SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES: PREDICTOR VARIABLES IN MOZAMBIQUE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

SATISFAÇÃO COM EXPERIÊNCIAS ACADÊMICAS: VARIÁVEIS PREDITORAS EM ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS DE MOÇAMBIQUE

SATISFACCIÓN COM LAS EXPERIENCIAS ACADÉMICAS: VARIABLES PREDICTORAS EN ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITARIOS DE MOZAMBIQUE

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ABSTRACT: This study analyzes the impact of personal and contextual variables on (in)satisfaction with academic experiences in students from Licungo University in Mozambique. The sample was formed by 711 students, being 472 (66.4%) male. A questionnaire containing items of students' social and academic description, as well as satisfaction with academic experiences was applied online. Based on hierarchical regression analysis, the students age, the performance variables (eg, level of participation in classes, intention to change course) and contextual variables (eg, leaving home to attend ES, occupation of the student) are significant predictors of (in)satisfaction with academic experiences. These results suggest the need to implement university strategies more focused on individual characteristics and in the academic context to improve the provision of services and students´ satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Higher education. University students. Academic satisfaction. Mozambique.

RESUMO: O presente estudo analisa o impacto das variáveis pessoais e do contexto na (in)satisfação com experiências acadêmicas em estudantes da Universidade Licungo em Moçambique. Participaram do estudo 711 estudantes, sendo 472 (66,4%) do sexo masculino. Foi aplicado, na modalidade online, um questionário contendo itens de descrição social e acadêmica dos estudantes e de avaliação de satisfação com as experiências acadêmicas. Com base no modelo de regressão hierárquica, a idade dos estudantes, as variáveis de rendimento (e.g., nível de participação nas aulas, intenção de mudança de curso) e as variáveis contextuais (e.g., mudança de residência para frequentar o ES, a ocupação do estudante) mostraram serem preditores significativos da (in)satisfação com experiências acadêmicas. Os resultados do presente estudo sugerem a necessidade de implementação de estratégias de

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gestão universitária mais focadas nas características individuais e do contexto dos estudantes, visando melhorar a prestação de serviços e a satisfação dos estudantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Ensino superior. Estudantes universitários. Satisfação acadêmica. Moçambique.*

RESUMEN: *Este articula analiza el impacto de variables personales y de contexto en la (in)satisfacción con las experiencias académicas por parte de estudiantes de la Universidad Licungo en Mozambique. En el estudio participaron 711 estudiantes, siendo 472 (66,4%) varones. Se aplicó online un cuestionario que contenía ítems de descripción social y académica de los estudiantes, así como de evaluación de la satisfacción con las experiencias académicas. Con base en el modelo de regresión jerárquica, la edad de los estudiantes, las variables de desempeño (e.g., nivel de participación en las clases, intención de cambiar de curso) y las variables contextuales (e.g., cambio de residencia para asistir al ES, ocupación del estudiante) se presentarán predictores significativos de la (in)satisfacción de los estudiantes con sus experiencias académicas. Los resultados de este estudio sugieren la necesidad de implementar estrategias de gestión universitaria más centradas en las características individuales y el contexto de los estudiantes, con el objetivo de mejorar la prestación de servicios y la satisfacción de los estudiantes.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Ensenanza superior. Estudiantes universitários. Satisfacción académica. Mozambique.*

Introduction

Higher education (HE) has recently gained greater social relevance in Mozambique, especially with the increase in demand by students and their families, with the need of opening higher education in private institutions (CAMPIRA; BULAQUE; ALMEIDA, 2021). Regardless of the nature of the institutions, the objectives of HE involves the individual and social development of students, as well as the technological and economic development of countries. For this, HE is expected to create and disseminate new knowledge, involving innovation and creativity, as well as the scientific, technical, human and cultural formation of its students (CAMPIRA; BULAQUE; ALMEIDA, 2021; WEERASINGHE; LALITHA; FERNANDO, 2017). In this sense, several reforms and monitoring programs have been developed to guarantee the quality of higher education and the quality of formation of its graduates, with research on student satisfaction gaining relevance here as one of the indicators of the quality of programs, processes, and conditions and services of higher education institutions (HEIs).

The study on satisfaction is not recent, being associated with the socioeconomic concern to ensure quality in organizations, offering products and services that satisfy

customers (BORTOLOTTI *et al.,* 2012; DUTRA; DE MATTOS, 2020; FORTES *et al.,* 2011; SILVA, 2017; SILVEIRA; DIAS, 2019; WEERASINGHE; LALITHA; FERNANDO, 2017; WEERASINGHE; LALITHA; FERNANDO, 2017).

This theme in the educational context is relatively recent, and quality assessment systems usually integrate the satisfaction of beneficiaries (students). Taking a deeper look, the monitoring of the quality of educational services is not only done by institutional managers and teachers, but also considers student satisfaction (RAZINKINA *et al.*, 2018). Although the study of academic satisfaction in the educational context is important, the centrality of studies has turned to Higher Education (e.g., ALBUQUERQUE *et al.*, 2019; ALCÂNTARA *et al.*, 2012; ALMEIDA *et al.*, 2020; ASSIS; MOURA; ALVES, 2020), given the demands of this educational context and the labor market. In this sense, authors in this area frequently seek to understand how the expectations, interests and experiences of students are considered and how their exposure to the experiences of their educational experience influence their satisfaction, involvement and academic success (ALBUQUERQUE; GAMA; BRAGA; VALVERDE; JÚNIOR; COSTA; MILHOMEM; MELO, 2019; ALMEIDA, 2007; ASSIS; MOURA; ALVES, 2020; BRASIL, 2014; LIZOTE *et al.,* 2014).

Focusing on higher education, the multiplicity of HEIs and the greater diversity of the student population make these institutions competitive, taking on the challenge of responding to the multiplicity of aspirations and interests of students. On the other hand, this answer becomes more complex given the heterogeneity of students in terms of age, social origins, expectations and life projects (CAMPIRA; BULAQUE; ALMEIDA, 2021; OSTI *et al.*, 2020). At this point, the way institutions organize themselves to respond to this diversity, namely in terms of services and institutional climate, is fundamental for the attraction, retention and academic success of students (DUTRA; DE MATTOS, 2020; APPUHAMILAGE; TORII, 2019), necessarily assuming student satisfaction as one of the quality indicators of the HEIs.

In an analysis of the determinants of student academic satisfaction, the investigation suggests the combination of personal variables (more linked to the student, such as their motivation, interest, expectations, age, gender or ethnicity), and contextual variables (which include, for example, experience prior to university life, university experience, family, economic conditions) and institutional variables (for example, quality of facilities, number and qualification of professors, organization of courses and services), all contributing to explain academic success and satisfaction (ALBUQUERQUE *et al.*, 2019; ALMEIDA, 2007;

CAMPIRA; BULAQUE; ALMEIDA, 2021; OSMAN; SAPUTRA; SAHA, 2017; TANDILASHVILI, 2019).

The investigation shows that the quality of services and formative programs impact the academic satisfaction of students (DUTRA; MATTOS, 2020). On the other hand, Osti *et al.* (2020) highlight the quality of interactions between professor-students, the didactic competence of the professors and the perception of the practical application of the knowledge learned. In another study, it was also found that the interactivity of teachers, support material, the theme of the course, adequate tuition fees and the university's connection with employers influence student satisfaction (CARVALHO, 2009), as well as the attitude of teachers and their qualification as factors emerging from satisfaction, with extra-class factors being less relevant (ALCÂNTARA *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, Montana (2019) found that corporate image, perceived value, perceived quality and social responsibility are determinants of student satisfaction.

One of the lines of research relates students' academic satisfaction with their performance, and this relationship may be reciprocal (ANTIČEVIĆ *et al.*, 2018; DHAQANE; AFRAH, 2016; KING, 2013; SNOPCE; ALIJA, 2018). The access grade, the choice of the course, the academic goals, the students' self-concept and motivation, but also the academic satisfaction of the students, are related to the academic performance, permanence and completion of courses by students (DHAQANE; AFRAH, 2016; FAGUNDES; LUCE; ESPINAR, 2014). On the other hand, in the Mozambican context, the type of HEI is a determining factor in student satisfaction and academic performance, with satisfaction associated with the academic performance of students (NHANTUMBO; CARREÑO; BRUCE-NHANTUMBO, 2018). Satisfaction with formation seems to play a mediating role between self-efficacy in formation and students' academic performance (RIBEIRO, 2019). Furthermore, in a study carried out at the Catholic University of Mozambique, it was found that the quality of teaching and the concern with salary improvement and professional development appeared associated with the academic satisfaction of students (MALEQUETA; SANTOS; PERY, 2017).

Thus, with this study we intend to analyze the influence of personal and context variables on satisfaction with academic experiences among university students in Mozambique.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 711 students participated in this study, 472 (66.4%) of whom were male and 239 (33.6%) were female. At the time of evaluation, the students' ages ranged from 17 to 59 years ($M = 28.51$; $SD = 7.43$), distributed in different colleges of the Licungo University (College of Education, 290; College of Arts and Humanities, 152; and College of Science and Technology, 269). As for age groups, 294 (41.5%) were aged up to 25 years and 415 students (58.5%) were aged over 25 years. Regarding the places where they attended higher education courses, 433 (60.9%) were students at the Licungo-Beira University and 278 (39.1%) attended different courses at the Licungo-Quelimane University. Regarding occupations, 344 (48.4%) reported having some occupation in addition to studying and the rest are full-time students. Of the participants, the majority 412 (57.9%) have a history of failure at previous school levels (primary and/or secondary education).

Instruments

It was applied, in the online modality, a questionnaire containing questions of social and academic description of the students and the items of evaluation of satisfaction with the academic experiences. The satisfaction questionnaire consists of 26 items distributed in four dimensions, namely: the Course, Learning and Performance dimension (8 items; alpha=.87; e.g., my level of participation in classes), the Infrastructure and Services dimension (8 items; alpha=.88; e.g., quality of service by university employees); the Financial Resources dimension (5 items; alpha=.85; e.g., the sufficiency of my economic resources for daily expenses); and, finally, the Interpersonal Relationship dimension (5 items; alpha=.85; e.g., the number of friends I have in my course).

Procedures

The questionnaire was applied online. The completion of the questionnaire lasted an average of 10 minutes. Initially, the objectives of the study were clarified to the students and their voluntary participation was requested, ensuring the confidentiality of the information collected and there being a concern to inform that participation in the study did not affect academic results. The collection of results from the students lasted three weeks. In the analysis of the results, we used the SPSS/IBM statistical package, version 20.0, with the

descriptive analysis, the Pearson product x moment correlation and the hierarchical regression model.

Results

We present below the results of the present research, starting with the descriptive analysis of the variables, then the results of the correlational study between satisfaction with academic experiences and the personal, contextual and performance variables of university students and, finally, the results of hierarchical regression. Table 1 presents the elements of descriptive statistics for the variables under analysis.

Table 1 – Descriptive statistics of contextual variables and student achievement

Variable		f	%			
1st choice course	Yes	631	88.7			
	No	80	11.3			
Preference for the course	Yes	623	87.6			
	No	88	12.4			
Change of residence	Yes	192	27			
	No	519	73			
Participation in classes	Very low	23	3.2			
	Low	22	3.1			
	Moderate	304	42.8			
	High	247	34.7			
	Very High	115	16.2			
Hours of study	Yes	639	89.9			
	No	72	10.1			
Course change	Yes	115	21.8			
	No	556	78.2			
Withdrawal from the course	Yes	149	21			
	No	562	79			
	Min.	Max.	M.	*SD*	Asymmetry	Curtosi
Average access in HE	2.00	17.00	10.28	2.45	.25	.02
Number of missed classes	.00	16.00	.73	1.82	.34	24.26
Age	17	59	28.50	7.43	97	.93

Source: Devised by the authors

Observing the results in Table 1, the average access of students in HE ranged between 2 and 17 values, being relatively weak (M = 10.28, SD = 2.45). The number of absences from classes ranged between 0 and 17 (M = .73, SD = 1.82). In this study, most students attended a 1st option course, 631 (88.7%) or their preferred course, 623 (87.6%). The results also show that few students changed residence to attend HE, 192 (27%). Overall, student participation in classes was moderate, 304 (42.8%), and most students claimed to have individual study hours, 639 (89.9%). Additionally, most students did not plan to change their course, 556 (78.2%), and not even giving up, 562 (79%).

Table 2 shows the correlations between the levels of student satisfaction with their academic experiences and personal, contextual and academic performance variables.

Table 2 – Correlations between satisfaction with academic experiences and personal, contextual and student performance variables

Variables	Course, Learning and Performance	Infrastructure and Services	Financial resources	Social	Overall satisfaction
Age	.126**	-.001	.091*	.056	.090*
1st choice course	-.124**	-.088*	-.006	-.019	-.089*
Preference for the course	-.113**	-.205***	-.150***	-.148***	-.201***
Average access	.074	.011	-.013	.030	.038
Change residence	.083*	.146***	.249***	.102**	.184***
Failure history	-.053	-.039	-.107**	-.064	-.082*
Student occupation	-.224***	.284***	.315***	.103**	.132***
Number of missed classes	-.133***	-.055	.022	-.090*	-.089*
Level of participation in classes	.181***	.125**	.108**	.159***	.189***
Hours of study	.036	.071	.020	.065	.063
Intention to change course	.245***	.058	-.073	.072	.117**
Intention to drop out of the course	.237***	.237***	.193***	.211***	.290***
Attended course	-.318**	.06	.163**	.06	-.078*

Source: Devised by the authors

The results in Table 2 show that, in relation to personal variables, there is a weak association only with the variable age of students in the dimensions of course, learning and performance, in the dimension of financial resources and in the global measure of satisfaction with academic experiences. that in the latter, the correlation is quite weak. Regarding the performance variables, participation in classes and the intention to quit appear more correlated in all dimensions of the satisfaction questionnaire with academic experiences and the overall measure. Furthermore, the number of absences from classes and the intention to change courses appear to be correlated with the course dimension, learning and performance,

lowering this correlation with the social or interpersonal dimension and the overall measure of academic satisfaction. There was no correlation with statistical significance taking the variable hours of study dedicated by the student outside of the classes taught at the college.

Regarding contextual variables, statistically significant correlations appear in the course preference, change of residence to attend higher education and student occupation, with the correlations in this last variable tending to be moderate. Also in these contextual variables, negative but significant correlations also arise, with the variable of choice of the course as the first option in the dimensions of course, learning and performance, in the dimension of infrastructure and university services and in the global measure of academic satisfaction. The history of failure prior to entering the university has a weak and negative correlation with the dimension of financial resources and the overall measure. Finally, the average access to higher education is not correlated with the dimensions of the satisfaction questionnaire with academic experiences.

In a second moment of this study, we analyzed the predictors of academic satisfaction using the hierarchical regression model. In each prediction model, the variables that were associated with the dimensions of academic satisfaction were inserted. In the first prediction block, the individual variable age was inserted; in the second block, the performance variables were included, namely the number of missed classes last week, the level of participation in classes, the intention to change courses, as well as the intention to drop out of the course; and in the third block, contextual variables were included, namely, the 1st choice course, the preference for the course they are attending, the change of residence to attend the HE, the type or nature of the course attended and the student's occupation.

In this analysis, student age was found to be a statistically significant predictor of academic satisfaction, β=.09, p=.017, 95% [.04, .38], explaining 1% of the variance. In the second model, the level of participation in classes and the intention to change the course were shown to be statistically significant predictors of academic satisfaction, β=.16, p<.001, 95% [1.72, 4.41]; β=.27, p=<.001, [8.41, 14.34], explaining the 12% of variance. The remaining variables did not emerge as significant predictors. In the third model, the preference for the course, the change of residence to attend higher education, the course they are taking and the student's occupation emerged as significant predictors of academic satisfaction among students, β= -.14, p=.001, 95% IC [-11.15, -2.94], β= .09, p=.017, 95% IC [.66, 6.54]; β= -.09, p=.013, 95% IC [-.43, -.05]; e β=.11, p=.003, 95% IC [1.38, 6.46], explaining 15% of variance (Table 3).

Table 3 – Predictors of Global Academic Satisfaction

Predictors	R²(R²aj)	Beta		p	95% CI [Inferior, Superior]
Age	. 01(.01)	09	.40	. 017	[.04, .38]
	.12(.12)			.00	
Number of missed classes		.03	.83	.407	[-.95, .39]
Level of participation in classes		16	4.47	.000	[1.72, 4.41]
Intention to change course		27	.54	.000	[8.41, 14.34]
Intention to drop out of the course		05	.39	.165	[-.86, 5.03]
	.16(.15)			.000	
1st choice course		05	.34	.181	[-1.34, 7.08]
Preference for the course		.14	3.37	.001	[-11.15, -2.94]
Change residence		09	.40	.017	[.66, 6.54]
Course attended		.09	2.49	.013	[-.43, -.05]
Student occupation		11	.03	.003	[1.38, 6.46]

Note: CI= Confidence Intervals.
Source: Devised by the authors

Discussion

The results of this study showed that contextual variables, namely the change of residence to attend higher education and the student's occupation, appear to be correlated with the dimensions of (dis)satisfaction with academic experiences. Trying to give some meaning to these results, the literature suggests that one of the challenges faced by students in the transition to higher education is related to the change of residence, which implies some weakening of family ties and usual friends, making their life experiences even more difficult at the university, given the lower socio-emotional support, especially in the initial moments (BENTO; FALCONELLI, 2013; CASANOVA; ARAÚJO; ALMEIDA, 2020; CUNHA; MARQUES; BIAVATTI, 2017; DUARTE; AMARAL, 2019). On the other hand, the literature has frequently anticipated some adaptive and performance difficulties for students who, in addition to studying, have some occupation, considering the range of responsibilities they have to manage, for example, taking care of the family, dedicating themselves to studies and to meet job requirements (DE ALMEIDA; QUINTAS; GONCALVES, 2016; DOUTOR; ALVES, 2019; FERNANDES; OLIVEIRA, 2012; MAIER; MATOS, 2016; VARGAS; COSTA DE PAULA, 2013), associated with the lack of knowledge about the course, the difficulty in carrying out school activities and the management of family and financial problems (DUARTE; AMARAL, 2019).

The results of the present study also showed that the performance variables (participation in classes and the intention to give up) appear as those that are most related to (dis)satisfaction with academic experiences, with the average access to HE and the hours dedicated to individual study do not show correlations with statistical significance. Taking these results, unlike Matta (2019), who considers study habits, feeling about the course chosen and prior knowledge as conditioning factors of academic performance, in this research, the average access and hours dedicated to the study do not appear associated with student satisfaction levels with their academic experiences. On the other hand, there is evidence that there is a direct relationship between academic satisfaction and academic performance of students (ALMEIDA *et al.*, 2020; CARMO *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, the average access rate does not reflect the expected performance in student learning. Furthermore, the hours dedicated to the study mentioned by the students may not be effective given the difficulty in assessing these learnings during the time of the pandemic, evidencing difficulties in time management, task management and online class schedule management (FLORES *et al.*, 2021). Finally, in the personal variables, the preference for a course appears more associated with the dimensions of (dis)satisfaction with the academic experiences of students, and it is also worth noting that the age appears more correlated with the course, learning and performance dimension, approaching of the results obtained by Matta (2019).

Taking more academic variables now, the choice of course, course preference, change of residence to attend Higher Education and the student's occupation appear first, followed by learning and performance variables, namely, the number of absences at classes, level of class participation, intention to change course and intention to drop out of the course. These results seem to suggest that although dropout is a global phenomenon, it varies from country to country, and from institution to institution, suggesting that the policies adopted by each country or institution are essential for the retention of students, in Brazil the attribution of scholarships favor the permanence in HE (BRITO; SOUZA; ALMEIDA, 2021; BRITO; COSTA; AMEIDA; 2019) or the programs to promote student resilience in Ukraine (COTTON; NASH; KNEALE, 2017). Finally, the age variable is the one that least predicts (dis)satisfaction with the academic experiences of students, even though in other studies the personal variables (gender and being single) and contextual (low family income and occupation) impact on the evasion of higher education (NEGREIROS; COSTA; ALMEIDA, 2021).

Final considerations

The results of this study allowed us to gather a section of important information to be considered at Licungo University and which we believe to be relevant in university management and in the teaching-learning process. The first indication is that we are facing a large part of students of legal age, suggesting from the outset that special attention should be paid to the organization of teaching-learning strategies. Furthermore, contextual variables such as student occupation, change of residence to attend higher education, the type of course the student is attending and the course choice itself appear as the variables with the greatest impact on satisfaction with the academic experiences of students, followed by the performance variables, namely, number of absences and level of participation in classes and intention to leave or give up on the course they are attending. Such information requires some special care, especially in organizing follow-up services, providing adequate information on courses offered, organizing extracurricular activities and implementing services to support students in their university adaptation, especially for new entrants.

In terms of limitations, future studies should consider the analysis of satisfaction with the academic experience considering the courses attended, as not all of them have the same recognition or social prestige. It is also important to analyze the phenomenon of academic (dis)satisfaction considering the several years of attendance of the courses, and satisfaction can be more anticipated when more practical curricular units or internships are introduced in the initial years of the course. Finally, it is important to know this academic reality from students from other universities, covering the diversity of regions in Mozambique.

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How to reference this article