Exploring Drivers of Students' Satisfaction with English Instruction in Vocational Schools in China

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Abstract

Purpose This study examines how five independent variables—student trust, student commitment, reputation, social identification, and service quality—affect a single dependent variable: student satisfaction. It also seeks to identify significant differences among these variables. **Research design, data, and methodology:** The study used the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) to ensure validity and Cronbach's Alpha in a pilot test (n=50) to assess reliability. Data from 151 valid responses from students at Yunnan Jiaotong College were analyzed using multiple linear regression to test the relationships between variables. Additionally, a group of 30 students participated in a 14-week strategic plan (SP). Comparisons were made between pre- and post-strategic plan quantitative results using paired-sample t-tests. **Results:** The multiple linear regression analysis indicated that student commitment, social identification, and service quality significantly influenced student satisfaction, whereas student trust and reputation did not. Furthermore, the paired-sample t-test revealed significant differences in student satisfaction levels before and after the strategic plan. **Conclusions:** The research aims to enhance student satisfaction by improving English teaching practices in Yunnan, China.

Keywords: Student Commitment, Service Quality, Social Identification, Student Satisfaction, English Teaching

JEL Classification Code: I23, J28, L2

1. Introduction

As technology and the internet evolve rapidly, blended In China, students learn English as a foreign language after mastering Chinese. This study aims to explore students' perspectives on their satisfaction with English teaching at the tertiary level in a public college in Kunming, China. By thoroughly understanding the factors that influence students' satisfaction with college English teaching, the study also assesses the overall quality of English instruction as a measure of a vocational college's teaching effectiveness. This research focuses on how factors such as student trust, commitment, reputation, social identification, and service quality impact students' satisfaction with English teaching in vocational colleges in Yunnan, China. The study recommends that colleges should fully acknowledge students' roles as "customers," understand their expectations, and consider their feelings to enhance satisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Student Trust

Trust is the belief that you can rely on someone or a group to fulfill their commitments. It plays a crucial role in fostering loyalty. When students and parents have strong trust in schools, it can lead to improved school performance and better student outcomes. Trust is significant across various fields such as mental health, psychology, education,

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medicine, and organizational studies, as it promotes positive results in human interactions. In a business context, trust is when customers believe that a person or company will act in their best interest and follow through on their promises (Karl de Fine Licht & Brülde, 2021). Trust is essential for maintaining societal harmony and ensuring positive relationships. For businesses and educational institutions, trust is fundamental for effective functioning (Taghizadeh et al., 2018). Essentially, trust not only fosters greater confidence among individuals but also strengthens their connections with one another.

H1: Student trust has a significant impact on student satisfaction.

2.2 Student Commitment

Commitment refers to the sense of reliability, connection, and dedication to an organization. It affects not only individual outcomes but also organizational results (Sharma, 2015). When students are confident in their ability to learn and grow at their college, their commitment to the institution tends to increase. There is a direct link between students' commitment to their school and their overall feelings about it. This commitment includes emotional commitment and normative commitment, which reflects a sense of moral obligation. Value-based commitment refers to how well an individual's goals align with certain values, demonstrating how emotions relate to understanding and adopting these values. Exchange-based commitments involve promises that individuals make to each other, which can include ongoing responsibilities or obligations perceived as burdens, such as financial costs, possessions, time, or relationships. University commitment can influence student performance and engagement (SPE) by affecting various factors, including motivation, confidence in academic abilities, and the reputation of the university attended.

H2: Student commitment has a significant impact on student satisfaction.

2.3 Reputation

Reputation significantly influences how institutions and groups evaluate their public perception to align with societal expectations. In the competitive landscape of higher education, reputation becomes increasingly important (Galeeva, 2016). This perception is shaped by various elements of the university, including its staff, students, external stakeholders, and the media. In this study, reputation is defined by how different groups assess and judge the university based on its historical actions, characteristics, and current practices. Schettino et al. (2022) note that students' commitment to their university is closely linked to their ambitions, confidence in their academic skills, and the

institution's reputation. Studies have also explored how people's perceptions of their employability relate to their educational experience (Capone et al., 2021; Chowdhury, 2019; Rothwell et al., 2009). Research indicates that parents' perceptions of their child's education and their understanding of the school significantly impact their satisfaction. Discussions about a university's reputation often involve students' views on the quality of programs, modern facilities, and post-graduation job support. In essence, a university's reputation reflects its quality, and institutions often leverage their strong reputations to attract students.

H3: Reputation has a significant impact on student satisfaction.

2.4 Social Identification

Social identification is a key concept in social psychology that explores how individuals see themselves as members of a group and how this self-perception influences their behavior and attitudes. According to social identity theory, a social group is defined by shared characteristics, and the way individuals perceive and define these groups becomes a part of their self-concept (Lee et al., 2020). Individuals' behavior on social media can vary based on their group affiliations and self-perception. Social identity refers to how people view themselves in relation to the groups they belong to. Social Identity Theory (SIT) examines interactions between different groups, suggesting that individuals enhance their own group's image by comparing it favorably against other similar groups. When certain social identities are perceived positively, such comparisons can benefit the individual's group. Social identification reflects a person's sense of belonging to a group and their emotional and moral connections to it, highlighting the impact of group membership on personal attitudes and behavior.

H4: Social identification has a significant impact on student satisfaction.

2.5 Service Quality

Service quality plays a crucial role in ensuring student satisfaction and providing a competitive advantage for schools (Saleem et al., 2017). High-quality service helps a school distinguish itself from its competitors by offering additional benefits to students, which is essential for maintaining a competitive edge (Kusumadewi & Karyono, 2019). Mahmoud and Khalifa (2015) found in Syria that three key elements define good service: personal attention from faculty, helpful support staff, and empathetic interactions from support staff. According to Zeithaml et al. (2018), service quality is based on customers' perceptions of various aspects of the service they receive. Students value quality education, a supportive academic environment,

employability skills, and active engagement (Djonlagic & Dedic, 2015). In colleges, five critical aspects of quality service are important: the condition of buildings and equipment, the university's ability to fulfill its promises, the efficiency and effectiveness of student support, the knowledge and courtesy of teachers, and their genuine concern for students.

H5: Social quality has a significant impact on student satisfaction.

2.6 Student Satisfaction

The indicator reflects students' perceptions of educational quality and their overall satisfaction with their school experience. A student's level of satisfaction largely depends on their personal experiences, which are shaped by their interactions and observations. For students to be content, the quality of education must be high. This is crucial for improving education and ensuring student satisfaction. Research has demonstrated that technology can impact the relationship between quality and satisfaction. When schools provide effective support, students often feel more excited and motivated. High-quality service in schools is essential for ensuring student happiness and success. By enhancing learning materials through technology, adopting innovative teaching methods, and fostering strong teacher-student relationships, schools can improve students' satisfaction with their education. Colleges can build trust by treating students fairly, meeting their expectations, and addressing their concerns. Additionally, students' satisfaction with their college is linked to their trust in the institution and their intention to stay. Satisfied students are more likely to remain at their college if they believe the institution is performing well.Top of Form

Bottom of Form

H5: Agentic engagement has a significant impact on student learning performance in blended learning.

3. Research Methods and Materials

3.1 Research Framework

Drawing on theoretical foundations and prior research models, this paper utilizes a conceptual framework to examine the factors influencing higher vocational students' satisfaction with English classes at Yunnan Jiaotong colleges. A conceptual framework describes the relationships between variables based on previous research (Adom et al., 2018) and can be seen as either a phenomenon or a proposed hypothesis (Camp, 2001). The author adapted this framework from existing theoretical models, selecting and modifying its structure to include both independent and dependent

variables for this study. The framework focuses on student trust, student commitment, reputation, social identification, service quality, and student satisfaction.
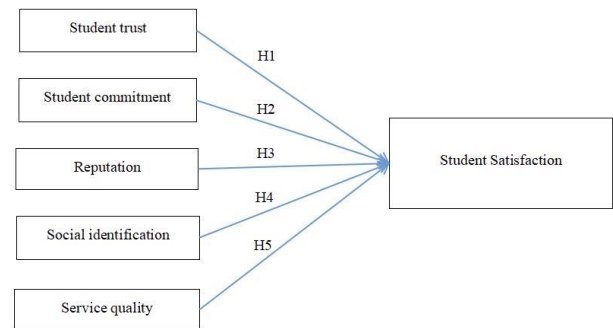

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

H1: Student trust has a significant impact on student satisfaction

H2: Student commitment has a significant impact on student satisfaction

H3: Reputation has a significant impact on student satisfaction

H4: Social identification has a significant impact on student satisfaction

H5: Service quality has a significant impact on student satisfaction

3.2 Research Methodology

The research process consists of four distinct phases. First, data was collected from the entire research population (n=151) to support the proposed conceptual framework. Next, all hypotheses were rigorously tested using multiple linear regression to assess their significance at a p-value threshold of < 0.05. Hypotheses that were supported were retained, while those that did not meet the criteria were discarded.

The second phase involved administering pre-strategic plan surveys to the same population of 151 students based on the supported hypotheses. The third phase implemented the strategic plan (SP) with a specific group of 30 participants.

In the final phase, these 30 participants completed a post-strategic plan survey, providing data for a paired sample t-test analysis. This analysis compared the results from before and after the strategic plan, enabling a thorough evaluation of the research objectives and hypotheses.

3.3 Research Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Procedures

3.3.1 Research Population

The researcher chose 151 students from Yunnan Jiaotong College as the study population for the pre-survey. According to Yunnan Jiaotong College (2023), the total student body was approximately 12,000, making this sample 1.26% of the entire population. The sample consisted of second-year students from the accounting, computer, and automobile specialties. These 151 students completed a questionnaire distributed via Wenjuanxing online.

3.3.2 Sample size

The researcher conducted a pilot survey with 50 randomly selected students to test reliability. Following this, the researcher identified 151 Yunnan Jiaotong College students as the main study population and collected all valid responses. The analyst then performed multiple direct regressions to explore the relationships between independent and dependent variables. Finally, 30 selected students were included in the strategic plan intervention stage.

3.4 Research Instruments

3.4.1 Design of Questionnaire

The researchers developed the questionnaire through a three-step process:

Step 1: The source of the investigation was obtained from three published articles (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022; Chaudhary & Dey, 2021).

Step2: Adjusting and Presenting survey questionnaires on Chinese university students Context.

Step3: Implementing IOC.

3.4.2 Components of Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Part 1: Screening Questions - These questions were designed to exclude individuals who did not belong to the research population.

Part 2: Basic Information Questions - This section collected fundamental details about the research population, including gender, student satisfaction, and profession.

Part 3: Pre-Survey Questions - These questions aimed to assess the current levels of independent and dependent variables among the 151 students from Yunnan Jiaotong College.

3.4.3 IOC Results

The researcher enlisted four independent experts or scholars to apply the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Among them, one was a Thai professor, and the remaining three were Chinese professors. During the IOC process, the experts rated each item as +1 for Congruent, 0 for Questionable, and -1 for Incongruent. Since all the questionnaire items scored higher than 0.67, the researcher decided to keep all the items.

3.4.4 Pilot survey and Pilot test results

The analyst conducted a pilot survey with 50 randomly selected students, asking them to complete the survey and provide feedback. Subsequently, the analyst performed a Cronbach's Alpha test to assess internal consistency reliability, with values expected to be 0.7 or higher. The results, as shown in the table below, indicate high reliability for each construct.

A questionnaire consisting of 33 questions was administered to 30 students for a reliability test. All items were retained following the IOC process. The results and the level of association are detailed in the table below. Each item on the research instrument passed the reliability test with a score of 0.6 or higher, including 0.970 for student trust, 0.962 for student commitment, 0.964 for reputation, 0.960 for social identification, 0.960 for service quality, and 0.961 for student satisfaction.

Table 1: Pilot Test Result

Variables	No. of items	Sources	Cronbach's Alpha	Strength of association
Student trust	6	Karl de Fine Licht and Brülde (2021)	0.970	Excellent
Student commitment	4	Sharma (2015)	0.962	Excellent
Reputation	5	Schettino et al. (2022)	0.964	Excellent
Social identification	6	Lee et al. (2020)	0.960	Excellent
Service quality	6	Saleem et al. (2017)	0.960	Excellent
Student satisfaction	6	Saleem et al. (2017)	0.961	Excellent

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Demographic Profile

The analyst presented the statistical profile of the entire research population (n=151), followed by a description of the

selected student group (n=30) who participated in the key stage, as shown in Table 2. The research utilized a multistage sampling approach. A total of 151 students from Yunnan Jiaotong College were chosen using quota sampling and proportional sample size methods. Of these, 64 were male, comprising 42.38% of the total, and 87 were female, also 57.62%. The students were enrolled in three majors: 57 in accounting (37.75%), 48 in computer studies (31.79%), and 46 in automobile studies (30.46%).

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Entire Research Population (n=151)		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	64	42.38%
	Female	87	57.62%
Major Direction	Accounting	57	37.75%
	Computer	48	31.79%
	Automobile	46	30.46%
Total		**151**	**100%**
Strategic Plan Participants (n=30)		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	6	20%
	Female	24	80%
Major Direction	Accounting	7	23.33%
	Computer	21	70%
	Automobile	2	6.67%
Total		**30**	**100%**

4.1.2 Results of multiple linear regression

The analyst performed multiple linear regression (MLR) on the 151 survey responses to determine whether each hypothesis was supported. A total of five research hypotheses were tested, all relating to student satisfaction (SS). The variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis showed that multicollinearity was not an issue, as all VIF values were below 5. The R-squared (R^2) value in the multiple linear regression model, which included five independent variables, accounted for 87.7% of the variability in student satisfaction, demonstrating the model's effectiveness in explaining the variance in student satisfaction.

Table 3: The multiple linear regression of five independent variables on student learning performance

Predictor	Stand. Estimate	T-Value	P	VIF	R^2
Student trust	0.0114	0.177	0.860	3.53	
Student commitment	0.2284	2.778	0.006*	5.79	
Reputation	-0.1004	-1.243	0.217	5.59	0.877
Social identification	0.3347	3.608	<.001**	7.37	
Service quality	0.4966	5.137	<.001**	8.01	

Note: p-value <0.05*, p-value <0.001**

The results of multiple linear regression (MLR) were utilized to evaluate the research hypotheses. The finalized research hypotheses pertain to the differences observed between the pre-SP and the post-SP for four sub-variables, where as H1 and H3 were not supported:

H6: There is a significant mean difference in student commitment between the pre-SP and post-SP.

H7: There is a significant mean difference in social identification between the pre-SP and post-SP.

H8: There is a significant mean difference in service quality between the pre-SP and post-SP.

H9: There is a significant mean difference in student satisfaction between the pre-SP and post-SP.

4.2 Results Comparison between Current situation and Expected Situation

The researcher conducted a paired-sample analysis to compare the current and expected situations for three variables to determine if there were any differences in student satisfaction phases. The tables below present the results of this paired-sample analysis for the three variables.

Table 4: Paired-Sample T-Test Results

Variables	Mean	SD	t-value	df
Student Commitment				
Post-SP	4.1917	.49429	-3.712	29
Pre-SP	3.7010	.52396		
Student Identification				
Post-SP	4.1167	.52137	-4.823	29
Pre-SP	3.4720	.54414		
Service Quality				
Post-SP	4.1663	.556545	-3.277	29
Pre-SP	3.7010	.52396		
Student Satisfaction				
Post-SP	4.1493	.57602	-4.280	29
Pre-SP	3.5603	.55450		

The analysis shows a significant increase in student commitment from the pre-student commitment stage (M=3.7010, SD=0.52396) to the post-student commitment stage (M=4.1917, SD=0.49429), with a t-value of 3.712 and $p < 0.05$. The mean difference is 0.49. Thus, Hypothesis 5, which posits a significant difference in student commitment between the current and expected stages, is supported with a p-value < 0.001.

Similarly, student identification significantly increased from the pre-student identification stage (M=3.4720, SD=0.54414) to the post-student identification stage (M=4.1167, SD=0.52137), with a t-value of -4.823 and $p < 0.05$. The mean difference is 0.6447. Hence, Hypothesis 6, which suggests a significant difference in student

identification between the current and expected stages, is also supported with a p-value < 0.001.

Furthermore, service quality showed a notable improvement from the pre-strategic plan stage (M=3.7010, SD=0.52396) to the post-strategic plan stage (M=4.1663, SD=0.556545), with a t-value of -3.277 and p < 0.05. The mean difference is 0.4653. This supports Hypothesis 6, indicating a significant difference in service quality between the pre- and post-strategic plan stages, with a p-value of 0.0003.

Lastly, student satisfaction significantly increased from the pre-strategic plan stage (M=3.5603, SD=0.55450) to the post-strategic plan stage (M=4.1493, SD=0.57602), with a t-value of -4.280 and p < 0.05. The mean difference is 0.589. Thus, Hypothesis 6, which proposes a significant difference in student satisfaction between the pre- and post-strategic plan stages, is supported with a p-value < 0.0001.

5. Conclusions, Recommendations and Limitations

5.1 Conclusions & Discussions

The study examined how five independent variables—student trust, student commitment, reputation, social identification, and service quality—affect student satisfaction. A thorough research design, including data collection and methodology, was used to derive meaningful conclusions.

The research utilized the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) to assess validity and Cronbach's Alpha in a pilot test to ensure the reliability of the measurement tools. This rigorous approach enhanced the study's validity. Data from 151 valid responses from students at Yunnan Jiaotong College were analyzed using multiple linear regression to identify significant relationships between the variables. Additionally, a 14-week strategic plan (SP) was implemented with a group of 30 selected students. Data from the post-strategic plan phase were compared with pre-strategic plan data using a paired-sample t-test.

The results indicated that student commitment, social identification, and service quality significantly impacted student satisfaction. This suggests that improving these areas can enhance student satisfaction. The paired-sample t-test results revealed a significant difference in student satisfaction between the post-strategic plan and pre-strategic plan stages, indicating that the 14-week strategic plan positively affected student satisfaction.

In summary, this research contributes to improving English classroom teaching by increasing student satisfaction in Yunnan, China. The study's robust methodology and analysis offer valuable insights into

enhancing student satisfaction, which can lead to better classroom experiences and overall development. Satisfied students are more likely to engage actively in activities, develop their skills, and prepare effectively for future academic and professional endeavors.

5.2 Recommendations

Students are encouraged to engage actively and collaborate with teachers and peers to address problems collectively. This active participation and interaction can boost students' enthusiasm for learning, prevent a monotonous learning experience, and enhance learning efficiency.

By promoting independent learning, improving school service quality, and updating resources and equipment, students can develop skills for solving problems on their own, creating learning plans, and assessing their progress. These abilities are crucial for their future academic and personal lives. When students can make decisions about what and how they study, they become more engaged and interested, which improves their learning satisfaction.

Cultural differences also impact students' comprehension of English vocabulary, phrases, and sentence structures. Variations in psychological habits and natural environments across different cultural backgrounds can highlight differences between English and Chinese.

To accurately assess students' satisfaction in English classes, diverse evaluation methods should be employed. These methods might include classroom performance, homework completion, group discussions, and personal reflections. Using these varied assessment tools allows teachers to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' learning conditions, identify issues promptly, and provide appropriate guidance.

Overall, enhancing student satisfaction in college English classes is crucial for improving teaching quality, creating a better learning environment, increasing motivation, gathering student feedback, and enhancing student commitment, social identification, and service quality, ultimately leading to better talent development.

5.3 Limitations for Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights into how independent variables affect student satisfaction, it is important to recognize its limitations to direct future research in this field. These limitations highlight areas for further investigation and refinement:

Sample Size and Demographics: The research was conducted with a specific group of students from Yunnan Jiaotong College. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, future studies should include students from

various departments and institutions to broaden the scope of the findings.

Variables and Relationships: The study examined five specific independent variables and one dependent variable. Future research could expand this scope by including additional independent variables and exploring their interactions, which would offer a more complete picture of what influences student satisfaction.

Intervention Design: This study used a specific current and expected situation intervention program. Future research should investigate alternative intervention designs, particularly those focused on classroom settings, to compare the effectiveness of different strategies in improving student satisfaction.

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