

Learning Perceptions, Satisfaction, and Performance of Flight Attendant Major Students: Insights from Jining Normal University

Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts (JTHCA)
2025, Vol. 17 (1) pp 1-11
© The Author(s) 2025
Reprints and permission:
UiTM Press
Submit date: 4th March 2025
Accept date: 20th April 2025
Publish date: 30th April 2025

Zhang Xuhong

Jining Normal University, Inner Mongolia, China.
zhangxuhongbww@gmail.com

Salamiah A Jamal

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Selangor, Malaysia.
drsalamiah@uitm.edu.my

Zurena @ Rena Shahril*

Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Selangor, Malaysia.
zurena511@uitm.edu.my

Proposed citation:

Xuhong, Z., Jamal, S. A., & Shahril, Z. (2025). Learning Perceptions, Satisfaction, and Performance of Flight Attendant Major Students: Insights from Jining Normal University. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 17(1), 1-11.

Abstract

This study explores the interrelationships between learning perceptions, satisfaction, and performance among flight attendant major students at Jining Normal University. Guided by the Expectancy-Value Theory, this research adopts a quantitative methodology involving a cross-sectional survey of 219 graduates. The findings reveal that positive learning perceptions significantly influence student satisfaction, mediating the relationship between perceptions and academic performance. Practical implications include strategies for enhancing curriculum design and teaching methodologies to align better with industry demands. This study contributes to the literature by focusing on a niche yet critical academic discipline, shedding light on the unique dynamics of aviation education.

Keywords:

Learning perceptions, Student satisfaction, Academic performance, Aviation education, Expectancy-Value Theory

1 Introduction

The civil aviation industry in China has undergone rapid development, emerging as a cornerstone of the country's economic and transportation growth. As air travel demand surges, so does the need for qualified professionals who can maintain service excellence and operational safety (Civil Aviation Administration of China, 2025). Among these professionals, flight attendants play a crucial role in ensuring passenger comfort and safety, making their training a vital component of aviation education Xi (2022).

Jining Normal University has taken a pioneering step in addressing this demand by introducing a specialized Flight Attendant program in 2012. This program aims to equip students with theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for careers in civil aviation. The curriculum encompasses various subjects, from civil aviation service etiquette to emergency response training, ensuring the holistic development of future professionals (Jining Normal University, 2023). Despite its innovative approach, the program has faced challenges, particularly in fluctuating enrollment and graduation rates, which signal potential issues with student satisfaction and alignment with industry expectations (Smith & Liu, 2019).

Student satisfaction has been widely acknowledged as a critical determinant of academic success and overall program effectiveness. Existing literature highlights the importance of aligning educational programs with student needs and expectations to foster engagement, motivation, and better learning outcomes (Wen, 2013; Wang & Yang, 2015; Hu, 2018; Liu et al., 2023). However, while significant research has been conducted on student satisfaction in various academic disciplines, there is a notable lack of studies focusing on niche fields such as aviation education, particularly flight attendant training programs.

The Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) offers a valuable framework for understanding the motivational dynamics in educational settings. According to EVT, students' learning outcomes are influenced by their expectations of success and the value they assign to their educational activities (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Factors such as practical training facilities, curriculum relevance, and instructor-student interactions play pivotal roles in shaping these expectations and values in aviation education.

This study aims to fill the research gap by investigating the interrelationships between learning perceptions, satisfaction, and performance among flight attendant major students at Jining Normal University. By examining these relationships, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for improving program quality, aligning educational offerings with industry demands, and enhancing the overall learning experience. Ultimately, this research contributes to the theoretical understanding of student satisfaction and the practical enhancement of aviation education programs.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Aviation Education

China's aviation education landscape has undergone significant evolution, driven by the rapid expansion of the civil aviation industry. Government initiatives, such as the "14th Five-Year Plan," emphasize the development of high-quality professionals to meet industry demands. However, aligning educational outcomes with practical needs remains a persistent challenge (Huang, 2022). Studies on aviation education highlight the importance of integrating theoretical knowledge with hands-on training to ensure students are industry-ready (Xi, 2022).

While traditional aviation programs focus on pilot training and technical maintenance, there is increasing recognition of the role of cabin crew in ensuring passenger safety and satisfaction (Dong, 2022). Programs like the one at Jining Normal University aim to address this gap by providing specialized training tailored to cabin crew responsibilities, including customer service and emergency management.

2.2 Learning Perceptions and Satisfaction

Learning perceptions refer to how students interpret and evaluate their educational experiences, encompassing teaching quality, curriculum design, and learning environment. Positive perceptions have been shown to significantly enhance student engagement and satisfaction (Zheng et al., 2023). For instance, students who perceive their courses as relevant and well-structured are more likely to feel motivated and perform better academically.

Student satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that reflects how educational experiences meet or exceed expectations. Research indicates that satisfaction is influenced by factors such as instructor effectiveness, availability of resources, and the overall learning atmosphere (Wang et al., 2023). In aviation education, practical training facilities and simulation-based learning are crucial in shaping satisfaction levels. For example, students with access to state-of-the-art simulation tools report higher satisfaction and confidence in their skills (Ko et al., 2021).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT), developed by Wigfield and Eccles (1992), posits that an individual's motivation is determined by their expectations of success and value on a task. In educational contexts, this theory has been widely used to explore how students' beliefs about their abilities and the perceived utility of their coursework influence their academic engagement and outcomes.

In aviation education, EVT provides a robust framework for understanding student perceptions, satisfaction, and performance dynamics. For example, students who believe their training will directly contribute to their career goals (high utility value) are

more likely to invest effort and engage in learning activities. Conversely, if the perceived cost of the program—in terms of time, effort, or financial resources—outweighs its value, students may experience lower satisfaction and reduced performance.

2.4 Gaps in Existing Research

While extensive studies have been conducted on student satisfaction in higher education, research specific to aviation education—particularly flight attendant training programs—is limited. Existing literature often focuses on general factors influencing satisfaction, such as teaching quality and curriculum design, without addressing the unique challenges faced by students in specialized programs. For instance, the high-pressure environment of aviation training, coupled with the need for practical, hands-on skills, requires tailored pedagogical approaches (Liu et al., 2023).

Additionally, few studies explore the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between learning perceptions and performance. Understanding this relationship is critical for designing programs that meet academic standards and prepare students for the demands of the aviation industry.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. The choice of a quantitative approach was guided by the need to systematically examine the relationships between learning perceptions, satisfaction, and performance among flight attendant students (Creswell, 2013). A cross-sectional design allows for data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of these relationships within the specified population. The study operates within a positivist paradigm, emphasizing objective measurements and statistical analysis to draw valid and reliable conclusions.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises Jining Normal University's Flight Attendant program graduates who completed their studies between 2016 and 2020. Based on university records, 219 graduates were identified as the population for this study. To ensure representativeness, a stratified random sampling technique was employed.

Graduates were stratified by year of completion, and proportional samples were drawn from each cohort to account for potential variations in experiences and perceptions over time.

The minimum sample size was calculated using G-Power software, with a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), a significance level of 0.05, and a power of 0.80. This calculation indicated a required sample size of 153 participants to achieve sufficient statistical power (Faul et al., 2009). Ultimately, 180 valid responses were collected, exceeding the minimum requirement and ensuring robust data for analysis.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire to measure learning perceptions, satisfaction, and performance. The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments used in previous studies, including Wang et al. (2023) and Mohammed et al. (2024). The survey comprised three sections: (i) Demographics - Capturing respondent details such as gender, age, employment status, and graduation year, (ii) Learning Perceptions - Measuring individual factors (e.g., motivation, self-regulation), instructor factors (e.g., teaching style, expertise), curriculum factors (e.g., relevance, difficulty), environmental factors (e.g., facilities, resources), and teacher-student interaction factors and (iii) Satisfaction and Performance - Assessing overall satisfaction with the program and self-reported performance indicators, such as practical skills and preparedness for industry roles. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture the extent of agreement with each statement.

3.4 Data Collection

Since the target population of 219 graduates from the Flight Attendance Major was dispersed across various cities in China, a multifaceted approach was employed to maximize response rates through online survey tools and strategic outreach. The first method involved email campaigns leveraging the university's alumni database. Personalized email invitations were crafted to include a concise yet compelling description of the survey's purpose and significance and a direct link to the survey. These emails were designed to be visually appealing and mobile-friendly, acknowledging that many recipients would likely access them via their smartphones.

The second method focused on social media outreach through the university's official channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and WeChat. Posts were strategically developed with clear calls to action, encouraging alumni to participate and share the survey within their networks. Visually engaging content, such as videos and infographics explaining the survey's objectives and benefits, was incorporated to boost engagement. Lastly, the third strategy utilized the WeChat alumni group, a widely popular communication platform in China. This approach fostered direct interaction with alumni, providing an opportunity to share the survey link in a familiar and frequently accessed space. Regular follow-ups and personalized messages in the group further encouraged participation, helping to optimize response rates. This comprehensive approach ensured effective communication with the target population, leveraging a combination of traditional email outreach and modern digital engagement strategies to maximize participation and data collection quality.

4 Findings

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study's respondents predominantly comprised young adults aged 18–25 (63.64%), followed by those aged 26–30 (36.36%). A gender imbalance was observed, with females making up 60.61% of the sample, reflecting the aviation industry's typical workforce demographic in customer-facing roles. Employment status varied significantly: 40.40% were unemployed, 28.79% worked in non-aviation industries, 16.16% were freelancers, and 14.65% were employed in the aviation sector. Additionally, graduates from the 2020 cohort accounted for the most significant proportion of respondents (35.35%), followed by those from 2021 (27.27%) and 2022 (15.15%). These figures highlight the transitional nature of employment for recent graduates in this field.

Table 1: Demographic Frequency

Items	Categories	N □	Percent (%) □	Cumulative Percent (%) □
Your gender	Male	78	39.39	39.39
	Female	120	60.61	100.00
Your age	18 to 25	126	63.64	63.64
	26 to 30	72	36.36	100.00
Your employment status	Wait for employment	80	40.40	40.40
	freelancer	32	16.16	56.57
	Work in the aviation industry	29	14.65	71.21
	Work in other industries	57	28.79	100.00
Your graduation year	2024	25	12.63	12.63
	2023	19	9.60	22.22
	2022	30	15.15	37.37
	2021	54	27.27	64.65

Items	Categories	N	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
	2020	70	35.35	100.00
Total		198	100.0	100.0

Note: Lorem ipsum

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the strength and direction of relationships between the key variables in the study: students' learning perceptions, satisfaction, and academic performance. This statistical method examines how changes in one variable are associated with changes in another, providing insight into the interdependencies among the constructs under investigation.

The results revealed significant positive correlations between students' learning perceptions and satisfaction levels, indicating that higher perceptions of individual factors (such as motivation and learning ability), teacher factors (expertise and communication), course factors (relevance and practicality), and environmental factors (facility quality and peer interaction) were associated with increased satisfaction. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that when students view their learning experience as engaging and supportive, their satisfaction improves.

Furthermore, satisfaction was strongly correlated with academic performance. Students who reported higher satisfaction with their instructors, course structure, and learning environment also demonstrated superior academic outcomes in theoretical assessments and practical applications. This positive correlation underscores the pivotal role of satisfaction as a determinant of educational success.

Interestingly, the analysis also highlighted the mediating role of satisfaction in the relationship between learning perceptions and academic performance. The findings suggest that students with favorable perceptions of their educational experience were more likely to feel satisfied, which enhanced their academic achievements. This mediation effect further emphasizes fostering a supportive and engaging learning environment to optimize student outcomes. Table 2 illustrates the relationships among the study variables. These findings highlight the interconnected nature of perceptions, satisfaction, and performance, reinforcing the importance of adopting a holistic approach to curriculum design, teaching practices, and resource allocation. By prioritizing student satisfaction as a core component of academic programs, institutions can improve engagement and educational outcomes.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Student perception	Student satisfaction	Academic achievement
Student perception	4.194	0.744	1		
Student satisfaction	4.240	0.869	0.809***	1	
Academic achievement	4.159	0.968	0.763***	0.901***	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

4.3 Learning Perceptions

Respondents reported that positive individual learning factors, such as motivation and effective study methods, contributed significantly to satisfaction. Students valued a balanced curriculum that integrated theoretical knowledge with practical applications, fostering a more engaging and relevant learning experience. Teacher-related factors, including subject matter expertise, communication style, and fairness, were highly influential in shaping positive perceptions. Furthermore, well-maintained facilities and a supportive learning environment enhanced students' academic engagement and satisfaction. The importance of teacher-student interaction was evident, as regular feedback and guidance were perceived as critical to successful learning outcomes.

4.4 Learning Satisfaction and Academic Performance

The analysis demonstrated a strong correlation between learning satisfaction and academic performance. Students who expressed higher satisfaction with their courses, instructors, and facilities achieved better educational outcomes in theoretical assessments and practical applications. The mediating role of satisfaction was significant in the relationship between learning perceptions and academic performance. This underscores the need for institutions to prioritize student satisfaction as essential to academic success. Practical training facilities, such as simulated cabin environments, contributed significantly to students' confidence and preparedness for real-world scenarios, aligning educational outcomes with industry expectations.

4.5 Practical Implications

The findings suggest that improving satisfaction requires a multifaceted approach involving curriculum updates, enhanced practical training resources, and better teacher-student engagement strategies. Institutions should prioritize modernizing facilities, fostering a collaborative learning environment, and ensuring the curriculum aligns closely with the aviation industry's demands. By addressing these areas, universities can

better prepare graduates for the workforce and mitigate employment challenges faced by new professionals in the aviation sector.

5 Conclusion

This study investigated the learning perceptions, satisfaction, and academic performance of Flight Attendant major students at Jining Normal University, uncovering critical insights into how educational programs can better meet the needs of students and the civil aviation industry. The findings emphasize the importance of aligning theoretical and practical elements of the curriculum with industry demands while prioritizing factors that influence student satisfaction.

The results revealed that learning perceptions, shaped by personal motivation, teacher expertise, and learning environments, significantly impact student satisfaction. Satisfaction, in turn, serves as a crucial mediator between perceptions and academic performance, highlighting its role as both an outcome and a catalyst for better educational results. Students who felt supported by instructors and equipped with industry-relevant skills through practical training reported higher satisfaction and improved learning outcomes.

These findings have important theoretical and practical implications. The study expands the application of the Expectancy-Value Theory by demonstrating its relevance in specialized aviation education. It shows how students' expectations of success and the perceived value of their education drive their engagement and performance. Practically, the results underscore the need for targeted interventions in curriculum design, teaching practices, and resource allocation to enhance student satisfaction and better prepare graduates for their professional roles.

Addressing issues such as fluctuating enrollment rates and gaps in graduate readiness requires a concerted effort from educational institutions to bridge the gap between academic programs and industry needs. By focusing on student-centred learning experiences, Jining Normal University and similar institutions can foster a more supportive educational environment, producing skilled professionals capable of contributing effectively to the growing civil aviation sector.

Future research should explore the long-term career trajectories of Flight Attendant graduates to assess the sustained impact of educational satisfaction and performance on professional success. Comparative studies across institutions and industries could provide broader insights into best practices for aligning education with workforce demands.

6 About the author

Zhang Xuhong is a lecturer at Jining Normal University, China, specializing in flight attendant training. With a strong background in aviation service education, she focuses on grooming students for careers in the airline industry by enhancing their professional skills, communication abilities, and service etiquette. Zhang Xuhong is dedicated to academic excellence and industry-relevant education, contributing to the development of future aviation professionals.

Salamiah A. Jamal is a Professor of Hospitality Management at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Selangor. She completed her PhD at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia and her undergraduate studies at Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom. Dr Jamal's research focuses on hospitality consumer behaviour transcending conventional boundaries, delving into general contexts and niche segments' intricacies. Driven by a commitment to understanding the diverse dynamics of consumers, guests, visitors, travelers, and tourists, she illuminates pathways to enhance the hospitality experience.

Dr Zurena @ Rena Shahril is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, UiTM, specializing in technology within the hospitality industry. Her expertise lies in the integration of digital innovations to enhance service efficiency, customer experience, and operational management in hospitality settings. With a strong academic and research background, she explores emerging technologies such as smart hospitality, digital payment systems, and automation in service delivery.

7 References

- CAAC (Civil Aviation Administration of China). (2018). Programme of Action for Building a Strong Civil Aviation State in the New Era. Retrieved from <http://www.caac.gov.cn/XXGK/XXGK/ZCFB/201812/P020181212604234264591.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dong, Q. (2022). Discussion on the professional identity and countermeasures of air crew students in higher vocational colleges. *Journal of Liaoning Teachers College*, 2022(1), 109-110.
https://chn.oversea.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLAS T2022&filename=SZXB202201042&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=EPtBzCnjKkpPJmDhZjy00G YoMAoQtjBcx9eU-fwSGInNg1y2ei_F2L8fvgELq98h
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., and Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41, 1149-1160.
- Hu, Y. (2018). A study on the influencing factors of local undergraduate students' learning satisfaction—based on the perspective of students' self-learning effectiveness. *Higher Education Exploration*, 2018(3), 43-50. doi: 10.3969/j.issn.1673-9760.2018.03.008
- Huang, Y. (2022). Analysis on the training direction of flight attendant professional talents in higher vocational colleges under the "14th Five-Year Plan." *Avant-garde*, 2022(1), 130-132.

- Jining Normal University. (2025). Overview of Jining Normal University. Retrieved from <http://www.jntc.nm.cn/>
- Ko, Y., Lee, H., & Hyun, S. S. (2021). Airline Cabin Crew Team System's Positive Evaluation Factors and Their Impact on Personal Health and Team Potency. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(19), 10480. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph181910480>
- Liu, A., Chen, Z., Wang, S., Guo, J., & Lin, L. (2023). Relationships between college students' belief in a just world and their learning satisfaction: The chain mediating effects of gratitude and engagement. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 197-209. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S396702>
- Mohammed, A. B., Maqableh, M., Qasim, D., & AlJawazneh, F. (2024). Exploring the Factors Influencing Academic Learning Performance Using Online Learning Systems. *Heliyon*, 10(2024).
- Wang, S. S., Wang, G., & Zhong, X. (2023). A study on the influencing factors of college students' classroom satisfaction: Based on the moderating effect of teacher-student interaction. *Quality Education in Western China*, 9(3), 38-42. doi: 10.16681/j.cnki.wcqe.202303010
- Wang, Y., & Yang, X. (2015). An empirical study on student satisfaction in high-level universities - based on the data analysis of the "National College Student Learning Survey". *Journal of the National Academy of Educational Administration*, 2015(2), 77-82. doi : 10.3969/j.issn.1672-4038.2015.02.015
- Wen, J., & Shi, Q. (2013). An analysis of the elements and structure of college students' learning satisfaction. *Macroscopic Quality Study*, 1(3), 87-94. doi: 10.3969/j.issn.2095-607X.2013.03.010
- Wigfield, A. & Eccles, J.S. (1992). The development of achievement task values: A theoretical analysis. *Developmental Review*, 12(3), 265-310. doi: 10.1016/0273-2297(92)90011-P
- Xi, T. (2022). Research on Training Mode of Air Crew Professionals Based on Job Requirements. *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 2022(7), 98-102. doi: 10.25236/AJHSS.2022.050719
- Zheng, X., Li, C., Chen, Y., & Li, S. (2023). College students' participation and learning self-efficacy affect the curriculum satisfaction study. *Journal of Hubei Normal University (Philosophy and Social Science)*, 43(1), 118-123. doi: 10.3969/j.issn.2096-3130.2023.01.01