

Enhancing In-Bound Student Mobility in Kenyan Universities through Student Feedback on Their Satisfaction

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Abstract

Quality education for attainment of sustainable development goals cannot exclude giving attention to students as global citizens. In the context of an ongoing trend of inter-regional and intra-regional student mobility, universities must consider hosting international students as a key attribute of internationalization of education and give attention to the needs of the international students they host. Feedback from students on their satisfaction with their university experiences is therefore vital for continuous quality improvement in universities. Understanding how different groups of students perceive their experiences is helpful in decision making to help meet diverse students' needs. This paper focuses on feedback from international students enrolled in Christian universities in Kenya where a survey was conducted and cross-sectional data collected in the year 2017. Stratified random sampling was done for inclusivity of the various sub-groups of interest to the study. Overall satisfaction with students' university experiences was sought and student characteristics were regarded as the dependent variables whose influence on the international students' satisfaction is established. Relationships between students' satisfaction and various student characteristics were determined through Mann-Whitney U tests and Kruskal Wallis tests which revealed that the variables of age, gender, current type of residence and the kind of accommodation preferred by international students had a significant relationship with students' satisfaction. The findings revealed that the younger undergraduate students were significantly less satisfied than their older postgraduate counterparts and that female international students were significantly less satisfied than male students. University accommodation off campus was not just the least popular type of accommodation among international students; it also generated the least satisfaction. These are aspects to which educational administrators need to give attention in the endeavour to enhance service quality among international students in their institutions.

Keywords: educational quality, international students' feedback, international student management, international student mobility, satisfaction with experiences, student characteristics

INTRODUCTION

In the current context of globalization, the goal of delivering quality education entails meeting the needs of all students and preparing them as global citizens. This has promoted the concept of internalization of education which is propagated in higher education through programmes that involve students and faculty exchanges; through national and sub-national

policies, through the curriculum or through the recruitment and hosting of international students (Qiang, 2003; Schoole & Knight, 2013; Yemini & Sagie 2016). Although most universities have generally had an international component (Healey, 2008; Teferra & Altbach, 2003; Kehm & Teichler, 2007), internationalization of the student body has given a new focus to the international nature of education (Healey, 2008). The role of international students in institutions of higher learning cannot be ignored and in the more developed countries, international students have been credited in the promotion of educational quality, institutional linkages as well as making a great contribution to the economy (Lee, 2015; Garrett, 2014; Qiang, 2003).

Although most studies on international students are documented from the more developed countries which attract the most international students, developing countries also host international students primarily coming from neighbouring countries. South Africa and Kenya are some of the regional hubs that attract international students from Africa for higher education and this is a continuing trend in other regions as well. African students may have taken note of the improvements in their regions such as recognition of academic programmes, political stability in the host countries, common language and trade links as contrasted to the increasing cost of studying in universities in the west (Njuguna & Itegi, 2013) and increased visa restrictions (Lee & Schoole, 2015). With increasing student mobility across borders in Africa, leaders in institutions of higher learning need to be more deliberate in promoting educational quality for both national as well as international students flowing into the universities. This would promote education within African universities as more internationally oriented and change perceptions based on the contribution of African universities as givers of international education, not just recipients.

Continuous evaluation is central in determination of the level of goal achievement in organizations. In institutions of higher learning, students are key stakeholders who are at the

centre of the educational process, and whose input is invaluable in achievement of educational goals. In the context of the ongoing goal for internalization of education, hosting international students is an important aspect that needs to be promoted in all universities including those in developing countries. For purposes of continuous improvement towards meeting student needs, international students are then important informants for institutions that care about quality education for global citizenship. This paper gives attention to valuable feedback from international students in Kenyan Christian universities on their overall level of satisfaction with their university experiences and how this feedback relates to different groups of international students based on their demographical information.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Regional Cooperation in Promoting Cross-border Student Mobility

Institutions of higher learning strive to offer quality education for both national and global citizens. Even though there is often a contradiction between serving national and global interests (Hammond, 2016), these institutions need to continually strive to make contributions through internationalization activities such as hosting international students. Many developing countries, however, have weak educational systems and their preoccupation may not be on what they can give to the world – rather the focus is on what they wish to receive. It is clear that studies on international students are predominantly from the perspective of the more developed countries which tend to ‘import’ international students from the developing countries and are “exporting transnational education services as trade” (Hammond, 2016). Developing countries may have more benefits by cooperating with one another especially those from the same regions in promoting the benefits of higher education.

The concept of regionalisation in international education has thrived in European countries with the popular European Higher Education Area (AHEA) and the Bologna

process which promotes staff and student mobility in the area through cooperation of countries in the European Union. With the endorsement of the African Union for greater harmonization of education systems in Africa (Huisman, Hsieh, Shams & Wilkins, 2012), Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) in Africa should give focus to international students considering the possibility of continuous student mobility within Africa. It is also in the nature of universities to maintain an international focus as Aisling Tiernan asserts, “a higher education institution cannot grow and thrive within its national borders; such an inward focus goes against the ethos for which scientific research and education stands” (Tiernan, 2017).

Having indicated the importance of encouraging the growth in number of international students in the universities, issues of international student recruitment, retention, satisfaction and achievement are pertinent for educational leaders and administrators. Correlations between student satisfaction and their willingness to recommend their institutions have been reported (Garrett, 2014; Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker & Grøgaard, 2002), showing the importance of giving attention to student satisfaction. This paper therefore gives a report from international students in Kenyan universities on their overall satisfaction with their university experiences, information that would be useful in enhancing international student experiences and further promote the trend of student mobility in Africa.

The Student in Higher Education

Understanding the concept of student satisfaction in higher education requires contextualization of the role and place of the student. There is a continued debate on whether students should be viewed as customers, products of higher education, consumers of the educational experience or partners (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996; Eagle & Brennan, 2007; Colonnese, 2000; Guilbault, 2016). For those who view students as customers, reference is made to their payment of fees in increasingly high proportions, therefore likening them to buyers of goods and services. Higher educational practices are increasingly expressing the

adoption of the customer model for students such as the use of student satisfaction surveys in universities and adoption of marketing promotions by universities (Clayson & Haley, 2005; Durkin & McKenna, 2011). One of the factors associated with the customer model's adoption in higher education according to Clayson & Haley is historical. That is; the need to refocus on the student and the importance of teaching rather than the focus on research that has dominated the universities since the late 19th century. The other factor is allocation of funds in higher education based on student numbers (head count or full-time equivalencies), thus giving importance to students in relation to resource allocation (Clayson & Haley, 2005). The adoption of business perspectives such as total quality management in education and various marketing models is also associated with the popularity of the student as customer model (Eagle & Brennan, 2007).

Antagonists to the view of students as customers believe that regardless of whether students are paying for their services, the education context is different from a business and adoption of marketplace metaphors might have negative effects on the educational process. Emphasis is put on some notions that cannot be blindly adopted in educational settings such as "the customer is always right" (Eagle & Brennan, 2007). The perspective of a student as 'customer' may also lead to a misunderstanding of what the 'product' would be. Whether education or a degree can be regarded as a product is a question of concern (Clayson & Haley, 2005). The role of the faculty and the university in setting the standards may also seem to be under threat when students take the perspective of customers in educational institutions. For instance, students may make alternate choices defying standard guidelines such as keeping normal or manageable workloads for quality purposes or choosing to select easier courses or prefer lecturers who can give an 'easy "A"' (Clayson & Haley, 2005).

Taking the perspective of faculty, Colonnese was of the opinion that "college students - even the slow learners - are neither our products nor our customers but rather our fellow

travellers, persons with whom we are engaged in a systematic, long-term altruistic relationship complicated by our ever-shifting inequalities of knowledge and status” (Colonnese, 2000). This perspective sees students as partners with faculty and the educational institutions, each party having an important role in the education process. According to Colonnese, students are to do their best based on their abilities, faculty are to teach students based on the students’ needs while the institution is to provide a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Another perspective is from Clayson and Haley (2005, p. 6) who in review of the ‘student as a collaborative educational partner’ model, argue that “it still ignores the relationship that logically exists among the academic/research community, parents, alumni, government, business, and the public with higher education.” They propose the “relationship-marketing model” which acknowledges that the student is not the only partner in education and therefore their immediate needs may not always be at the focus considering the other stakeholders that are served by the mission of the institution.

With a backdrop of systems theory that acknowledges the interplay of roles and expectations of different stakeholders in organizations, this paper takes the perspective that students are key stakeholders in the institutions of higher learning and they remain at the centre of the educational process (Weerasinghe, Lalitha & Fernando, 2017; Gruber, Fuss, Voss & Glaeser-Zikuda, 2010). Among other modes of evaluating success in universities, students’ feedback is very important. Through student feedback, administrators can get to understand student needs from their own perspective and utilise the received information in decision making that would promote quality in education.

Student Satisfaction with their experiences

The use of student satisfaction surveys in universities is a common means of getting feedback from students on their experiences. However, most of the available literature on international student experiences is from the more developed countries such as the U.S.A.

and the UK (Clayson & Haley, 2005; UK HE International Unit, 2015) while there is little available from the African region (ANIE, 2015). In the more developed countries, university ranking is known to play a key role in students', parents' and academicians' decision making in selecting colleges and universities (Martin, 2015; Hendel & Stolz, 2008). Student population characteristics such as the international student profiles form an important component in university ranking. In a study of 77 universities intended to develop an empirical approach to evaluating the international dimension of research universities in the United States, student characteristics topped the internationalization indicators based on the weighted means. Student characteristics as an indicator was followed by curricular content, then scholar characteristics, research orientation and finally the organizational support (Horn, Hendel, & Fry, 2007). The student satisfaction reported in this paper utilizes student characteristics as a variable of analysis to indicate which kind of students perceive their experiences as satisfying or not satisfying.

There are many factors at play to determine students' satisfaction with their university experiences, some personal and others institutional. Many studies on the adaptation of international students in foreign countries recognize the role of various student characteristics, especially age, gender, duration of stay in the foreign country as well as the region of origin for such students (Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair, & Ragavan, 2016; Sam, 2001). In a study done among international students in Norway, younger students adapted more easily when compared to the older ones. The male students in comparison to their female counterparts also seemed to easily adapt, while students from non-western countries had the greatest challenges in adaptation in western countries (Sam, 2001). In another study done among international students in branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), institutional factors seemed to have more significance in determining students' level of satisfaction than the students' personal characteristics. However, there was more satisfaction

among postgraduate students compared to undergraduate students (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013). Research from a university in India associated the predominantly low satisfaction of international students with a majority of the university services to the level of development of the country (Asare-Nuamah, 2017).

Studies on satisfaction revolve around concepts such as expectations, service quality, perceived value and experiences (Weerasinghe et al., 2017; Durkin, McKenna & Cummins, 2012; Ali & Amin, 2014; Ali et al., 2016). In the context of this study, issues of values, academic quality and excellence are not just central to universities, but the institutions under consideration should care even more based on their Christian identity. While evaluating satisfaction, both cognitive and emotional interactions are involved and personal as well as institutional factors have an influence on students' level of satisfaction (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006; Ali et al., 2016; Weerasinghe et al., 2017). Common personal factors include "age, gender, employment, preferred learning style and student's GPA" while "institutional factors cover quality of instructions, promptness of the instructor's feedback, clarity of expectation, [and] teaching style" (Weerasinghe et al., 2017, p. 534). Other institutional factors include social conditions, educational facilities, and effective use of technology (Wilkins & Balakrishnan, 2013). The factors under consideration in this paper are the personal factors of international students in the selected Christian universities. Specifically, relationships are sought between students' satisfaction with their overall university experiences and student characteristics such as age, gender, region of origin, accommodation status and source of funding.

The increased mobility of international students for higher education requires that educational leadership recognizes the place of international students and their role in promotion of internationalization of education and profiling the host universities internationally. Understanding the student characteristics and their relationship to student

satisfaction provides important information that university administrators can use in strategic planning and decision making such as what students of different age groups, gender and countries of origin expect. According to Dužević & Časni, “satisfied students are a source of competitive advantage because they are more likely to remain at their HEI [higher education institution] and to spread positive feedback via word-of-mouth” (Dužević & Časni, 2015, p. 568). There is also evidence of association between student satisfaction, service quality, student retention and academic success (Ali et al., 2016; Elliott & Healy, 2001; BC Outcomes Working Group, 2003). Students’ self-reported assessment of their university experiences, although important, may not wholly indicate the quality of university services or learning. However, student satisfaction is regarded as a key performance indicator of service quality (Ali et al., 2016). Feedback from students on their satisfaction is therefore an aspect that university administrators cannot ignore since it is also regarded as a significant educational outcome (Weerasinghe et al., 2017; Gray & DiLoreto, 2016). The definition by Elliot and Healy of student satisfaction as “a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of a student’s educational experience” is adopted for purposes of this paper (Elliott & Healy, 2001, p. 2) and it is assessed based on students’ overall experience with their university experiences.

Student feedback is not, however, an end in itself. In many cases, student feedback is not maximally utilised in educational institutions, with many completed studies gathering dust on library shelves. Research is not just for its own sake, but adoption of research in educational practice is useful and valuable for educational administrators. According to Harvey, gaps may exist in institutions where there is no room provided for integration of student feedback with institutional structures and systems (2003). To address this, Harvey proposes some guidelines that can make student feedback more effective in institutions as follows: Institutions should only collect usable data as students can tell when their feedback

is not taken seriously, and they may be sceptical of participating in the future. The other recommendation made is for clear reporting of information gathered from student data, and integration of accountability systems targeted at continuous quality improvement in the institution. The accountability system should include communicating back to students for them to know directly how their contribution has led to institutional policy changes.

University Education in Kenya

In the Kenyan context, universities are run under the oversight of the Commission for University Education (CUE). As of November 2017, there were a total of 74 universities in Kenya, 31 public and 18 private chartered universities. In addition, there were 6 constituent colleges of public universities, 5 constituent colleges of private universities and an additional 14 universities operating under a letter of interim authority (CUE, 2017). Expansion of Kenyan university education has provided opportunities for many Kenyan students as well as international students. Most of the Kenyan students in the public universities are government sponsored. The private universities have received government sponsored students only in the last two years before which their only students were those self-paying and the international students. The public universities have in addition to receiving the government sponsored students also been admitting self-paying students since 1998 when the dual track admissions policy was adopted (Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2013). As for international students, the public universities mainly admit those on short-term or exchange programmes (Teferra & Knight, 2008), while the private universities have had a higher chance to admit more, especially for full degree programmes. In Kenya, the majority of the private universities have religious affiliations, similar to the context in other parts of Africa (Otieno & Levy, 2007) and this paper focuses on the understudied private Christian institutions. Due to the issues of quality raised in many mushrooming private institutions offering higher education (Teferra &

Knight, 2008), the institutions surveyed for this study were those that have received charters in Kenya.

In a study on student services in Kenyan universities, Yakaboski and Birnbaum studied the challenges of student affairs at Kenyan public universities. The cost of education, student behaviour, lack of training for staff responsible for student affairs and lack of support from senior leadership were some of the challenges identified. Such findings reveal that little attention was given to student affairs section in the public universities in Kenya (Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2013). Some teaching staff were reported to view appointment into positions such as Dean of Students as stepping stones for promotion to higher positions rather than as an area of speciality that requires investment in training and improved practice. Other leaders were said to express hesitation on empowering workers in student services in an effort to reinforce status quo. Private universities are known to take advantage of the difficulties experienced in public institutions (Otieno & Levy, 2007; Teferra & Knight, 2008). Would student experiences in the private universities indicate more focus on meeting students' holistic needs and probably yield good satisfaction reports from the students?

Besides complementing the public universities in absorbing Kenyan students that have attained university entry requirements, private universities have had more room to receive international students from East Africa and other regions of the continent. Studies have shown that there are educational hubs in each region of the world where students converge for higher education (Knight, 2011; Njuguna & Itegi, 2013). This might be an indication that most international students in Kenyan universities would be from the East Africa region. The assumption may be made that they have a very similar culture to that of Kenyans and their adaptation into their universities may be easy. Analysis of international student satisfaction based on the differences between groups such as students' regions of origin is important for informing administrative practice and testing the underlying

assumptions. According to Dužević & Časni, private universities would be expected to give more attention to students based on their approach to management of service quality (Dužević & Časni, 2015). This paper seeks to assess this assumption basing on the findings of international students' level of satisfaction with the overall experiences in the selected private universities.

METHODOLOGY

The target population was international students in five private Christian universities in Kenya. A survey was conducted and cross-sectional data of 185 randomly selected students were collected for the year 2017. Stratified random sampling technique was used for inclusivity of the various sub-groups targeted for the study. A questionnaire with mainly closed-ended questions was administered for data collection to assess international students' satisfaction with their overall university experiences. Students were asked to reflect on their experience and respond on a Likert scale (1–5) from 'Very dissatisfied' to 'Very satisfied' with a neutral middle of 'Not sure'. The Likert scale responses were then distilled into a binary variable indicating whether students were satisfied or unsatisfied.

The posed hypotheses seek to establish the relationship between the different student characteristics and their overall satisfaction with the university experiences. The student characteristics reviewed were students' age, gender, regions of origin, academic programmes, mode of study, duration of study, length of sojourn in the host country, source of funding and type of accommodation. Data from the questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) and relationships between students' satisfaction and various student characteristics were determined through Mann-Whitney U tests while comparing two groups and Kruskal Wallis Tests while comparing more than two groups. The reliability of the instrument was tested using the Cronbach Alpha method.

The paper sought to answer the following research question: What are the factors that influence international students' level of satisfaction? To help answer the research question, several hypotheses were posed and tested as discussed under the findings. A null hypothesis assuming no statistically significant difference in overall student satisfaction based on the set student characteristics is rejected if a p-value of less than 0.05 is obtained.

FINDINGS

To establish if student satisfaction varied significantly between male and female students, a Mann-Whitney U test was done to compare the median overall satisfaction for the two groups. Results indicated that overall satisfaction was significantly greater for male students (Mean rank = 94.63) than for female students (Mean rank = 81.15), $z = -2.053$, $p = .040$ even though the effect size was low ($r^2=0.0239$, 2% shared variance). The effect size was based on Cohen's r and was calculated as below (Morris & Richler, 2012, p. 12).

$$r = \frac{z}{\sqrt{N}}$$

Considering the students' age, respondents were divided into 5 categories. Those from 15 to 24 years represented 64% of the respondents, 25 to 34 years represented 17%, 35 to 44 years (11%), 45 to 54 years (7%) and those at 55 years and above at 1%. A Kruskal Wallis test indicates that there is a significant difference in the medians, $\chi^2 (4, N = 175) = 13.21$, $p = .01$ for the different age groups. The mean rank for those aged between 15-24 years old was 80.49, 94.22 for those aged 25-34 years old, 105.24 for those aged 35-44 years old, 107.04 for those aged 45-54 years old and 167.50 for the 55 years old and above category. The mean rank scores showed that the youngest students who were also the majority, had the lowest satisfaction scores and the scores increased steadily upwards the age groups with the oldest group of students having the highest satisfaction scores. Although the difference was statistically significant and the older students in general seemed to be

significantly more satisfied than the younger students, post hoc tests using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction did not identify specific age groups with statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction with other specific age groups. But in general, universities need to ensure that their operations cater for all categories of students regardless of their age group and the younger students who are by far the majority cannot be ignored if their attraction and retention is to continue.

The research respondents came from 20 African countries which were grouped into 4 regions: West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and South Africa. There were no respondents from the 5th region in Africa, the Northern region. In addition, none of the respondents came from non-African countries. Therefore, these two regions were not represented in the sample since they form a minority of the entire population. Most of international students in the selected private universities came from the East African region (61%) affirming the idea of regional hubs that gather students from that region. The West African region followed as a source of international students in Kenya with 17% of the students, and then the central African region with 15% and the least were from the South African region at 7%. The results of a Kruskal Wallis test indicate that there is insignificant difference in the medians, $\chi^2(3, N = 170) = 7.522, p = .057$ for the different regions. There was a mean rank of 90.25 for those from West Africa, 87.50 for those from Central Africa, 87.34 for those from East Africa and 54.08 for those from South Africa. Although the difference was not statistically significant, these results generally show that students from West Africa were the most satisfied with their overall university experiences followed by those from Central Africa, then from East Africa and the South Africans were the least satisfied. The fact that all the international students sampled came from Africa may explain this finding, showing little difference in perception of students using their region of origin as the lens.

The difference in the satisfaction level was also analysed based on the students' academic level. Most of the respondents were undergraduate bachelor's students (78%), followed by Master's (17%), Doctoral level (3%) and Diploma level 2%. Based on the Kruskal Wallis's test, the Doctoral students were the most satisfied with a mean rank of 101.00, followed by the Master's level (98.40), then the Diploma students (95.25) and the least satisfied were the undergraduates (Bachelor students) with a mean rank of 84.45. However, the difference was not statistically significant in the medians, $\chi^2 (4, N = 174) = 3.198, p = .362$ for the different programme levels.

Most of the sampled international students were full-time (92%) compared to those who are part-time (8%). To establish if student satisfaction varied significantly between students based on their mode of study, a Mann-Whitney U test was done to compare the median overall satisfaction for the full-time and the part-time student groups. Results indicate that overall satisfaction was not significantly different for part-time students (Mean rank = 91.04) and the full-time students (Mean rank = 88.84), $z = -0.176, p = .860$. The mode of study for the international students therefore does not influence the students' overall level of satisfaction with their university experiences.

The surveyed international students were asked to indicate their anticipated duration of stay in the university in years. The relationship between anticipated period of stay and the satisfaction levels was investigated by performing a Spearman correlation. Results showed that there is no significant relationship between anticipated years of stay and their overall satisfaction ($r = -0.034, p = 0.654$) since the p-value obtained was not less than 0.05. In addition, satisfaction scores for students who had been to Kenya before they enrolled into their current academic programme were compared with the scores for those who had not been to Kenya before. A Mann-Whitney U test was done to compare the median overall satisfaction for the two groups of students and the results showed that overall satisfaction for

students who had been to Kenya was not significantly greater (Mean rank = 89.80) than for those who had not been (Mean rank = 88.04), $z = -0.421$, $p = .673$. The overall level of international students' satisfaction is therefore not related to whether the student had been to Kenya before the current programme of enrollment or not.

The researcher also wanted to establish if students' satisfaction with their overall university experiences is related to the students' source of funding. There were 6 categories that were assessed as follows: funding from parents/family, self-funded, scholarship from their host university, employer funding, and other. Frequency data revealed that most international students (72%) were mainly funded by their parents or family, 11% were self-funded, 7% funded by their host universities, and the other source of funds for 6% of international students included churches and donor organizations. There were only 3% of students mainly funded by their employers and 0.5% funded by the government of the students' home country. Based on the mean ranks, the most satisfied group of students were those funded from other sources (church and donor organizations) who had a mean rank of 109.09, followed by those sponsored by their employer (103.00) then the self-funded (94.05), host university sponsored (91.77), parents/family sponsored (86.80) and finally the host-government sponsored (32.00). The analysis however indicates that there is no significant difference in the medians, $\chi^2(5, N = 178) = 5.214, p = .390$ for the different groups based on their main source of funds.

One of the important factors for consideration by international students is accommodation. Satisfaction levels were compared between 3 different student accommodation types, university accommodation on campus, university accommodation off campus and self-rented housing off campus. The mean ranks indicated that the international students residing on the university accommodation on campus were the most satisfied (mean rank of 92.45), followed by those living on the self-rented houses out of campus (mean rank

90.82) and the least satisfied students resided on the university accommodation off campus (mean rank of 60.33). The results of the Kruskal Wallis test indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the medians, $\chi^2(2, N = 177) = 7.167, p = .028$ for the different accommodation type groups, showing that the students' accommodation type has an influence on their overall level of satisfaction.

A post hoc Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction was done to identify which group among the three accommodation types had statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction and it revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction between students who stayed in the university accommodation on campus and those who lived in the university accommodation off campus ($p=0.026$). There was also a significant difference in overall satisfaction between the students in the university accommodation off campus and those in self-rented housing off the campus ($p=0.039$). However, overall satisfaction did not significantly differ between students in the university accommodation on campus and those in the self-rented housing off campus. That is to say that even if the students residing on university campuses are more satisfied than those who are in self-rented houses off the campus, the difference is not significant, unlike the previous comparisons. Taken together, these results suggest that the residence where the students reside has an impact on their overall satisfaction levels and it is specifically seen while comparing students in the university accommodation off campus with the other two options.

Looking more closely at the accommodations, students were asked to indicate their preferred accommodation. From the findings, it is clear that most international students prefer to be on campus (46%), followed by those who prefer self-rented housing off campus (42%) while only 12% prefer university accommodation off-campus. The difference in students' overall satisfaction based on their preferred type of residence is seen to be statistically significant based on a Kruskal Wallis test ($\chi^2(2, N=176) = 10.114, p=0.006$) which shows that

the obtained p-value was less than 0.05. With a mean rank of 94.81 the group that preferred to be accommodated on the university campus was the most satisfied, followed by those living in self-rented accommodations off the campus (89.59) and then the group that preferred to live in university accommodation off the campus (61.91).

Post hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction indicated that there was statistically significant difference in overall satisfaction between students who preferred university accommodation on campus and those who preferred university accommodation off campus ($p=0.005$). There was also significant difference in overall satisfaction between the students who preferred university accommodation off campus and those who preferred self-rented housing off the campus ($p=0.025$). However, overall satisfaction did not significantly differ between those who preferred to reside on the university accommodation on campus and those who preferred the self-rented housing off campus. These results suggest that the preferred type of residence has an impact on the overall satisfaction of international students just as it was with the students' current accommodation status. This similarity may be explained by the cross tabulation below which shows that majority of the students would prefer to live in their current type of residence and the preferences are either on the university campus or in self-rented housing off the campus.

Cross tabulation: current* preferred accommodation type							
		Current Accommodation type					
		% (n)		Self-rented housing off campus	University accommodation off campus	University accommodation on campus	Total
Preferred Accommodation type	Self-rented housing off campus	85.9% (67)	6.7% (1)	6.0% (5)	41.2% (73)		
	University accommodation off campus	5.1% (4)	93.3% (14)	4.8% (4)	12.4% (22)		
	University accommodation on campus	9.0% (7)	0.0% (0)	89.3% (75)	46.3% (82)		
Total		100.0% (78)	100.0% (15)	100.0% (84)	100.0% (177)		

For international students living in self-rented housing, 86% (n = 67) of them prefer the same living place while 5% (n = 4) of them would prefer university accommodation off campus and 9.0% (n = 7) would prefer university accommodation on campus. For students living in university accommodation off campus 93.3% (n = 14) would prefer the same living place while 6.7% (n = 1) of them would prefer self-rented housing off campus and none of them would prefer university accommodation on campus. On the other hand, 89% of international students on university accommodation on campus would prefer the same accommodation and 9% of them would prefer self-rented housing off campus.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The student satisfaction feedback received from the international students provides a first-hand perspective of their assessment of their overall university experiences. For institutions concerned with quality improvement, the responsibility is now for the university administrators to report such findings and use them to inform decision making on matters related to students' welfare. In the context of private universities, consideration for students' age, gender and accommodation expectations should not be ignored since they elicit significant differences in international student satisfaction levels. It is evident that the preferred, and most satisfying type of accommodation, among international students is the on-campus housing. Where the available space is limited, universities are encouraged to fill the gaps in the available alternative university accommodation out of campus. It seems that if the students do not get university accommodation on campus, they opt for self-rented accommodation out of campus and they are more satisfied than those who get university accommodation out of campus.

The fact that most international students are young and in the bachelor's programmes and yet these are the least satisfied students compared to the older students in post graduate

programmes should make the university administrations refocus on the needs of the younger international students. The older and more mature students may have better ways of managing educational challenges in a foreign country than the younger ones who might need more care. Forums with the younger students should be created either with relevant university staff or mentorship relationships with the older students.

Although factors such as students' source of funds, region of origin and duration of stay in Kenya did not have significant influence on international students' satisfaction, they provided important descriptive information that universities can use in their student recruitment and management processes. The fact that most international students come from the East African region affirms the ongoing efforts of regionalization and these efforts should be enhanced. Continuous East Africa collaboration such as credit transfers and relaxed visa requirements should receive support of the educational sector. Universities on the other hand should be at the forefront to complement these efforts by enhancing their visibility in the neighbouring countries through partnerships and meaningful recruitment efforts to encourage cross border student mobility. With adequate planning and strategic implementation strategies, East African students could easily access information that would help them to select universities in the region that best meet their career and other educational aspirations at fees almost similar to their own countries. Utilizing available avenues for regional cooperation, universities can promote the benefits of higher education more efficiently. Considering that student satisfaction is a key indicator of quality, ensuring that all international students are satisfied would facilitate a continuous natural flow of international students from all the regions in Africa since the students would act as the greatest institutional marketers.

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