort is the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) programme, which allocates €159 million to support Slovak academic institutions. A new approach to the accreditation of university programmes was introduced in 2022, a significant step towards raising educational standards.

In addition, a call for proposals has been launched in 2023 under the RRP, with €72 million available to strengthen cooperation between universities. The funds are earmarked for the development of joint study programmes, the integration of library and IT systems, and the development of research and innovation capacities. In July 2023, the Slovak government published eight calls for proposals with a total value of €227 million, targeting universities, research institutions and innovative companies, with the intention of supporting research projects and investments in new technologies. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS) has launched a call for the modernisation of university infrastructure, including dormitories, with a budget of €53 million, which is open until December 2023. Within the ESF+ (European Social Fund Plus) Implementation Programme 2021-2027, support for higher education through the provision of advisory services and other forms of support is also envisaged. These initiatives demonstrate Slovakia's commitment to developing the higher education sector and strengthening its role in research and innovation (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2023).

Referring to student satisfaction, it appears that global efforts to support higher education are having a positive effect. The 'Global Student Satisfaction Awards 2023' study conducted by Studyportals, Unibuddy and the British Council IELTS showed that satisfaction perceived by students is increasing by 3.70 per cent compared to the 2021 dock. The study covered students from 126 countries, including Poland and Slovakia. They showed that the global satisfaction level was 4.21 on a 5-point scale. It can therefore be concluded that satisfaction is at a high level. It should be noted that an increase in overall satisfaction was also recorded in Poland. In 2021, it was 4.09, while in 2023 it was already 4.18, which allows us to note an increase of 0.09 (Studyportals, 2023).

Interestingly, when these results are compared with the younger age group the picture emerges differently. In the study 'PISA 2022 Result. Factsheets. Slovak Republic' observed a decline in overall life satisfaction among 15-year-old students in the Slovak Republic area. In 2022, 17% of students rated overall life satisfaction at a very low level from 0 to 4 on a scale of 0 to 10. Thus, it can be concluded that Slovak students are dissatisfied with their lives. An increase from 2018, in which the percentage of dissatisfied students was 15%, was also shown (OECD, 2022).

It should be noted that the issue of satisfaction with education presented in this study is understood as a component of general satisfaction, consisting of specific determinants. Satisfaction with the chosen educational path is mainly understood as a feeling of pleasure associated with participation in the process of academic education. Based on a review of the literature, its components include the following factors: a sense of purposefulness of education, loyalty to the choice, a vision of future opportunities, a sense of satisfaction of one's aspirations and a declarative feeling of satisfaction with the choice made (Juczyński, 2012, p. 128; Chodkowski, 2021, p. 159; Frisch, 2006, p. 5; Hall, 2022; Douglas, McClelland, Davis, 2008 p. 31; Finogenov, 2013, p. 346; Zalewska, 2003, p. 30; Pujer, 2017, pp. 17-18; Laguna, 2012, p. 165; Bubble, 2000, p. 329; Wolowska, 2013; p. 121; Springer, 2018, p. 48; Plewka, 2016, p. 66).

## Methodology and methods

This study is based on research conducted from November 2023 to April 2024 in Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. A total of 399 respondents responded, but due to significant differences in group sizes, data from the Slovak Republic was not included in the analyses proper. This is because the respondents from this country included 43 people. Therefore, the part of the research presented in this article concerns only the presentation of data obtained from Slovak students.

The subject of the presented research was the phenomenon of satisfaction with the chosen educational path among students. The aim was to find out the declarative level of satisfaction with the chosen educational path.

To structure the research questions, the following problems were identified for analysis:
- How is the phenomenon of satisfaction with the educational path taken shaping up among students?
- What variables are related to pursuing higher education as perceived by students?
- What variables are related to students' choice of a particular educational unit?

Given the diagnostic nature of the research being carried out, the formulation of research hypotheses was abandoned.

In order to answer the presented issues of interest to the researchers, a study was carried out using a diagnostic survey method, a survey technique and an online survey questionnaire tool. Data collection in the indicated area (Slovak Republic) took place from February 2024 to May 2024. 43 respondents from the University of Prešov took part in the research.

The tool used to obtain the information was an adaptation of the author's questionnaire investigating satisfaction with the educational path taken. The questionnaire consisted of seven closed questions referring to specific dimensions of satisfaction with education and two open questions, through which answers were sought to issues related to the reason for undertaking higher education and the reason for choosing a specific educational unit. The developed questionnaire was an adaptation of the Polish tool, which, with regard to the closed questions, was subjected to reliability analysis. The α-Cronbach coefficient of the Polish tool was 0.90, which may indicate a very good reliability of the test (George, Mallery, 2016, p. 240). The possibility of answering the closed questions was contained on a 7-point scale. The lowest possible score was therefore 7, while the highest score was 49.

## Findings

### Characteristics of the study group

A total of 43 respondents took part in the survey, a significant proportion of whom were women, accounting for 95.35%, while men accounted for 4.65%. For this reason, it was decided to carry out analyses excluding the demographic variable of age. It should be mentioned that such a significant disproportion may be related to the characteristics of the field of study, as it mostly concerned pedagogy. This may indicate that female students predominate among pedagogical faculties.

The age of the respondents also varied, as presented in the form of the table below relating the percentage of respondents by age.

The wide age range, on the other hand, may have been the result of surveying people who study in different forms. Indeed, respondents studying full-time represented 58.14%, while part-time students accounted for 32.56%. Among the

respondents, there were also students using the combined form; they accounted for 9.30%.

Table 1. Percentage of respondents by age (N = 43)

| Age | Percentage share |
|---|---|
| 20 | 20.93% |
| 21 | 23.25% |
| 22 | 11.62% |
| 23 | 4.65% |
| 24 | 2.33% |
| 26 | 2.33% |
| 30 | 2.33% |
| 33 | 2.33% |
| 36 | 4.65% |
| 40 | 4.65% |
| 41 | 4.65% |
| 43 | 6.97% |
| 44 | 4.65% |
| 46 | 2.33% |
| 47 | 2.33% |

Source: own research.

With regard to the respondents' education itself, the majority of them had secondary education – 60.46%. First degree education was declared by 11.63% of the respondents, second degree education by 25.58% and third degree education by 2.33%.

The largest proportion of respondents resided in rural areas – 60.46%, a smaller proportion resided in a city of up to 100,000 inhabitants – 32.56%, while the smallest number of respondents resided in a city of more than 100,000 inhabitants – 6.98%.

## Satisfaction with the chosen training path

In order to analyse the collected data, the Jamovi programme was used. The statistics of the descriptive characteristics are as follows, shown below in Table 2.

Based on the above data, it can be observed that satisfaction with the chosen educational pathway is at a higher than average level among students from the Slovak Republic. The standard deviation of 7.11 allows us to assume that, despite some variability, most scores are close to the average. The overall range of scores (from 19 to 49), on the other hand, indicates the students' varied experiences of their education. It should be noted, however, that the lowest possible score of 7 did not occur in the study group.

**Table 2. Characteristics of descriptive statistics (N = 43)**

|  | Satisfaction with education |
|---|---|
|  | 43 |
| Average | 34.9 |
| Median | 35.0 |
| Standard deviation | 7.11 |
| Minimum | 19 |
| Maximum | 49 |

Source: own research.

In order to obtain in-depth information on specific aspects of satisfaction with the chosen educational path among students, it was decided to analyse the distribution of respondents' answers to specific questions. Each question included an option to answer on a scale from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). These related to the following aspects:
- Question one – comparing the status quo with your own vision of academic education,
- Question two – the sense of purpose of academic education,
- Question three – loyalty to the choice and declaration to make the same choice of education path again,
- Question four – the declarative sense of satisfaction in relation to academic education as a whole,
- Question five – a declarative sense of satisfaction with the choice of a particular educational pathway,
- Question six – a sense of satisfaction of one's own aspirations,
- Question seven – declarative assessment of educational conditions.

Among the respondents' answers, the highest averages (5.49) were obtained for questions two and five, which referred to the sense of purposefulness of education and the declarative sense of satisfaction with the choice of a particular educational pathway. A slightly lower average (5.32) was obtained by question four, which referred to the declarative sense of satisfaction in relation to the overall academic education. This was followed by the mean of question three (5.05), which addressed loyalty to the choice and declarations of choosing the same educational path again. The next highest average (4.74) was for question one, seeking answers to the question of how the current state of affairs compares with one's own vision of academic education. In penultimate place in terms of the average obtained (4.49) was question six, which concerned the sense of satisfaction of one's own aspirations. The least satisfactory aspect for students was the declarative assessment of the conditions of education in question seven, which had the lowest mean (4.35).

The results of the distribution of respondents' answers to specific questions are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents' answers to individual questions (N = 43)**

| Question number | Number of responses / Percentage | Very Strongly Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Very Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | n | 0 | 1 | 6 | 12 | 13 | 6 | 5 |
|  | % | 0% | 2.33% | 13.95% | 27.91% | 30.23% | 13.95% | 11.63% |
| 2 | n | 0 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 11 |
|  | % | 0% | 2.33% | 4.65% | 16.28% | 20.93% | 30.23% | 25.58% |
| 3 | n | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 15 |
|  | % | 4.65% | 9.31% | 9.31% | 13.95% | 13.95% | 13.95% | 34.88% |
| 4 | n | 1 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 16 | 7 |
|  | % | 2.33% | 0% | 4.65% | 18.60% | 20.93% | 37.21% | 16.28% |
| 5 | n | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 15 | 12 |
|  | % | 2.33% | 4.65% | 4.65% | 9.30% | 16.28% | 34.88% | 27.91% |
| 6 | n | 0 | 0 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 3 |
|  | % | 0% | 0% | 27.91% | 23.25% | 27.91% | 13.95% | 6.98% |
| 7 | n | 2 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 7 | 1 |
|  | % | 4.65% | 6.44% | 13.86% | 23.25% | 32.56% | 16.28% | 2.33% |

Source: own research.

The results suggest that the majority of respondents express positive opinions on the mentioned aspects of academic education, especially in the context of purposefulness of education and loyalty to the chosen educational pathway. However, in the context of certain factors, such as the satisfaction of aspirations and the evaluation of the learning environment, respondents show more varied responses, thus indicating that there may be areas for further analysis and potential improvement.

In the course of further analysis, it was decided to examine the correlation between satisfaction with education and demographic variables. The Shapiro-Wilk test yielded a value of 0.975, suggesting that the data are very close to a normal distribution. The p-value, on the other hand, was 0.474. This, in turn, suggests that there is no basis for rejecting the null hypothesis of normality of the distribution at a typical significance level (e.g. 0.05). This means that the data can be derived from a normal distribution. In view of this, the data were analysed using the r-Pearson correlation test, with $p < 0.05$ taken as the significance level. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Relationship between satisfaction with education and demographic variables (N = 43, p < 0.05)

| | Satisfaction with education |
|---|---|
| Place of residence | -0.003 |
| Form of study | 0.008 |
| Education | 0.032 |
| Age | -0.091 |

Source: own research.

Through the analyses, no correlation was found between satisfaction with education and demographic variables such as place of residence, form of study, education and age. This may mean that the declared level of satisfaction depends little on the above-mentioned factors. It may be that perceived satisfaction in the described area is to a greater extent dictated by personality factors.

## Reason for pursuing higher education

Through an open-ended question in the developed questionnaire, the study participants were asked about their reason for entering higher education. The data obtained were analysed and coded to form groups with a specific motive. It should be noted that due to the possibility of an elaborate form of expression, respondents' answers were often classified into more than one category.

The resulting categories are as follows:
- Interests, passion, vocation,
- Development of competencies, qualifications,
- Current job.

- Natural continuation of the educational path, obtaining higher education,
- Development of skills and knowledge,
- Family,
- Earning prospects.

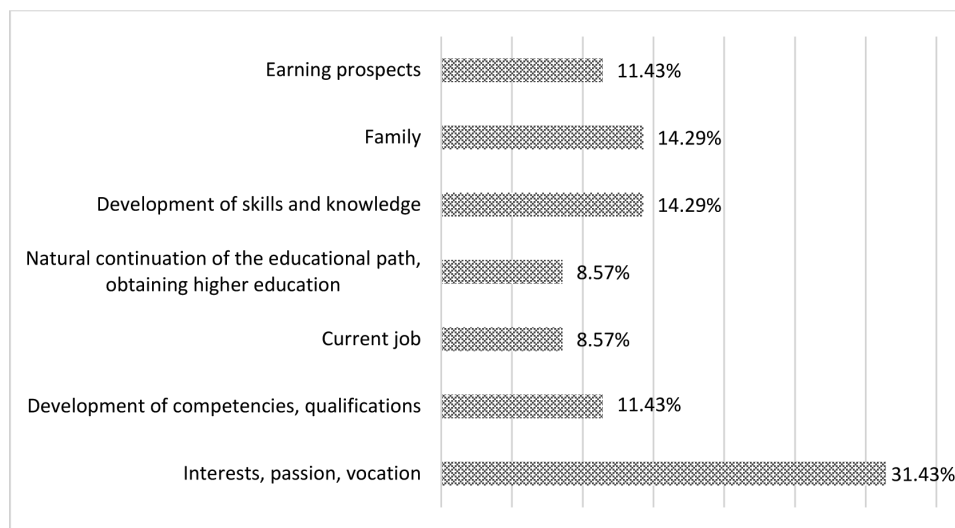The distribution of respondents' answers is illustrated in Chart 1 below.



**Chart 1. Reason for undertaking academic education (N = 43)**
Source: own research.

As can be seen from the data obtained, the largest proportion of students (31.43%) decided to enter higher education because of their own interests, passions or feelings of vocation. This in turn may indicate a greater tendency to be guided by internal factors when making the decision described. In order to better understand the motivations of the respondents, selected statements of the respondents that referred to the category „interest, passion, vocation" are presented below.

„*I often meet people with disabilities and I am very interested in how such people think, how they live and how they are educated*" (Female, 20 years).

"*Deep down I always wanted to be a teacher*" (Female, 21 years old).

"*My motivation is to work with people, to develop their potential. This is my main goal. Every person is different and unique. There are also many approaches that are supportive. From a young age I was fascinated and attracted to therapies that help people. Thanks to the special education I am currently studying, I am able to take more courses, studying therapeutic approaches that help people break down what is holding them back from expressing their true potential. It's my main goal for each person to do what they are meant to do and what they are exceptional at*" (Female, 43).

In last place among the respondents' indications were two groups: *current job* (8.57%) and *natural continuation of educational path, obtaining a higher education* (8.57%). The answers given in the above categories may give the impression that in this case the decision to study may be motivated by external factors. Below are selected responses from respondents.

Category current work:

"*I started working in a kindergarten* (Female, aged 26).

"*Increase knowledge, keep job*" (Female, aged 33).

Category natural continuation of educational pathway, obtaining higher education:

"*The decision to continue my studies at university was inevitable, and this was due to the fact that I had attended secondary school*" (Female, aged 20).

"*Essential for the future*" (Female, aged 33).

## Reason for choosing a particular education unit

As with the previous question, through the opportunity to answer an open-ended question, participants were also encouraged to share their reason for choosing a particular educational unit. The data collected was also analysed and coded to identify specific response categories. Again, due to the possibility of a multithreaded form of expression, respondents' answers could be classified into more than one group.
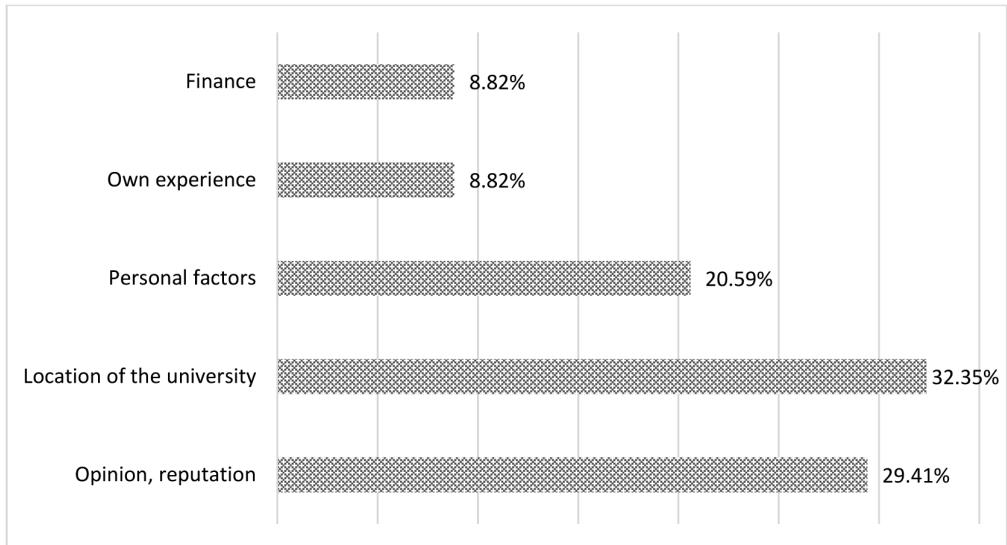


**Chart 2. Reason for undertaking academic education (N = 43)**
Source: own research.

The resulting categories are as follows:
- Opinion, reputation,
- Location of the university,
- Personal factors,
- Own experience,
- Finance.

The distribution of respondents' answers is illustrated in Chart 2 below.

Summarising the data obtained, the largest part of the respondents (32.35%) indicated the location of the educational unit as the reason for choosing a particular university. The result may indicate that students attach great importance to the comfort of living, accessibility and practical aspects related to the place of study, as illustrated by the following statements of the respondents.

"*The university I study at is located in the city where I work and live*" (Female, aged 47).

"*Closest to home*" (Female, aged 22).

"*In Slovakia we have few universities with a special pedagogy major, at least I think so. I had a choice between Prešov and Bratislava. Since Prešov is closer to where I live, I chose the University of Prešov*" (Female, age 21).

The least frequent respondents indicated factors such as *finances* (8.82%) and *their own experience* (8.82%). In relation to the categories indicated, they commented as follows:

Finance category:

"*Employability and finance*" (Female, aged 23).

"*The university was inexpensive, close by – you didn't have to spend extra money to commute to university and it was a time saver*" (Female, aged 40).

Own experience category:

"*After graduating from high school, I studied at this university as a full-time student. I interrupted my studies because of work. After 8 years, I was employed in a kindergarten and I know I need an education to progress. I knew this university, so I decided to continue my studies as a part-time student*" (Female, aged 26).

"*I have already studied there, I know the department*" (Female, aged 36).

## Final conclusions

This article presents research on satisfaction with the chosen educational path among students in the Slovak Republic. The analyses revealed that students rate satisfaction at a higher than average level, which may suggest that academic institutions in the Slovak Republic are responding effectively to students' educational needs.

In addition, the results indicate varying levels of satisfaction in relation to different aspects of education, which may suggest that some areas probably require further analysis and potential improvement, particularly in terms of educational conditions. As one of the most satisfying factors, respondents indicate the desirability of academic education, which may indicate well-defined educational goals and their compatibility with students' expectations. This may also confirm the reason for undertaking academic education. Indeed, students showed that they most often undertake their studies because of their own interests, passions or vocation.

The location of the university is one of the most important factors influencing respondents' choice of a particular educational unit. This may be due, for example, to the cost of living, familiarity with the area, access to local resources or employment opportunities. It may be that students who choose universities close to where they live feel more comfortable and secure because of their familiarity with the location. It is also likely that they may choose educational units in remote regions, which may be attractive to them if only because of the labour market conditions there. However, in order to accurately answer the above question, the research presented needs to be deepened.

In conclusion, the research presented in this article can provide information that has the potential to assist academic institutions to further improve their educational offerings to better meet the needs and expectations of students. Continued research in the area indicated may furthermore contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of academic education.

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