Article

Students' Expectations Regarding the Achievement of Educational Outcomes in Terms of Knowledge, Practical Skills, and Social Competencies as Determinants of Sustainable Education

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Abstract: In the face of global challenges related to sustainable development, this study explores the role of students' expectations in sustainable education in higher education institutions. Aiming to understand how these expectations influence the effectiveness of education oriented toward sustainable development, a comprehensive survey was conducted among 529 students from diverse educational backgrounds. The research design included detailed analysis using statistical tools like Pearson correlation coefficients. Results reveal a strong student preference for greater emphasis on sustainable development in curricula, along with innovative and interactive teaching methods. Incorporating real environmental and social problems was also highlighted. These findings underscore the significant impact of students' expectations on the quality and effectiveness of sustainable education. The conclusions stress the importance of aligning educational strategies with students' expectations to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education in sustainable development. This study offers valuable insights for higher education institutions to refine teaching strategies in the spirit of sustainable development.

Keywords: sustainable education; students' expectations; higher education; teaching methods; curriculum development

1. Introduction

In the context of global challenges like climate change and social–economic inequalities, the role of sustainable education in higher education institutions is becoming increasingly vital. This importance is echoed in studies such as [1], which highlight sustainable education as a key factor in developing future leaders and specialists. Our study delves into the role of students' expectations in achieving educational outcomes within sustainable education, encompassing theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies.

Interdisciplinarity and the integration of sustainable development concepts, as discussed in [2], are essential for transforming higher education into a tool for change. Facing the challenge of implementing sustainable practices and fostering critical thinking, higher education institutions are at a crossroads.

Our study, conducted in September–October 2023, seeks to understand and address students' expectations in sustainable education. The goal is to examine the impact of these

expectations on the quality and effectiveness of education, especially under the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summary, this research underscores the significance of sustainable education in preparing students for a sustainable future. It aims to contribute to the development of teaching strategies that respond effectively to students' needs, thereby enhancing educational quality.

Sustainable education as a determinant of high-quality learning in higher education institutions.

Sustainable education in higher education institutions is a key element in shaping future generations of leaders and specialists who will be responsible for steering our world toward a more sustainable future. In the context of higher education, sustainable education encompasses not only the curriculum content but also innovative teaching methods, effective institution management, and their role in local and global communities [3].

This comprehensive approach includes the integration of sustainable development concepts in all aspects of educational activities. It involves developing awareness and understanding of global challenges such as climate change and social and economic inequalities and encourages critical thinking and innovation in solving these problems. These challenges demand a holistic approach, combining knowledge from different disciplines and fostering a culture of responsibility and proactive problem solving among students [4].

One of the key aspects of sustainable education is interdisciplinarity, which enables students to combine knowledge from various fields to better understand and solve complex problems. This approach is critical in addressing the multifaceted nature of sustainable development. It encourages students to look beyond their specific areas of study and to understand the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental issues. Interdisciplinary education promotes a broader perspective, equipping students with the skills to analyze problems from multiple angles and develop comprehensive solutions [5].

Higher education institutions, through their curricula, research, and collaboration with local and global communities, play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development. These institutions are not just centers of learning but are also hubs for innovation and social change. By engaging in cutting-edge research on sustainability, higher education institutions can contribute significantly to the development of new technologies and strategies for sustainable living. Additionally, by collaborating with local communities and industries, these institutions can ensure that their research has practical applications and real-world impact [6].

Moreover, higher education institutions have the opportunity to implement sustainable practices in their daily operations. This includes resource and energy management, promoting sustainable transportation, and encouraging sustainable consumption habits among their students and staff. Such actions not only contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of the institutions but also serve as practical examples of sustainable living for students. For instance, campuses can become living labs where students can see and participate in sustainability initiatives, from renewable energy projects to waste reduction programs [7].

Furthermore, higher education institutions have a unique role in policy advocacy and thought leadership in the area of sustainability. By generating and disseminating knowledge about sustainable practices, they can influence policymakers, industry leaders, and the public. This role is crucial in creating a broader societal shift towards sustainability. Institutions can host conferences, publish research, and engage in public discourse, positioning themselves as key players in the journey toward a sustainable future [8].

In the context of global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development, higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to shape future leaders and innovators. These future leaders will be equipped not only with the technical knowledge and skills relevant to their fields but also with a deep understanding of sustainability principles. They will be prepared to face these challenges and contribute to building a

more sustainable future. This preparation involves instilling values of ethical responsibility, community engagement, and a commitment to long-term thinking in students [9].

To further enhance the impact of sustainable education, higher education institutions can also focus on developing partnerships and networks that span across borders. International collaborations can facilitate the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources, enriching the educational experience and fostering a global community of sustainability practitioners. These partnerships can take various forms, from student and faculty exchanges to joint research projects and global sustainability initiatives [10].

In conclusion, sustainable education in higher education institutions is not just about integrating environmental studies into the curriculum. It is about creating an ecosystem of learning, research, and practice that holistically addresses the complexities of sustainable development. This approach requires a commitment to continuous innovation, collaboration, and a willingness to challenge conventional wisdom. By adopting such an approach, higher education institutions can lead the way in preparing a generation that is capable, motivated, and ready to make a significant contribution to a sustainable world. Sustainable education in higher education institutions transcends integrating environmental topics into the curriculum. It entails fostering an ecosystem of learning, research, and practice that holistically tackles the complexities of sustainable development. This approach necessitates a commitment to ongoing innovation, collaboration, and challenging established norms. By embracing such an ethos, higher education institutions can lead in preparing a generation equipped and motivated to contribute meaningfully to a sustainable world.

Sustainable education in higher education is more than a curriculum feature—it is a transformative approach. This paradigm encompasses continuous innovation, collaboration, and challenging established norms. Institutions that embrace this ethos become leaders in shaping future generations who are not just academically adept but also deeply committed to sustainable practices. This education model is vital in preparing leaders and innovators who understand the complexities of our times and are equipped to drive meaningful, sustainable change in a rapidly evolving world.

Educational outcomes at higher education institutions in terms of knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies

Building on the foundational concepts of sustainable education discussed in the first part, this section titled "Educational Outcomes at Higher Education Institutions in Terms of Knowledge, Practical Skills, and Social Competencies" aims to delve into the specific educational achievements crucial for sustainability. It explores how acquired knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies translate into students' ability to address sustainability challenges. This analysis will deepen the understanding of the role higher education plays in shaping future leaders and innovators whose education aligns with sustainable development principles. By linking these areas, this article creates a cohesive narrative that emphasizes the integral role of sustainable education in the context of higher education.

Educational outcomes at higher education institutions are a critical element in assessing the quality of education. These outcomes encompass not just the acquisition of theoretical knowledge but also the development of practical skills and social competencies, vital in today's rapidly evolving world. In the context of sustainable education, as previously discussed, educational outcomes gain an additional dimension, emphasizing preparing students for active and conscious participation in building a sustainable future [11].

Knowledge, as one of the primary educational outcomes, transcends traditional academic frameworks, including an understanding of global challenges and sustainable practices. Higher education institutions, through their programs, aim to provide students with a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to learning. This approach fosters an understanding of the complex interdependencies between different knowledge fields, crucial for addressing contemporary global challenges [12].

Practical skills, such as applying knowledge in practice, problem solving, critical thinking, and innovation, are equally important. These institutions strive for students to assimilate knowledge and effectively use it in various contexts, including sustainable development. Such skills are imperative in a world where theoretical knowledge must be coupled with practical application to address real-world problems effectively [13].

Social competencies, including teamwork, communication, and social and ethical responsibility, form an integral part of educational outcomes. In an era of globalization and heightened social and ecological consciousness, universities focus on developing skills in students that enable them to function effectively and contribute to the common good in a diverse and sustainable world [14].

Moreover, the concept of lifelong learning becomes crucial in sustainable education. Higher education institutions foster an environment where learning is continuous and adaptable to changing global dynamics. This approach ensures that graduates remain relevant and capable of contributing to their fields long after they have left the university [15].

In addition, universities are increasingly incorporating experiential learning and community engagement into their curricula. This involves students actively participating in projects and initiatives that have a tangible impact on their local or global communities. Such experiences are vital in connecting academic learning with real-world applications, providing students with a deeper understanding of the complexities of sustainability issues [16].

Furthermore, the assessment of educational outcomes in sustainable education also involves evaluating the institution's contribution to sustainable development goals. This includes measuring how effectively institutions incorporate sustainability into their research agendas, campus operations, and community outreach programs. It reflects a holistic approach to education, where the institution's practices align with the principles they teach [17].

In summary, educational outcomes in higher education institutions are multidimensional, covering a broad spectrum of competencies crucial in today's world. Sustainable education, through the integration of knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies, plays a pivotal role in preparing students for active participation in building a balanced, sustainable future [18].

Sustainable education, blending theoretical foundations with practical applications, shapes students who are not only well-prepared for their future careers but also conscious of their role in society and the environment. Universities, through their programs and initiatives, have the responsibility not just of transferring knowledge but also of inspiring action and innovation that positively impacts the world [19].

Contemporary challenges such as climate change, social inequalities, and the need for sustainable development call for a new approach to education [20]. Higher education institutions, as centers of knowledge and innovation [21], are key in shaping this approach [22] and preparing future generations for effective and responsible action in a sustainable world [23]. This expanded role of higher education institutions reflects a deepening understanding of their responsibility to equip students not just with knowledge [24] but with a comprehensive skillset [25] and mindset geared towards sustainability and proactive problem solving [26].

2. Materials and Methods

The objective of this article is to explore how students' expectations about achieving educational outcomes influence the development of sustainable education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to identify key student expectations and assess their impact on perceived education quality.

The research questions are as follows: (1) What are the key expectations of students regarding educational outcomes? (2) How do these expectations influence their perception of the quality of sustainable education?

The research methodology involved a survey conducted on 529 individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds. To collect data, a structured questionnaire was developed based on previous research works in the field. This instrument was designed to measure students' expectations in various educational contexts and conditions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives. The development of the questionnaire was informed by both the literature review and preliminary qualitative research, ensuring its relevance and appropriateness.

In terms of ethical considerations, all participants were informed about the purpose of this study, and their consent was obtained. Data confidentiality and participant anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process.

This study's demographic data reveals a diverse sample in terms of age, level of education, and academic discipline. The majority of participants were from Vistula University, with significant numbers also from WSB and UTH. The age distribution and types of study programs enrolled in, as well as the professional activity statuses of the participants, were recorded.

This study, conducted in September–October 2023, aims to provide valuable insights into the role of student expectations in shaping sustainable education, with a particular focus on the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this study, two separate analyses were conducted. The first, presented in Table 1, focuses on students' expectations regarding remote learning, encompassing theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies. The second analysis, as illustrated in Table 2, delves into the correlations among six key variables of the remote work process. It has been acknowledged that the relationship between these two parts of this study may not be immediately evident, which could partly be attributed to the adopted conceptual framework. Efforts have been made to provide a clearer explanation of this connection and to ensure that the theoretical and methodological references are transparent and coherent.

Table 1. Expectations regarding the achievement of the assumed educational outcomes in terms of knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies using a remote work model.

Category	Definitely NOT	Rather NOT	No Opinion	Rather YES	Definitely YES
Theoretical Knowledge	6	12	38	225	247
Analytical Thinking Skills	4	15	25	222	263
Foreign Language Proficiency	10	40	57	198	224
The ability for innovative thinking	5	15	38	215	256
The ability for creative action	4	19	37	206	263
The ability to make independent decisions	4	17	29	182	297
The ability to analyze data	1	11	28	214	275
The ability to work in a team	22	69	55	203	180
The ability to use information and telecommunication technology	5	19	38	190	277
The ability to conduct negotiations	9	46	69	205	200
The ability for balanced action in professional and personal situations	7	25	54	224	219
Crisis Management Skills	7	36	55	204	227
Communication Competencies	16	46	56	221	190
Communication Competencies	15	57	60	204	193
Leadership Competencies	15	48	65	219	182
Entrepreneurship Competencies	12	23	37	232	225

Study: own work.

Table 2. Pearson correlation coefficients.

Variables	Pearson Correlation Co-Efficient	t-Value	*p*-Value
Effectiveness—Satisfaction	**0.686**	21.64	8.35×10^{-75}
Effectiveness—Lecturer Engagement	0.447	11.47	2.39×10^{-27}
Effectiveness—Amount of Students' Own Work	0.309	7.46	3.63×10^{-13}
Effectiveness—Institutional Technical Preparation	0.377	9.34	2.61×10^{-19}
Effectiveness—Overall Institution Evaluation	0.467	12.12	5.19×10^{-30}
Satisfaction—Lecturer Engagement	**0.526**	14.20	5.65×10^{-39}
Satisfaction—Institutional Technical Preparation	0.456	11.76	1.59×10^{-28}
Satisfaction—Overall Institution Evaluation	0.483	12.66	2.85×10^{-32}
Lecturer Engagement—Institutional Technical Preparation	**0.560**	15.52	5.36×10^{-45}
Lecturer Engagement—Overall Institution Evaluation	0.452	11.63	5.36×10^{-28}
Institutional Technical Preparation—Overall Institution Evaluation	**0.490**	12.90	2.68×10^{-33}

Note: significant correlations are highlighted in bold. Study: own work.

In the course of this study, the following sociodemographic data were obtained. Among the participants, the majority studied at Vistula University (63.14%), while 17.01% attended WSB, and 19.85% were at UTH. Regarding age, the largest group of respondents (50.09%) fell within the 21–25 age range, with those under 20 years of age forming the smallest group (6.99%). As for the type of studies, the majority of respondents (63.89%) were enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, 35.73% in graduate studies, and only 0.38% in engineering studies. A vast majority of respondents (92.63%) were part-time students. In terms of professional activity, most respondents (66.54%) were employed full-time, 17.58% worked part-time, 9.83% ran their own businesses, and 6.05% were not working.

3. Results

Table 1 presents expectations regarding the achievement of the assumed educational outcomes in different categories in the context of using remote work models. These categories include aspects of knowledge, practical skills, and social competencies. A five-point evaluation scale from "Definitely NO" to "Definitely YES" is used in the table, illustrating the percentage distributions of responses.

In the revised Table 1, where numerical values are used instead of percentages, it can be observed that in the "Theoretical Knowledge" category, the majority of respondents, 225 and 247, respectively, expressed opinions of "Rather YES" and "Definitely YES". Similar trends are seen in other categories like "Analytical Thinking Skills", where 222 respondents answered "Rather YES" and 263 "Definitely YES". In "Foreign Language Proficiency", 198 responded "Rather YES", and 224 "Definitely YES".

For categories like "Ability for Innovative Thinking" and "Creative Action Skills", high numbers of positive responses are also noted. In "Independent Decision-Making Skills", a significant number, 297 respondents, answered "Definitely YES".

Responses in "Teamwork Skills" are more balanced, with the highest number, 203, in the "Rather YES" category and a notable number, 69, in "Rather NO.

Overall, the table shows a positive attitude of respondents towards achieving educational outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and social competencies through remote work, with a clear tendency for affirmation in most categories. In summary, it is evident that expectations regarding achieving the assumed educational outcomes are generally high, especially in areas of analytical, innovative, creative skills, and independent decision-making, which underscores their importance in the context of contemporary education and the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key to understanding the interrelationships between various aspects of the educational process in a remote work model has become the calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient. In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote education has become a commonly used teaching method, it is important to understand how different elements of this process—such as the effectiveness of classes, student satisfaction, lecturer engagement, the amount of students' own work, the technical preparation of the institution, and the overall evaluation of the institution—affect each other. The Pearson correlation coefficient allows for the quantification of these dependencies, providing important information that can be used to optimize teaching strategies and improve the quality of distance education. Understanding these relationships is crucial for further developing and optimizing remote learning processes, especially in the face of challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the conducted research, a correlation table was developed between six variables:

1. The effectiveness of implementing the educational process in a remote work model.
2. The level of satisfaction with conducting classes in a remote work model.
3. The engagement of lecturers in conducting classes in a remote work model.
4. The amount of self-study necessary to conduct classes in a remote work model.
5. The technical, organizational, and methodological preparation of the institution for conducting classes in a remote work model.
6. The overall evaluation of the institution in the educational market during COVID-19.

Table 2 presents a comprehensive statistical analysis of the relationships between various variables related to remote education. It includes Pearson correlation coefficients, indicating the strength and direction of the relationships, along with t-values and *p*-values, which provide insights into the statistical significance of these correlations. The table covers a range of variable pairs, such as the correlation between effectiveness and student satisfaction, lecturer engagement, and the amount of students' own work. The inclusion of t-values and *p*-values alongside the correlation coefficients offers a more nuanced understanding of the data, highlighting not just the existence of relationships but also their reliability and significance in the context of remote education.

Higher effectiveness of the educational process (Variable 1) often correlates with greater student satisfaction, as seen in the strong positive correlation (0.686) with the level of satisfaction (Variable 2). This effectiveness also shows a moderate correlation with lecturer engagement, the amount of students' own work, preparation of the institution, and the overall evaluation of the institution, suggesting that these aspects are somewhat related to the effectiveness of remote teaching.

In turn, the level of student satisfaction appears to be moderately linked with lecturer engagement, institutional preparation, and overall institution evaluation, indicating that these elements may affect students' satisfaction with remote classes. Lecturer engagement has a weak correlation with the amount of students' own work and a moderate one with institutional preparation and overall evaluation, suggesting it influences the students' perceptions of the institution but not necessarily directly their own work.

The amount of students' own work shows weak correlations with institutional preparation and overall evaluation, which may mean that these aspects do not significantly impact the amount of students' work. The technical, organizational, and methodological preparation of the institution seems to have a moderate impact on the overall evaluation of the institution, suggesting that well-prepared institutions are better rated in the context of remote education.

In summary, the table indicates that each of the assessed aspects of remote work contributes to the success of remote education to some extent, but none of them is the sole determining factor. Most of the relationships are moderate or weak, meaning that while there is some relationship between these variables, it is not very strong.

Based on the provided Pearson correlation coefficients and the number of respondents (529), a statistical analysis was conducted, calculating the t-values and *p*-values for each pair of variables. All *p*-values are very close to zero, indicating that the observed correlations are statistically significant at a very high level. These results suggest the existence of statistically

significant relationships between the examined variables. The statistical analysis of the provided data reveals strong, statistically significant correlations between various aspects of remote education. High t-values and extremely low *p*-values indicate that these correlations are not due to chance. Key findings include the following:

- Effectiveness and Satisfaction: There is a strong positive relationship between the effectiveness of remote learning and student satisfaction, suggesting that more effective courses lead to higher student satisfaction.
- Lecturer Engagement: This factor is significantly correlated with both the effectiveness of courses and overall student satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of lecturer involvement in successful remote education.

Student Work and Technical Preparation: While these factors are less strongly correlated with others, they still play a significant role in the perception of course effectiveness and satisfaction.

Overall Institutional Evaluation: Strong correlations here suggest that the general perception of an institution is heavily influenced by its remote education quality.

4. Discussion

These results underline the multifaceted nature of remote education success, emphasizing the importance of lecturer engagement, effective course design, and institutional support in enhancing student satisfaction and educational outcomes.

Expanding on the findings from the statistical analysis, it becomes evident that the quality of remote education is influenced by multiple factors. The engagement of instructors impacts not only the effectiveness of teaching but also the overall evaluation of the institution, highlighting the importance of the educator's role in creating positive educational experiences.

Further analysis indicates that instructor engagement alone is not sufficient without proper technical and organizational support from the institution. The technical and organizational preparation of an institution affects the overall student experience in remote education, suggesting that investments in technical infrastructure and teacher training are crucial for improving the quality of remote learning.

Additionally, the results point to the need for further research on the long-term effects of remote education on students' career and life development. Remote education, though a response to a crisis, may have lasting effects on the way future generations learn and work.

These conclusions also show that the success of remote education depends on the perception of students' own work. This indicates a need to create more engaging and interactive educational materials that motivate students to work independently and explore topics.

In conclusion, this analysis emphasizes that the success of remote education depends on a complex set of factors, each playing a key role. Understanding these interdependencies is crucial for further development and optimization of educational processes in a remote work model.

5. Conclusions

The statistical analysis of Pearson correlation coefficients and t-tests, conducted in the context of the effectiveness of the educational process in a remote working model, serves to confirm the statistical significance of the observed relationships between variables. This analysis allows for determining which aspects of remote education are most interconnected and have the greatest impact on its success. The results of such an analysis indicate strong links between effectiveness and student satisfaction, suggesting that the quality of remote class implementation directly affects learners' satisfaction. Additionally, significant correlations between lecturer engagement and other aspects, such as student satisfaction and the overall evaluation of the institution, highlight the importance of faculty engagement in the educational process.

The amount of students' own work, although less correlated with other variables, still plays a role in the perception of the effectiveness and quality of remote education. Meanwhile, moderate correlations between the technical, organizational, and methodological preparation of the institution and its overall evaluation indicate that well-prepared institutions are better rated in the context of remote education.

Overall, the results of this analysis emphasize that the success of remote education is multifaceted and depends on a combination of different factors, including instructional effectiveness, lecturer engagement, technical preparation of the institution, and the level of student satisfaction and self-study. Understanding these relationships is crucial for further developing and optimizing educational processes in a remote work model, especially in the face of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This article makes a significant contribution to research on sustainable education in higher education institutions, highlighting the importance of student expectations in shaping the effectiveness of the educational process, especially in a remote work model. The statistical analysis of Pearson correlation coefficients and t-tests reveals significant links between class effectiveness and student satisfaction, lecturer engagement, and the overall evaluation of the institution. These results indicate that the success of remote education is complex and multifaceted, dependent on a combination of various factors.

These findings have practical significance for institutions in the context of further developing and optimizing educational processes, especially in the face of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This article underscores that understanding and appropriately responding to student expectations is crucial for improving the quality of sustainable education and can serve as a guide for educational institutions in striving to achieve high standards of teaching and learning.

However, this study, despite its value, has certain limitations that should be considered in interpreting the results. Firstly, these limitations stem from the nature of the conducted survey, which may not fully reflect the complexity and diversity of student expectations from different environments and specialties. Secondly, this study focuses on a single university, which may limit the possibility of generalizing the results to other educational institutions. Cultural, economic, and structural differences between institutions may affect the perception and expectations of students in the context of sustainable education.

Moreover, this study was conducted over a specific period, which may influence student responses, especially in the context of the dynamically changing situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research could focus on a longer time period to better understand how student expectations change with the development of global and local situations.

Finally, this study mainly focuses on perceptual aspects, relying on students' self-descriptions, which can lead to subjectivity in responses. Future research could include more objective measures, such as analysis of data on academic outcomes or engagement in activities related to sustainable development.

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