

## RESEARCH ON THE CZECH STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH ONGOING STUDIES

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**Abstract:** Studying educational satisfaction is a crucial component in understanding the current state of affairs and forecasting future actions. The satisfaction experienced by students can influence their motivation to achieve educational and career goals. This article presents the results of a study on the level of satisfaction with education among students in the Czech Republic, conducted from November 2023 to April 2024. The study explored students' satisfaction with their education, the reasons for pursuing higher education, and the motives for choosing specific educational institutions. A total of 154 respondents participated in the study, utilizing diagnostic survey methods, questionnaire techniques, and an interview survey. The analysis of the results indicated that many of students reported a satisfaction level higher than average.

**Keywords:** satisfaction with education, students, education system, education, educational path, academic education

### 1 The State of Higher Education in the Czech Republic

Based on the data released by the Czech Bureau of Statistics, the Czech Republic's population exceeds 10.6 million. Among these inhabitants, 1.3 million individuals have attained higher education degrees. Statistical surveys reveal a significant rise in the number of individuals with higher education in the Czech Republic, showing an increase of nearly 750,000 people. Additionally, annual reports from the Ministry of Education indicate that this figure represents an approximate 134% growth compared to two decades ago. The number of college students in the population has increased. At that same time, during that 20-year period the number of persons who have graduated from the kind of secondary school that does not offer a school-leaving examination has declined by 125 000. As of today, the ministry reports there are 2.2 million such students. It also has to be said that the number of persons successfully passing the secondary school-leaving examination has grown to 505 000 inhabitants. Overall, therefore, 2.1 million people have successfully passed a school-leaving examination. According to ISCED and the Czech education system, college education is the third (or tertiary) level of education provided by academic institutions. It therefore represents the highest degree after which no further study formally exists.

In comparison to other European countries, the Czech Republic continues to be one of the countries that expends the smallest proportion of its financial capacities on education, its structures and its systems. The issue of preventing academic failure in higher education, which has been a focus of our research in recent years, remains underexplored in the Czech Republic. This topic has not garnered sufficient attention within the tertiary education system nor across various research-oriented and academic platforms established in the country. And similar problems are written in the publication by the authors D. Kizeková and J. Žolnová (2021). The regularly performed collection of educational data points that are processed through the relevant statistical indicators, including the ongoing monitoring of demographic data and its subsequent presentation, cannot sufficiently meet the definition of the epistemologically required knowledge about the essence of the problem as a whole. The paradigm of sociological research, in which answers are found to questions about the existence, extent and development of societal phenomena, requires that processes define exact standards for the implementation of extensive empirical objectives that can apply across the board. The findings of partial surveys are just able to serve as a framework orientation. They

cannot be considered holistic knowledge of the problem exactly because they lack the above-mentioned standards.

### 2 Methodology and Methods

The presented research is a segment of a broader study on the phenomenon of satisfaction with education conducted in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia. The entire research took place from November 2023 to May 2024. The section below focuses exclusively on students pursuing higher education in the Czech Republic.

The subject of this research was the phenomenon of satisfaction with education among students. The aim was to understand the declared level of satisfaction with education among students.

To systematize the issues of interest to researchers, the following research problems were defined:

1. How is the phenomenon of satisfaction with education among students shaped?
2. What other variables (demographic) are related to the declared level of satisfaction with education among students?

Due to the diagnostic nature of the research, no research hypotheses were formulated. To answer the questions of interest to researchers, a survey was conducted using an online questionnaire. Data collection took place from February 2024 to May 2024. The study included students from the following universities: Silesian University in Opava, University of Ostrava, and Ambis University in Prague.

The adopted method was a diagnostic survey, which is an appropriate method when researchers are interested in the attitudes, interests, and motives of respondents (Łobocki, 2003). The survey technique was used, allowing, among other things, to minimize the researcher's influence on the responses given by the respondents and fostering a sense of anonymity (Maszke, 2008).

The tool used in the research was an original questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 7 closed-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were constructed using a 7-point scale. The highest possible score was 49, and the lowest was 7. The open-ended questions concerned the general motive for undertaking studies and the motive for choosing a specific university. Regarding the closed-ended questions, the tool was subjected to reliability analysis. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.84, indicating good test reliability (George, Mallery, 2016).

The inspiration for this questionnaire was the SWLS tool developed by E. Diener, R. A. Emmons, R. J. Larsen, and S. Griffin in the adaptation by Zygfryd Juczyński. However, it is essential to note the fundamental differences, as SWLS consists of 5 statements and relates to the overall level of life satisfaction. The tool developed by the authors of this publication relates only to satisfaction with education.

According to this research, satisfaction with education is understood as the feeling of pleasure associated with participating in the academic education process. Education serves as a pivotal element of development, significantly impacting the future trajectories of individuals (Kukla, 2020). A comprehensive literature review has delineated the components of this concept. Therefore, satisfaction with education encompasses: a sense of the purposefulness of education, loyalty to the chosen educational path, a vision of future opportunities, a sense of fulfilment of personal aspirations, and a declarative sense of satisfaction with the chosen educational path (Juczyński, 2012; Chodkowski, 2021; Frish, 2006; Hall, 2022; Douglas, McClelland, Davis, 2008; Finogenow, 2013; Zalewska, 2003; Pujer, 2017; Łaguna, 2012; Bańka, 2000; Wołowska, 2014; Springer, 2018; Plewka, 2016).

### 3 Research Results

#### 3.1 Characteristics of the Surveyed Group

The surveyed group of respondents was heterogeneous and diverse in terms of developmental periods. To further characterize the group of students surveyed, certain categories of demographic variables were distinguished, such as gender, age, place of residence, education, and type of study. The total number of respondents was 154.

When categorizing the respondents by gender, it was not possible to obtain evenly distributed groups. This may be due to the random selection of the sample or the general characteristics of the higher education institutions participating in the study. The surveyed group included 136 (88.31%) women and 18 (11.69%) men. Due to the strong unevenness of the groups, it was decided to exclude the demographic variable related to gender from further analysis. In the analyses themselves, gender was not distinguished as a specific category. However, it should be noted that the percentage of women was significantly higher.

The next grouping category was age. Due to the large variation in respondents based on this criterion, it was decided not to include age in the analyses. However, it can be mentioned that the youngest participants in the study were 18 years old, and the oldest were 60.

Regarding the place of residence, three groups of respondents were identified: those living in rural areas, those living in a city with up to 100,000 inhabitants, and those living in a city with over 100,000 inhabitants. Among the respondents living in rural areas, there were 66 people (42.86%). In the group of respondents living in a city with up to 100,000 inhabitants, there were 53 respondents (34.41%). In the last group living in a city with over 100,000 inhabitants, there were 35 people (22.73%).

Another demographic variable according to which the respondents were differentiated was education. In this area, four groups of respondents were identified. Among those with secondary education, there were 90 people (58.44%). The second largest group was those with a second-cycle higher education, which included 34 people (22.08%). A first-cycle higher education was declared by 25 people (16.23%). In the group of those with a third-cycle higher education, there were 5 people (3.25%). The last grouping variable was the type of study the respondents attended. In this category, three groups were distinguished. The group of full-time students included 76 people (49.35%). A combined form of study was declared by 66 respondents (42.86%). In the group of part-time students, there were 12 people (7.79%).

#### 3.2 The Phenomenon of Satisfaction with Education

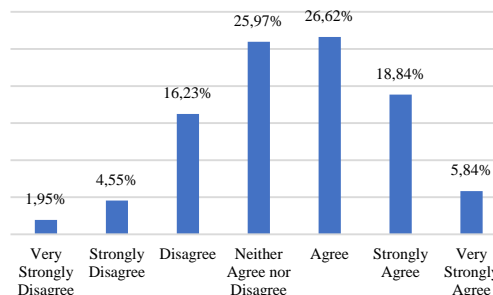
As mentioned in the previous section of the article, the number of respondents was 154. After conducting analyses using the Jamovi software, the descriptive characteristics are as follows, shown in Table 1.

The data indicate that students from the Czech Republic declare a satisfaction with education above the average level. To find out which specific categories highlighted by the researchers are particularly satisfying for students, an analysis of specific questionnaire questions was conducted. The maximum number of points possible to obtain for a specific question was 7. The first question concerned the category of comparing the current state with one's own vision of academic education. Among the obtained responses, the average was 4.51. The distribution of respondents' answers is presented in Figure 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics Characteristics (N=154)

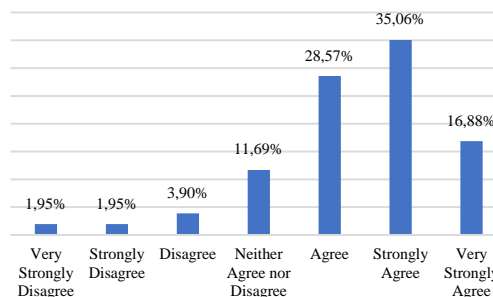
	Satisfaction with Education
N	154
Mean	33,6
Median	34,0
Standard Deviation	7,60
Minimum	14
Maksimum	49

Figure 1 Distribution of Responses to Question One (N=154)



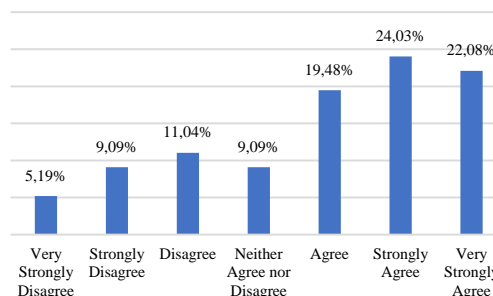
The second question related to the sense of purpose in academic education. For this question, the average of the obtained responses was 5.36. The graphical distribution of respondents' answers is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Distribution of Responses to Question Two (N=154)



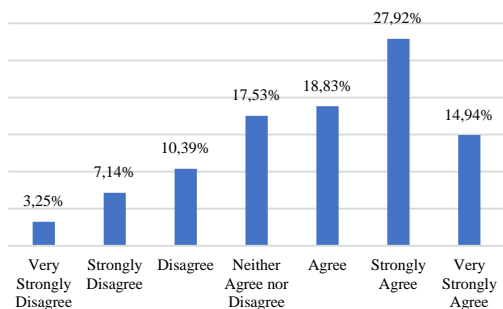
The third question related to loyalty to the chosen path and the declaration of making the same educational choice again. Among the obtained responses, the average was 4.89. The distribution of respondents' answers is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Distribution of Responses to Question Three (N=154)



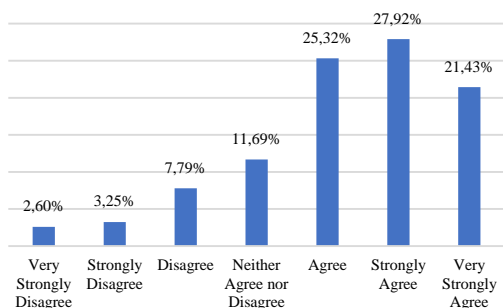
The fourth question related to the declared sense of satisfaction with the entire academic education. Among the obtained responses, the average was 4.85. The graphical description of the distribution of responses is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Distribution of Responses to Question Four (N=154)



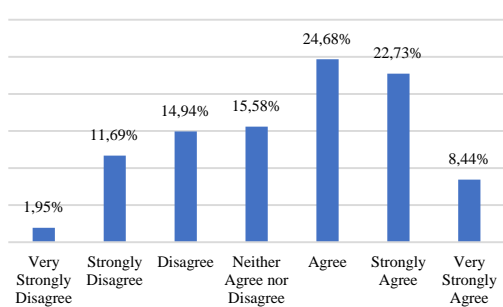
The fifth question related to the declared sense of satisfaction with the choice of a specific educational path. Among the obtained responses, the average was 5.23. The graphical representation of respondents' answers is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Distribution of Responses to Question Five (N=154)



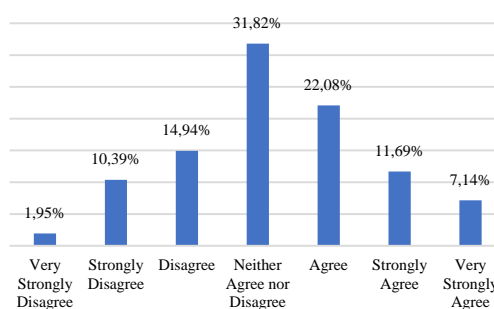
The sixth question related to the sense of fulfilling one's own aspirations. Among the obtained responses, the average was 4.51. The distribution of respondents' answers is presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Distribution of Responses to Question Six (N=154)



The seventh question related to the declared assessment of educational conditions. Among the obtained responses, the average was 4.25. The graphical distribution of respondents' answers is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Distribution of Responses to Question Seven (N=154)



As indicated by the above data, the most satisfying element highlighted in the questionnaire tool was the sense of purpose in education. This was encompassed in the second question, where both the average and total responses were the highest. The sense of purpose refers to the perception and achievement of one's own educational and career goals. It can be assumed that respondents may view academic education as a tool to achieve future goals and improve their professional lives. This is also confirmed by some respondents' statements, where they indicated that the motivation for undertaking studies was to gain or strengthen their professional position, the possibility of broad development, or enhancing their qualifications.

Regarding the lowest score, it was obtained in the question about the declared conditions of academic education. This may indicate that respondents have higher expectations concerning educational conditions than what is currently reflected in their experience.

To deepen this research, it was decided to conduct an analysis for correlations. The Jamovi software was used for statistical analyses. In the Shapiro-Wilk test, the p-value was 0.01, indicating the asymmetry of the distribution. Therefore, during the analyses, the Spearman's rank correlation test, a non-parametric equivalent of the Pearson correlation test, was used. The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$ . The results of the analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Relationship Between Satisfaction with Education and Demographic Variables of Czech Students (N=154;  $p < 0.05$ )

	Satisfaction with Education
Place of Residence	-0,11
Form of study	0,16
Education	0,14
Age	0,15

During the above analyses, no correlation was detected between satisfaction with education and demographic variables such as age, place of residence, form of study, or education. This may indicate that the feeling of satisfaction with education is influenced more by personality factors than by demographic variables.

### 3.3 Motivation for Undertaking Studies

The above research was enriched with open-ended questions relating both to the general motivation for pursuing higher education and the choice of a specific higher education institution. These questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to provide voluntary written responses. It should be noted that respondents could mention several aspects or choose not to respond at all. Consequently, the answers do not sum up to the total number of respondents.

Regarding the general motivation for pursuing higher education, certain thematic areas were identified during the analysis of the obtained material, which frequently appeared in the respondents' statements. The following categories were derived in this way:

- Obtaining higher education
- Enhancing qualifications
- Changing or obtaining a specific profession
- Acquiring or expanding knowledge
- Personal development
- Interests, vocation, and passion
- Social development
- Influence of external factors (peer pressure)

The most frequently declared category was the area related to personal interests, vocation, or passion, indicated by 48 people. It is therefore likely that the largest number of respondents pursued higher education precisely to develop these factors. Perhaps students who are aware of their interests decided to utilize their potential and develop it during their academic education. It should also be noted that respondents sometimes decide to realize their plans related to their interests after some time. This category appeared in respondents' statements in the following ways. Examples of responses in this category are as follows:

Woman, 26 years old: *"I would like to reach a point where I can dedicate myself to a field that is meaningful to me. I told myself, if not now, then when. That's why I am currently studying"*.

Woman, 38 years old: *"I have become interested in the social sphere, and at the same time, it connects to the field I have already studied"*.

Woman, 20 years old: *"To acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to solve social problems and provide support to people in need, stemming from my passion for helping others"*.

Man, 44 years old: *"This field has always interested me"*.

A slightly smaller group was the category related to personal development, indicated by 38 people. It can be assumed that respondents saw academic education as an opportunity for broad personal development. This category may be somewhat linked to interests. However, in the respondents' statements, there was a clear emphasis on general self-development. Examples of respondents' answers are presented below.

Man, 37 years old: *"A lot of time and a desire to change something in my current life, to learn something new"*.

Woman, 24 years old: *"My motivation was the desire to try something new, something that had intrigued me for a long time"*.

Woman, 42 years old: *"Self-fulfilment, expanding knowledge"*.

Man, 20 years old: *"A new and interesting chapter of life"*.

Next in order among the respondents' indications was the category related to acquiring and expanding knowledge, indicated by 26 people. This may mean that respondents expect the educational process to provide specific information that they consider useful. It should be emphasized that during their statements, respondents pointed to the expansion of both personal and professional knowledge. Examples of respondents' answers are as follows:

Woman, 50 years old: *"Learning new things, gaining new information that I will use in my work in social services"*.

Woman, 21 years old: *"I started my studies mainly to learn new things that will definitely be useful in the professional direction I want to pursue"*.

Woman, 43 years old: *"I started studying special education to learn more about the work at the place where I currently work and mainly to be able to stay in that position"*.

Next, students indicated the possibility of changing or obtaining a specific profession. Respondents also mentioned the specifics of the current times. They believe that higher education can help them develop their professional careers. By obtaining specific qualifications, they can find employment in legally regulated

professions. Below are examples of respondents' answers in this category.

Woman, 30 years old: *"Expanding job opportunities, the ability to perform a job according to my expectations"*.

Woman, 23 years old: *"The opportunity to do meaningful work"*.

Woman, 22 years old: *"My motivation is working with children and obtaining a higher education for employment purposes"*.

Among the further indications of the respondents, the category of enhancing qualifications was distinguished. It was indicated by 21 people. This category was often associated with situations where an already employed person received the opportunity to change positions. This may mean that new and sometimes unexpected opportunities in the course of their working lives often compel respondents to pursue education in a specific direction. Examples of respondents' answers in relation to this category are presented below.

Woman, 50 years old: *"I was promoted from the position of teaching assistant to the position of educator with the condition of completing my education"*.

Woman, 34 years old: *"To maintain my position as an educator"*.

Woman, 45 years old: *"I was approached by the management of the school where I teach to study the field of special education. I would not have thought of it myself; it was not the path I initially wanted to take"*.

The next category was obtaining higher education, indicated by 17 people. It should be mentioned that this often involved forward-thinking and pointing out the positive aspects of having higher education, most frequently in a professional context. This idea is illustrated by the following example responses from the respondents:

Woman, 23 years old: *"I believe that a university degree will enable me to find a quality job with good financial rewards in the future"*.

Woman, 20 years old: *"My motivation is indeed the degree, but mainly I wanted to learn more about this field, which will give me a broader range of options when it comes to choosing my subsequent employment"*.

Woman, 37 years old: *"I need a degree in this field to be able to do what I excel at and what fulfils me"*.

The least frequently indicated categories were "influence of external factors," mentioned by 4 people, and "social development," mentioned by one person. It can be assumed that respondents rarely pointed to peripheral factors, such as making acquaintances or the influence of their surroundings, in their statements. Examples of respondents' answers are presented below.

Woman, 24 years old: *"Family pressure"*.

Woman, 20 years old: *"Studying at a university is something I have wanted to achieve since a young age, and my parents have always encouraged me towards it, as both of them have degrees"*.

In summary, respondents indicated various motives for pursuing higher education. Most frequently, they expressed a desire to develop their own interests, the possibility of obtaining a degree, expanding their knowledge, or performing a specific profession. Often, respondents' statements included factors indicating internal motivation or personal beliefs that led them to undertake studies. It can be assumed that those who pursue academic education see it as a tool to help them achieve their own educational and professional goals.

### 3.4 Motivation for Choosing a Specific University

The second open-ended question in the online survey related to the reason for choosing a specific university. Similar to the first question, certain thematic areas were identified during the data analysis. These areas formed the following categories:

- Location
- Educational offer
- Opinions about the university, reputation
- Own positive experiences
- Economic considerations (cost of studies, cost of living in the city)

The most frequently indicated category was the educational offer of the institution, mentioned by 66 people. This may suggest that respondents often chose a specific university based on the available study programs. Examples of respondents' answers are shown below.

Woman, 33 years old: *"The opportunity to study special education at the master's level"*.

Man, 47 years old: *"An interesting and appealing field that will broaden my horizons"*.

Woman, 25 years old: *"There is a program here that intrigued me, and I couldn't find it elsewhere"*.

In second place, respondents indicated the category related to the convenient location of the university, mentioned by 38 people. This may suggest that respondents often consider logistical factors, such as transportation and general ease of access to the university. Examples of respondents' answers are presented below.

Woman, 45 years old: *"My choice was practical - I chose the university that was closest to where I live"*.

Woman, 22 years old: *"It is close to my home"*.

Woman, 47 years old: *"The best and quickest accessibility considering my place of residence"*.

In third place, respondents indicated the category related to good opinions about the university, mentioned by 35 people. This may suggest that the positive evaluation of the university by others motivated respondents to choose this institution. Examples of respondents' answers are shown below.

Woman, 46 years old: *"I chose to study here based on recommendations from acquaintances who also studied here"*.

Man, 44 years old: *"I thought the faculty had lecturers who were interested in sharing their experiences"*.

Man, 50 years old: *"My wife's previous experience with the university and the teaching style, which I enjoy very much"*.

Next, in fourth place, respondents indicated the category related to their own positive experiences with the university, mentioned by 13 people. Examples of respondents' answers in relation to this category are presented below.

Woman, 43 years old: *"I had already studied at OSU and felt close to both Ostrava and the Faculty of Education"*.

Woman, 36 years old: *"I had already studied there, so I knew the faculty"*.

Woman, 35 years old: *"I went to the same university where I completed my bachelor's degree; the familiar environment, system, and good experience were a certainty for me"*.

Finally, respondents indicated economic considerations (cost of studies, cost of living in the city), mentioned by 3 people. It should be noted that this category was often mentioned along

with others. Examples of respondents' answers are presented below.

Woman, 38 years old: *"Accessibility, previous experience, free of charge"*.

Woman, 48 years old: *"Proximity to my workplace and the associated lower financial costs"*.

Woman, 43 years old: *"Practical reasons - commuting distance, time and financial savings"*.

In summary, regarding the motivation for choosing a specific university, respondents most often cited the institution's educational offer as the main reason. The following factors were: location, reputation, own experiences, and economic considerations. This may indicate that when making a decision, students most frequently consider the university's offerings. This suggests a thoughtful and conscious choice, a step towards achieving their own goals.

### 4 Conclusions

In this study, the phenomenon of satisfaction with education was examined. In the surveyed group, the level of satisfaction with education was higher than average. No statistically significant differences were detected between satisfaction with education and demographic data. This might suggest that the feeling of satisfaction in this aspect is more influenced by individual differences.

A qualitative analysis of the questionnaire questions revealed that the most satisfying aspect for respondents is the sense of purpose in academic education. This category was rated the highest when analysing both the total and average responses. This may indicate that students largely perceive the realization of their educational and career plans positively. They might believe that academic education brings them closer to their goals. The lowest score, however, was indicated in the context of the declared conditions of academic education. The total and average in this area were the lowest. This may suggest that students have higher expectations for the conditions of education than what they currently experience.

The analysis of the open-ended questions showed that, in the context of the general motivation for undertaking academic education, respondents most often pointed to aspects related to the development of interests, passions, or personal calling. This may indicate that students, when deciding to pursue academic education, largely considered their own preferences. They might have a good understanding of themselves and wish to develop in the direction that interests them the most.

Regarding the question about the motivation for choosing a specific university, the main reason indicated was the educational offer of the institution. This result corresponds with the previous question. Students who are aware of their preferences might seek an institution that can provide them with development in their chosen field based on their interests.

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