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The Relationship between Academic Boredom and Academic Satisfaction among Application-Oriented Universities in Gansu Province of China

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction among 439 undergraduates from local application-oriented universities in Gansu, China. Using validated questionnaires, results show moderate levels of boredom, with attention as the most notable dimension. Academic boredom negatively correlates with academic satisfaction, indicating that higher boredom reduces student satisfaction. Findings support Control-Value Theory and highlight the need for strategies to reduce boredom and improve student experiences. Implications for educators and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Academic boredom, academic satisfaction, relationship

Introduction

Academic satisfaction has increasingly gained attention as a vital component of the student educational experience worldwide (Aman et al., 2023). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognizes academic satisfaction as a key indicator of education quality and student well-being (OECD, 2022). High levels of academic satisfaction are linked to greater motivation (Chen et al., 2020), improved performance (Baños et al., 2018), and personal development (Li et al., 2024), while low satisfaction is associated with disengagement (Mazman Akar, 2024) and higher dropout risk (Li & Carroll, 2020). Recent global trends highlight rising concerns about student mental health (Marshall-Seslar, 2024), including anxiety (Liu & Wang, 2024) and boredom (Bekker et al., 2023), prompting higher education institutions to develop comprehensive support systems to foster academic satisfaction and well-being (Franzen et al., 2021).

Surveys measuring academic satisfaction serve as valuable tools for policymakers and educators to understand student needs and guide effective educational reforms (X. Liu & Wang, 2024). Although many studies have explored determinants of academic satisfaction (Walter et al., 2024) and its links to professional contentment (Ponukupati et al., 2025), application-oriented undergraduate universities—an emerging development of this century, especially in China and other parts of Asia—remain understudied, with limited research on their students' characteristics and the impact on academic satisfaction across diverse cultural contexts (Xu, 2024).

Satisfaction, as a direct reflection of learners' subjective experience, is closely linked to their learning outcomes. Hence, enhancing satisfaction is not only vital for promoting student learning but also a key approach to strengthening the overall impact of educational institutions (Sheng et al., 2025). The rise of lifelong and autonomous learning philosophies further underscores the importance of student-centered research perspectives (Bhardwaj et al., 2025), with academic satisfaction positioned

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as a crucial pathway to improving higher education quality (Syahmer et al., 2022). According to the recent National Higher Education Satisfaction Survey (2021) in China, the overall satisfaction rate stands at 77.46%, which was still a relatively large base of lower academic satisfaction groups considering the total amount of higher education. In this report (National Institute of Education Sciences, 2021), undergraduate students were far less satisfied than higher vocational education and postgraduate students, especially in the learning experience at local universities. Given the scale and diversity of China's educational system, further investigation into student satisfaction, particularly its relationship with academic boredom, is essential. This study aims to provide both theoretical and empirical foundations to inform educational interventions that enhance students' academic experiences and satisfaction.

Review of Literature

Academic Boredom

Academic boredom refers to a state of disinterest, lack of engagement, and frustration experienced by students in educational settings (Bekker et al., 2023). It is characterized by a sense of apathy, monotony, and dissatisfaction with academic tasks and learning activities (Finkielsztein, 2021). Pekrun and his colleagues (2010) labeled boredom as a "silent emotion" as compared to other studied emotions. Academic boredom is often associated with negative emotions such as frustration, irritation, and restlessness, which can impede students' motivation, learning, and academic performance (Goetz et al., 2007; Pekrun et al., 2010). Sharp et al. (2019) found that a majority of students suffer from high levels of boredom, indicating that it negatively affects undergraduate students' engagement, performance, and achievement. 40% to 59% of university students expressed feeling bored (Finkielsztein, 2020). The difficulties that are thought to be involved in obtaining academic achievement may contribute to developing negative emotions (boredom), leading to decreased satisfaction (Mutawa & Sruthi, 2023).

Academic Boredom and Academic Satisfaction

40% to 59% of university students expressed feeling bored (Finkielsztein, 2020). The difficulties that are thought to be involved in obtaining academic achievement may contribute to developing negative emotions (boredom), leading to decreased satisfaction (Mutawa & Sruthi, 2023). Control-value theory (Pekrun), a key framework in educational psychology, explains the origins and effects of students' academic emotions (Li, 2021). The theory proposes a three-dimensional classification of academic emotions based on valence (positive or negative), activation level (degree of arousal), and object focus (whether emotions arise from academic activities or academic outcomes) (Pekrun et al., 2023). Learner boredom is a negative, low-arousal emotion linked to academic activities, while satisfaction from learning is a positive, high-arousal emotion focused on academic achievement (Wang & Zhang, 2024). Furthermore, affective learning gains are connected to shifts in students' well-being, satisfaction, and attitudes(Wang & Zhang, 2024).

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction. Boredom and satisfaction showed a significant negative correlation (Morales-Sánchez et al., 2021). Bieleke et al. (2024) reported that higher levels of boredom were associated with adverse psychological and behavioral outcomes, including lower satisfaction. The indirect effects of boredom on life satisfaction were also computed by Bekker et al.(2023). Boredom is more about lacking anything interesting or truly motivating to do, from which one could derive meaning or lasting satisfaction (J. G. Sharp et al., 2020).

Concerning negative deactivating emotions, high boredom impaired the learning strategies and reduced satisfaction (Heckel & Ringeisen, 2017). As the emotion most often experienced in the context of learning, student academic boredom can significantly affect student learning outcomes (Camacho-Morles et al., 2021; Weybright et al., 2020). High levels of academic boredom tend to lead to dissatisfaction, lack of attention, and demotivation, thus hurting student learning (Affandi et

al.,2023). Zhengyan & Chang (2023) applied two scales primarily to assess the boredom of monotonous or repetitive work, and both of them show that boredom is negatively significant with satisfaction. From what the researcher has mentioned above, this study tests the relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction of undergraduates at the local application-oriented university of Gansu Province. The hypothesis goes as follows:

H: There is a significant relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction.

Methodology

Respondents and Procedure

In this study endeavor, a proportionate random sampling technique was utilized to amass data from a cohort of 480 third-year undergraduates across eight local application-oriented universities in Gansu province. The sample size used in our study is considered appropriate and robust, by the guidelines set forth by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Measures

This study employed a quantitative research method to explore the relationships among various variables. The items in the questionnaire of this study comprised the closed-ended questions of Likert-type rating scales to gather views of undergraduates from local application-oriented universities in Gansu Province of China regarding their status of academic boredom (Academic Boredom Questionnaire (Sharp et al., 2021) and academic satisfaction (University Students Academic Satisfaction Scale (Li & Wang, 2009).

These two scales were rigorously tested by their original developers to ensure reliability and validity. Modifications were made to adapt the scales to the objectives of the present study. Specifically, the adapted scales were designed as five-point Likert scales, enabling participants to rate each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Detailed information about each scale is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Information on the Measurement Scales

Scale	Item (N)	Sample
Academic Boredom	19	I get really tired and sleepy, or start yawning all the time.
Academic Satisfaction	11	I am not satisfied with the teaching management system of the school.

Ethical Considerations

Participants in the online questionnaire survey were initially informed about the research purpose and their right to withdraw, per academic ethical standards. At the beginning of the questionnaire, they were presented with a confidentiality statement assuring that their data would be used solely for academic research and that no harm would result. Participants were then asked to indicate their consent by selecting the “I Agree” option, signaling their willingness to proceed and provide honest responses to the survey items.

Data Collection and Analysis

The online questionnaire survey was conducted via Wenjuanxing, an online survey platform, over two weeks from April 14 to 25, 2025. Upon completion, the data were carefully reviewed, and invalid responses were excluded, resulting in a final dataset of 439 valid responses, accounting for 91% of the total.

Following data screening, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on each scale using AMOS (version 26.0). The fit indices were carefully evaluated to ensure they met established criteria, thereby confirming the high construct validity of the measurement instruments. Thereafter, reliability analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 27) to confirm the high reliability of the scales. Upon completion of these preliminary validations, SPSS 27 was utilized to perform descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses in order to address the research question.

Findings and Discussion

Validity and Reliability of the Scales

The validity of this study was assessed using a comprehensive set of fit indices, including χ^2/df, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Residual (RMR), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's α coefficient. As presented in Table 2, all fit and reliability indices met the recommended criteria (Xu, 2019), confirming that the measurement instruments utilized in this research possess strong psychometric properties in terms of validity and reliability.

Table 2. Indices Indicating the Construct Validity and Reliability of all the Scales (N=439)

Indices	χ 2 /df	p	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA	Alpha
Standard	<3	>.05	>0.8	>0.8	>0.8	>0.8	<.05	>0.7
Academic Boredom	1.445	.000	0.954	0.941	0.987	0.958	0.032	0.93
Academic Satisfaction	1.32	0.09	0.98	0.965	0.995	0.980	0.027	0.906

Overall Profiles of the Constructs

This study performed descriptive statistical analysis on the collected data to elucidate the relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction. As shown in Table 3, the kurtosis and skewness values for all data ranged between -2 and +2, indicating that the data were normally distributed. The analysis indicated that the students' academic boredom was at a moderate level (Mean = 2.72, SD = 0.735) and academic satisfaction was at a moderate to high level (Mean= 3.56, SD =0.747). Taken together, the participants in this survey generally held a moderately positive perception of their learning experience.

Table 3. Descriptive Results (N=268)

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic Boredom	2.72	0.735	0.622	-0.805
Academic Satisfaction	3.56	0.747	-1.084	0.054

Correlations Between the Variables

The correlation analysis results indicate statistically significant relationships among the examined academic variables (see Table 4). The correlation analysis revealed significant negative relationships between academic satisfaction and several variables. Specifically, academic boredom showed a moderate negative correlation with academic satisfaction ($r = -0.320$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of boredom are associated with lower satisfaction. Similarly, CRA ($r = -0.280$, $p < 0.01$), CAC ($r = -0.276$, $p < 0.01$), SRB ($r = -0.263$, $p < 0.01$), and SRD ($r = -0.208$, $p < 0.01$) all demonstrated statistically significant negative correlations with academic satisfaction. These findings suggest that as these factors increase, students' academic satisfaction tends to decrease, highlighting the inverse relationships between these dimensions and students' overall academic contentment.

Table 4. Pearson correlation analysis

Variables/dimensions		Academic satisfaction
Academic boredom	Pearson Correlation	-0.320**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000
CRA	Pearson Correlation	-0.280**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000
CAC	Pearson Correlation	-0.276**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000
SRB	Pearson Correlation	-0.263**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000
SRD	Pearson Correlation	-0.208**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000

Notes: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

CRA denotes Class-related attention, CRC represents Class-related constraint, SRB indicates Study-related boredom, SRD signifies Study-related distraction.

Results of Regression Analyses

This study conducted a linear regression analysis using academic boredom as the independent variable and academic satisfaction as the dependent variable. This study first examined the correlations among the sub-dimensions, considering a correlation coefficient above 0.85 as indicative of potential serious multicollinearity issues. Based on 439 valid survey samples, correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships among the four dimensions: CRA, CRC, SRB, and SRD. The strength of these relationships was expressed using Pearson correlation coefficients to assess multicollinearity within the model. Detailed results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Pearson correlation analysis

	CRA	CRC	SRB	SRD	LPR	TTP	USTF
CRA	1						
CRC	0.519**	1					
SRB	0.525**	0.502**	1				
SRD	0.493**	0.536**	0.512**	1			
LPR	-0.249**	-0.222**	-0.246**	-0.171**	1		
TTP	-0.256**	-0.194**	-0.182**	-0.145**	0.579**	1	
USTF	-0.256**	-0.279**	-0.236**	-0.209**	0.606**	0.577**	1

CRA denotes Class-related attention, CRC represents Class-related constraint, SRB indicates Study-related boredom; SRD signifies Study-related distraction; LPR refers to Satisfaction with the learning process and results, TTP denotes Satisfaction with teachers' teaching and teaching process, USTF represents Satisfaction with the university system and teaching facilities.

Additionally, this study conducted a further examination of multicollinearity among variables in the model using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF).

Table 6. Variance Inflation Factor

	Tolerance	VIF
CRA	0.597	1.674
CRC	0.587	1.704
SRB	0.606	1.651
SRD	0.596	1.677

The results showed that all correlation coefficients between variables were below 0.85, and all VIF values were less than 10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity, as illustrated in Table 6.

Discussion

This study explored the relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction among undergraduates at local application-oriented universities in Gansu Province, China. The findings provide important insights into how students' emotional experiences influence their overall academic contentment and contribute to the existing literature in this emerging educational context.

This study's findings regarding the prevalence and impact of academic boredom align closely with a growing body of international research demonstrating that boredom is a common and consequential emotional experience among university students. For example, Goetz et al. (2024) provided empirical evidence highlighting the high incidence of academic boredom across diverse student populations. Similarly, Sharp et al. (2017) found that nearly half of 235 final-year undergraduates in England reported experiencing common precursors of academic boredom at least occasionally. In Pakistan, Khan et al. (2019) reported an average academic boredom score of 2.93, which falls within a moderate range and mirrors the findings of this study.

Consistent with these prior investigations, our results support the assertion that academic boredom is pervasive and has significant negative consequences for students' school-based learning experiences (Özerk, 2020). Liu (2022), for instance, surveyed 2,503 college students using the Chinese version of

the Academic Boredom Scale and found similar moderate boredom levels, with the highest scores in the constraint dimension—reflecting feelings of being trapped or restricted in learning contexts. This mirrors the present study's finding that constraint represents the most prominent facet of academic boredom, a pattern also observed by Liu (2022). The higher average score for classroom boredom relative to learning boredom further underscores the importance of addressing boredom within the immediate instructional environment.

In terms of academic satisfaction, this study observed moderate overall levels among undergraduates at local application-oriented universities in Gansu Province. These findings resonate with previous research indicating generally moderate to high academic satisfaction among university students. Wilcox & Nordstokke (2019) and Silva & Figueiredo-Braga (2019) similarly reported substantial levels of satisfaction in various higher education contexts. Aldhahi et al. (2022) documented that 51% of students reported high academic satisfaction, particularly linked to e-learning self-efficacy, emphasizing the role of students' perceived capabilities in shaping satisfaction.

Further supporting these findings, Boon Sian et al. (2023) observed high satisfaction levels ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.85$) in their study, especially among students exhibiting optimistic outlooks and task-oriented coping styles. This suggests that psychological factors influence how students appraise their academic experiences. Additionally, Bagonza & Kaahwa (2023) reported notably higher satisfaction among students enrolled in science, engineering, and technology programs across Ugandan universities, a pattern also reflected in Bekker et al.'s (2023) study, which found consistently high satisfaction levels in these fields. The convergence of these results points to programmatic and disciplinary differences in student satisfaction that warrant further investigation.

Regression analyses in this study indicated that predictors such as academic boredom significantly and negatively impact academic satisfaction, consistent with Franzen et al. (2021). This inverse relationship aligns with a wide range of studies demonstrating that increased boredom correlates with decreased satisfaction and engagement. Daradkeh et al. (2025) identified a significant negative correlation between academic boredom and academic achievement among 3,800 students at Ajloun National University, reinforcing the broader detrimental effect of boredom on academic outcomes.

Specifically, the negative association between boredom and satisfaction in physical education classes was substantiated by Morales-Sánchez et al. (2021), who found that students experiencing higher boredom levels reported lower enjoyment and satisfaction. These findings are echoed in Chan and Ko's (2021) survey of undergraduate business students in Hong Kong, which demonstrated that boredom adversely affects perceived learning, thereby reducing learning satisfaction. Morales-Sánchez et al. (2021) further argued that improving students' self-perceptions can enhance satisfaction and enjoyment, suggesting intervention points to mitigate boredom's negative effects.

However, Bekker et al. (2023) also highlighted complexities in the relationship between boredom and life satisfaction. Their structural equation modeling revealed that boredom in subjects such as mathematics and English indirectly impacts life satisfaction through mediating variables like learner burnout and engagement, illustrating the nuanced pathways through which boredom influences broader well-being.

Taken together, the findings reinforce the imperative for higher education institutions to address academic boredom proactively, as its prevalence and negative impact on satisfaction have been consistently documented across diverse cultural and disciplinary contexts. By developing targeted strategies that reduce feelings of constraint and disengagement, educators can foster more satisfying and motivating learning environments, ultimately promoting better academic and psychosocial outcomes.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between academic boredom and academic satisfaction among undergraduates at local application-oriented universities in Gansu Province, China. The findings confirm that academic boredom is moderately prevalent among these students, with constraint emerging as the most salient dimension. Importantly, academic boredom

negatively correlates with academic satisfaction, indicating that higher levels of boredom significantly diminish students' positive perceptions of their educational experience. These results align with a broad spectrum of international research and reinforce Control-Value Theory's assertion regarding the detrimental effects of negative, low-arousal emotions on learning outcomes. The study also highlights the need for tailored interventions that address the specific facets of boredom, particularly within classroom settings, to enhance student engagement and satisfaction. Given the increasing emphasis on improving educational quality and student well-being in local application-oriented universities, policymakers and educators must prioritize strategies to mitigate academic boredom. This may include adopting more engaging pedagogical approaches, fostering supportive learning environments, and enhancing students' academic self-efficacy.

Future research should consider longitudinal designs and incorporate additional variables such as self-efficacy and institutional support to elucidate further the mechanisms linking boredom and satisfaction. Expanding the scope to diverse regions and institutional types would also enhance the generalizability of these findings. Overall, this study underscores the critical role of academic emotions in shaping student satisfaction and provides a foundation for improving the educational experiences of undergraduates in local application-oriented universities.

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