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University student engagement and mobility from one university to another in private universities in Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether student engagement influences students' choice of mobility. This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design. The target population of this study was 26 registered private universities (including private university constituents where mobility rate records are too high) in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research sample size was 180 private university students and nine registrars. Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. Descriptive analysis, inferential statistics, and regression analysis were used to analyse the findings. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean scores and standard deviation were computed appropriately. Binary logistic regression analysis was employed to establish the magnitude of the effect on the dependent variables of independent variables. The study concluded that student engagement significantly influences students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya. Institutions of higher learning with up-to-standard student engagement frameworks and platforms attract more clients than those with less student engagement. A policy is recommended to stimulate the level of interactions between students and staff who related with delivery of education (academic staff and administrative staff).

Key words: Private universities, student engagement, student mobility, university student.



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INTRODUCTION

Student engagement refers to the amount of energy, time, and effort invested by students in their studies (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Student engagement is a major characteristic of high-quality education in institutions of higher learning. Student engagement can serve the interests of several stakeholders across teaching along learning and impact institutional management (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). On the other hand, student mobility in colleges is a more important trend. Student mobility is brought about by the expansion in postsecondary capacity and choice, therefore making student engagement significant in the conversation on institutional effectiveness. This is because student engagement evaluates direct student behaviour and its impact on the improvement of the educational experiences of students (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Research studies have shown that student involvement in the institution helps mould student learning outcomes.

Moreover, universities and higher learning institutions are obliged to progressively create a conducive environment for student engagement. This includes involvement in curricular as well as co-curricular activities, adapting programmes and services to student needs, and cultivating a conducive environment that fosters student engagement and academic success (Zhao et al., 2005). There is a positive correlation between student engagement and student outcomes, as well as a positive effect on retention (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Student engagement also refers to the deliberate efforts by learning institutions to create environments for learning and development (Kuh, 2009). In this regard, institutions must strive to provide environmental conditions that are rich with learning experiences aimed at developing critical thinking, creativity, and social as well as academic engagement, as well as support students to embrace global citizenship (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Consequently, student engagement needs to involve student participation (Klemenčič, 2012) and the development of productive partnerships (Healey et al., 2016). The level of participation ranges from access to consultation to information and dialogue, which consequently leads to the development of partnerships (Klemenčič, 2012). Therefore, this

study set out to examine the effect of student engagement on students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student transfers between colleges have become an ever more important trend. This has been brought about by the expansion in postsecondary capacity and choice, therefore making student engagement significant in the conversation on institutional effectiveness. This is because student engagement evaluates direct student behaviour and its impact on the improvement of the educational experiences of students (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Research studies have shown that student involvement in the institution helps mould student learning outcomes. Moreover, universities and higher learning institutions are obliged to progressively create a conducive environment for student engagement. This includes involvement in curricular as well as co-curricular activities, adapting programmes and services to student needs, and cultivating a conducive environment that fosters student engagement and academic success (Zhao et al., 2005).

Student engagement, according to (Murphy & Stewart, 2017), refers to the amount of energy, time, and effort invested by students in their studies. Moreover, student engagement has also been characterised as a major characteristic of high-quality education in institutions of higher learning. This is the reason that student engagement can serve the interests of several stakeholders across teaching, along with learning and impact upon institutional management (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015).

Recent research established that there exists a positive correlation between student engagement and student outcomes, as well as positively affect retention (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Nevertheless, because of differences in college choice and differences in the level of student engagement between colleges, it becomes essential to conduct research to examine the student transfers across universities in contexts such as the Kenyan one used in the present study.

According to Kuh (2009), engagement can also refer to the deliberate efforts by learning institutions to create environments for learning and development. In this regard, institutions must strive to provide environmental conditions that are rich with learning experiences aimed at developing critical thinking, creativity, and social as well as academic engagement, as well as support students to embrace global citizenship (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Consequently, student engagement needs to involve student participation (Klemenčič, 2012) and the development of productive partnerships (Healey et al., 2016). According to Klemenčič (2012), the level of participation ranges from access to consultation to information and dialogue, which consequently lead to the development of partnership.

For student engagement to take place effectively, the relevant institutions need to create a conducive environment through the establishment of activities that enhance student engagement irrespective of the students' contextual or former experience with higher education (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). When this condition is met, student engagement gets connected with anticipated outcomes of higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). With improved college access, students are able to make conscious choices regarding where to pursue their college education. Consequently, more students are now changing institutions at least once before they finish their degrees (Hossler et al., 2012).

Understanding the unique features of student transfers and matters involved in their unique college experiences and engagement levels is a matter central to research on student mobility as perceived for the current study. Issues such as students' inability to get through college have been posited as assumptions about transfer students (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012). Studies have further suggested that some institutions of higher learning do not understand how to offer support to transfer students (Kirk-Kuwaye & Kirk-Kuwaye, 2007). These factors also become crucial for the current study, especially with regard to personal and institutional factors that motivate the transfer of students in the Kenyan private university context, as will be considered in this study.

According to Cook (2012), transfer students are often ignored by college administrators because they are assumed not to add to graduation and retention rates. The reason for this is that indicators, such as academic scores, resilience, satisfaction, and gains made in educational outcomes, run in tandem with the engagement of students and all transfer students are affected by these factors (McCormick et al., 2009). The inability of host institutions to relate academic experiences and engagement in their previous institutions is a matter of concern (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Although studies on student transfers often pay attention to such variables as the number of credits relocated, number of former institutions attended, and time between enrolments, student engagement and customer care practices have not been examined as significant variables. It is this gap in the literature, especially within the context of African countries such as Kenya, which the present study seeks to close.

According to Denovan et al. (2020), student engagement plays a vital role in promoting learning and enhancing institutional effectiveness in universities. It is very crucial for universities to endeavour to develop a broad understanding of engagement and, more importantly, to undertake student engagement activities as a process with multi-dimensions. In particular, student engagement should be incorporated into all programmes in the universities.

According to Bowden et al. (2021), student engagement is a good way of attracting new students to an academic institution, especially private institutions. It should be noted that it is very important to monitor the changing patterns and dimensions of engagement throughout students' academic lives. Such monitoring can be done using both quantitative and qualitative tools. In monitoring student engagement, both behavioural as well as attitudinal dimensions should be included. This approach is important in enabling institutions to accurately understand the nature of student engagement and their respective experiences.

The concept of student engagement in colleges, therefore, becomes an important variable to consider,

especially with regard to motivation to transfer. It has been noted that student engagement activities impact students differently, so some have a higher effect than others (Cook, 2012). Limited research has been conducted on how transfer students make their choices with regard to their level of engagement in college. While the role of student engagement is distinct for students who started and graduated from a similar institution, its role in stimulating students to transfer has not been seriously studied (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). It is in light of this need that the present study seeks to establish the link between student engagement and student mobility.

Tight (2020) concur that students' engagement plays a pivotal role in determining the extent of their satisfaction with the quality of education that they receive in universities. A student who is not satisfied with the quality of education that they receive tends to be those who are less engaged in academic and non-academic matters by their institutions. Indeed, encouraging student engagement is key to achieving all the other educational processes among first-year learners.

According to Taylor and Wendy (2021), the engagement and involvement of students are important in controlling the unhealthy transfer of learners from one institution to another, which could be detrimental to academic development. Institutions that work closely with students and engagement them in many activities have the advantage of retaining their students in addition to gaining increased numbers of students who transfer from other institutions (Wang et al., 2021). Student involvement throughout the various stages of the academic period in an institution offers opportunities for solidifying the relationship between students and their institutions.

Faculty engagement is a good aspect of student engagement that has a great implication for universities' ability to retain their pool of students. Good faculty engagement is not only healthy for the academic progress of students but also has the ability to shape their social life. A healthy faculty engagement comprises players from various

disciplines within the institutions (Taylor & Wendy, 2021).

In a study by Thomas (2012) that was based on evidence across seven higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (UK), it was found that student engagement is one of the factors that influence student choice of remaining in their current institutions or to endeavour to transfer to other institutions. Students were observed to consider withdrawing their registration from institutions that were poor in student engagement. According to Thomas (2012), improving student belonging is best achieved through increasing efforts that could enhance student engagement in academic education among institutions of higher learning.

In their in-depth examination of student engagement as well as retention in honours programmes, Kampfe et al. (2016) argued that the inclusion of students in honours programs is an important determinant of their liking of an academic institution and their ability to be retained. Student engagement requires proper coordination by departments that deal with students directly. Understanding the positive and negative impacts of student engagement on preference of being placed in a particular universities and not the other is therefore timely.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Nairobi County, which is the most populous of the 47 Kenyan counties. This study employed a positivist research philosophy as postulated by Creswell (2014). The study employed the mixed methods design as the framework of the current study. Mixed methods research provides for the gathering and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, the research pursued the triangulation design of mixed methods. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were considered for application. The study's target population consisted of all 26 private university students in Nairobi County, Kenya. The accessible population comprised all registered students who were currently enrolled at and registered to take courses offered by the private universities (in their main location or through their partner. This study employed a multi-stage sampling

procedure to arrive at a representative sample of private university student respondents. The study obtained both primary and secondary data. Primary data was sourced from self-administered questionnaires (distributed to students). The university registrars were interviewed. Secondary data was sourced from documents and artefacts on transfer student statuses as well as on various variables considered as explanatory variables in this study. The researcher used a face-to-face interview guide for the registrar. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25.0) aided in the computation and analysis of data. The data assembled was sorted according to variables considered in the study. This study made use of an independent samples t-test. In this study, the qualitative data was sought from the interviews. The data was transcribed and coded. The data collected through interviews, observation, and researcher journal notes was summarised after interpretation to evolving themes reflecting the study partakers' voices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of Student Engagement on Student's Choice of Mobility from One University to Another in Private Universities in Nairobi County in Kenya

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that the staff in the university are effective in their communication. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 83.1 per cent, with 46.7 per cent agreeing and an additional 36.4 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 6.7 per cent. About 10.3 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that the staff in the university are effective in their communication was 4.12, with a standard deviation of 0.87.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that there are adequate forums for students to share their views. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 52.8 per cent, with 36.4 per cent agreeing and an additional 16.4 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 36.4 per cent. About 10.9 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that there are adequate forums for students to share their views was 3.25, with a standard deviation of 1.25.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that their religious beliefs are tolerated at the university. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 75.2 per cent, with 38.2 per cent per cent agreeing and an additional 37 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 21.8 per cent. About 3 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, an average student rating of the statement that their religious beliefs are tolerated at the university was 3.79, with a standard deviation of 1.34.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that there are numerous opportunities to obtain part-time work while in college. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 61.8 per cent, with 43 per cent agreeing and an additional 18.8 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 23.1 per cent. About 15.2 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that there are numerous opportunities to obtain part-time work while in college was 3.5, with a standard deviation of 1.18.

Table 1: Student Engagement

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	To tal	Me an	St d. De v.
1. The staff in the university are effective in their communication	1 (0.	10 (6.	17 (10	77 (46	60 (36	16 5	4.1 2	0. 87

	6)	1)	.3)	.7)	.4)	(10 0)		
2. There are adequate forums for students to share their views	13 (7. 9)	47 (28 .5)	18 (10 .9)	60 (36 .4)	27 (16 .4)	16 5 (10 0)	3.2 5	1. 25
3. There is ethnic diversity at the university	9 (5. 5)	5 (3. 0)	5 (3. 0)	10 9 (66 .1)	37 (22 .4)	16 5 (10 0)	3.9 7	0. 93
4. Students are supported to participate in education fairs	10 (6. 1)	17 (10 .3)	18 (10 .9)	90 (54 .5)	30 (18 .2)	16 5 (10 0)	3.6 8	1. 08
5. There are adequate recreational facilities at the university	51 (30 .9)	43 (26 .1)	9 (5. 5)	46 (27 .9)	16 (9. 7)	16 5 (10 0)	2.5 9	1. 42
6. My religious beliefs are tolerated at the university	18 (10 .9)	18 (10 .9)	5 (3. 0)	63 (38 .2)	61 (37)	16 5 (10 0)	3.7 9	1. 34
7. There are numerous opportunities to obtain part-time work while in college	12 (7. 3)	26 (15 .8)	25 (15 .2)	71 (43 .0)	31 (18 .8)	16 5 (10 0)	3.5 0	1. 18
8. The students at the university are supported by the university on patient issues that concern them	13 (7. 9)	18 (10 .9)	20 (12 .1)	92 (55 .8)	22 (13 .3)	16 5 (10 0)	3.5 6	1. 10
9. There are adequate accommodation facilities that suit my status	9 (5. 5)	24 (14 .5)	4 (2. 4)	99 (60 .0)	29 (17 .6)	16 5 (10 0)	3.7 0	1. 09
10. I enjoy the conducive study environment at the university	5 (3. 0)	1 (0. 6)	5 (3. 0)	99 (60 .0)	55 (33 .3)	16 5 (10 0)	4.2 0	0. 79
11. There are adequate study facilities at the university	14 (8. 5)	25 (15 .2)	5 (3. 0)	82 (49 .7)	39 (23 .6)	16 5 (10 0)	3.6 5	1. 23
12. Campus has free Internet	1 (0. 6)	14 (8. 5)	1 (0. 6)	90 (54 .5)	59 (35 .8)	16 5 (10 0)	4.1 6	0. 86
Overall							3.6 7	0. 62

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that the students at the university are supported by the university on patient issues that concern them. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 69.1 per cent, with 55.8 per cent agreeing and an additional 13.3 per cent strongly agreeing. A total of 18.8 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 12.1 per cent were neutral on a scale of 1 - 5, and the average student rating of the statement that the students at the university are supported by the university on patient issues that concern them was 3.56, with a standard deviation of 1.1.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that there is ethnic diversity at the university. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 88.5 per cent, with 66.1 per cent agreeing and an additional 22.4 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 8.5 per cent. About 3 per cent were neutral on a scale of 1 - 5; an average student rating of the statement that there is ethnic diversity at the university was 3.97, with a standard deviation of 0.93.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that students are supported to participate in education fairs. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 72.7 per cent, with 54.5 per cent agreeing and an additional 18.2 per cent strongly agreeing. A total of 16.4 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 10.9 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, an average student rating of the statement that students are supported to participate in education fairs was 3.68, with a standard deviation of 1.08.

The majority of the student respondents disagreed with the statement that there are adequate recreational facilities at the university. Those who disagreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 57 per cent, with 26.1 per cent disagreeing and an additional 30.9 per cent strongly disagreeing. The respondents' proportion who agreed with the statement was a cumulative of 37.6 per cent. About 5.5 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the

average student rating of the statement that there are adequate recreational facilities at the university was 2.59, with a standard deviation of 1.42.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that there are adequate accommodation facilities that suit their status. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 77.6 per cent, with 60 per cent agreeing and an additional 17.6 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 20 per cent. About 2.4 per cent were neutral. On a scale of 1 - 5, an average student rating of the statement that there are adequate accommodation facilities that suit their status was 3.7, with a standard deviation of 1.09.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that they enjoy a conducive study environment at the university. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 93.3 per cent, with 60 per cent agreeing and an additional 33.3 per cent strongly agreeing. The respondents' proportion who disagreed with the statement was a cumulative of 3.6 per cent. About 3 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that they enjoy a conducive study environment at the university was 4.2, with a standard deviation of 0.79.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that there are adequate study facilities at the university. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 73.3 per cent, with 49.7 per cent agreeing and an additional 23.6 per cent strongly agreeing. A total of 23.7 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 3 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that there are adequate study facilities at the university was 3.65, with a standard deviation of 1.23.

The majority of the student respondents agreed with the statement that their campus has free internet. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 90.3 per cent, with 54.5 per cent agreeing and an additional 35.8 per cent strongly

agreeing. A total of 9.1 per cent of the respondents disagreed with the statement. About 0.6 per cent were neutral on a scale of 1 - 5, and an average student rating of the statement that their campus has free internet was 4.16 with a standard deviation of 0.86.

Most of the students' ratings on the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement ranged between 3 – 3.99 (65.5%) and 4 -5 (26.7%), as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Rating on the Effectiveness of their Universities in Student Engagement

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
1-1.99	0	0.0%
2-2.99	13	7.9%
3-3.99	108	65.5%
4-5.00	44	26.7%
Total	165	100.0%

The overall students' rating on the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement (on a scale of 1 – 5) was a mean of 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.62.

Test of Hypothesis on the Influence of Student Engagement on Student Mobility

A null hypothesis, “ H_{02} : Student engagement does not significantly influence student’s mobility in

private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya,” was formulated and tested using binary logistic regression. The choice of binary logistic regression was justified because the dependent variable (willingness and non-willingness to transfer from one institution to another) was binary. Table 3 shows the influence of student engagement on mobility in private universities.

Table 3: Influence of Student Engagement on Mobility in Private Universities

Willingness to transfer	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Student engagement	-2.682	0.537	-5.000	0.000	-3.734	-1.631
_cons	7.883	1.802	4.380	0.000	4.351	11.414

Log likelihood = -63.99; LR chi2 (1) = 39.89; Prob > chi2 = 0.000; Pseudo R2 = 0.238

The log-likelihood for the fitted model (-63.99) and the likelihood ratio chi-square value of 39.89 (Prob> chi2 = 0.000) indicate that the model parameters (the independent variable and the constant) are jointly significant at 5 per cent. The Pseudo R2 of 0.238 imply that about 23.8 per cent of the student's willingness to transfer from one private university to another could be attributed to economic status (the independent variable). Therefore, Pseudo R2 of 0.238 meet the statistical threshold, confirming that the willingness to transfer from one private university to another among the sampled students was well attributed to students' rating of the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement. The coefficient of student engagement -

2.682) was statistically significant at a 5 per cent level. This implies that the null hypothesis, "Student engagement does not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," was rejected. Therefore, student engagement significantly influences student’s mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya.

A registrar from a privately sponsored university in Nairobi explained:

Most students value constant engagement between their fellow students, teaching staff and university administrators. A number

of students prefer to transfer to alternative institutions when an institution is not able to adequately support their engagement opportunities. Nowadays, universities have revolutionised into social platforms where students not only come to learn new skills but are also exposed to social engagement opportunities through which they are able to build strong networks, coin new friends and collaborate in idea exchange, among others.

One registrar from a church-sponsored private university in Nairobi explained:

Students enjoy being in an environment where the good relationship between the students

and teaching (as well as administrative) staff is thriving. Students are able to network and recognise more resources and opportunities through such relationships. Students also get separated from possible bad peer grouping when they relate better with academic and administrative staff in the university.

The aim of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in the students' rating of the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement and analysis done using independent samples t-test. Therefore, a t-test was used as a means to compare the ratings of those willing and not willing as affected by their student engagement. The results are summarised in Table 4.16.

Table 4: T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Rating on the Effectiveness of their Universities in Student Engagement between those willing and those not Willing to Transfer

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
No	131	3.764	0.045	0.518	3.674	3.853
Yes	34	3.115	0.079	0.458	2.955	3.275
Combined	165	3.630	0.044	0.569	3.542	3.717

Note: Mean difference = 0.649; Standard error = 0.097; P-value = 0.000; t = 6.658; df = 163

The mean difference in the scores on students' rating of the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement (between those willing to transfer and

those not willing) was computed as 0.649. The mean difference is depicted in Figure 1.

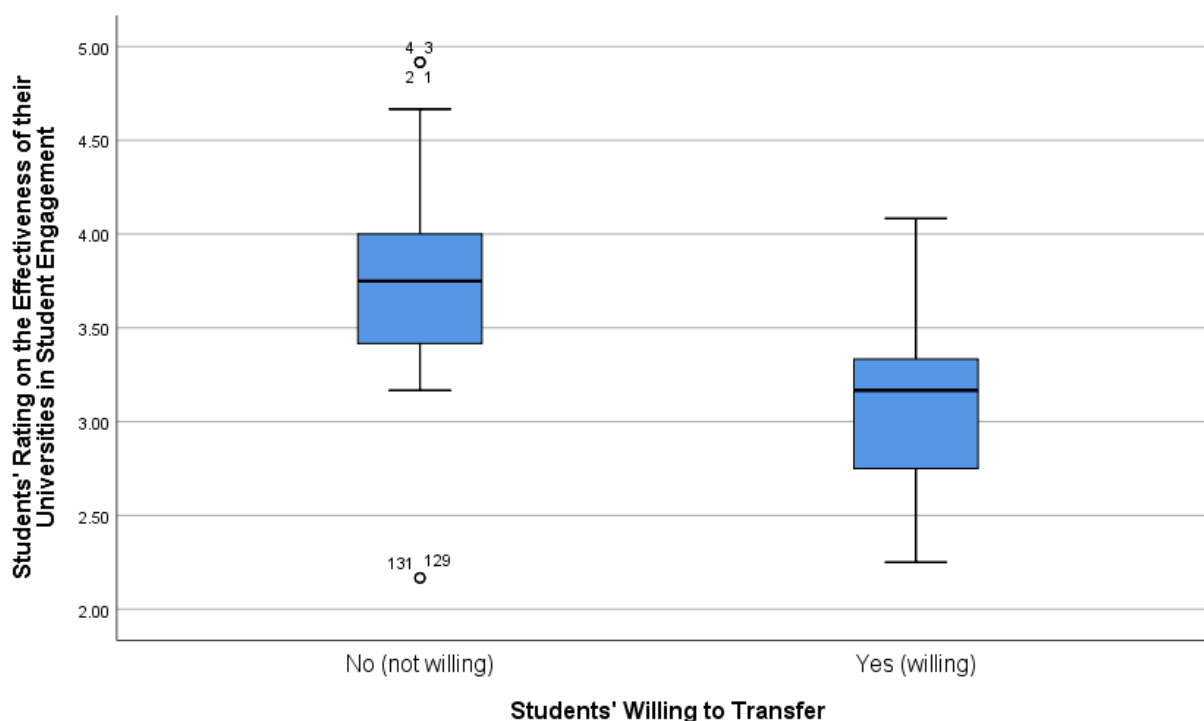


Figure 1: Comparison of Students' Rating on the Effectiveness of their Universities in Student Engagement between those Willing and those not Willing to Transfer

The calculated t-value of 6.659 at 163 degrees of freedom indicates that the mean difference was statistically significant at a 5 per cent level ($p < 0.05$). This implies that student engagement significantly influences student mobility in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya.

The findings in this study agree with Murphy and Stewart (2017), who noted that student transfers between colleges have become common partly because of the nature of engagement existing between learners and institutions of learning. Since there is an obvious expansion in postsecondary academic institutions, student engagement has become significant in the conversation on why students transfer from one institution to another. Student engagement evaluates direct student behaviour and its impact on the improvement of educational experiences.

The results of this study are also consistent with Zhao et al. (2005), who observed that student involvement in institutions of learning helps mould

their learning outcomes. As a result, student engagement is one key factor that contributes to mobility between institutions, with those that offer adequate engagement opportunities being preferred as compared to those that offer fewer engagement opportunities. For this reason, universities and higher learning institutions are obliged to progressively create a conducive environment for student engagement. This includes involvement in curricular as well as co-curricular activities, adapting programmes and services to student needs, and cultivating a conducive environment that fosters student engagement and academic success.

The results of this study are also consonant with Murphy and Stewart (2017), who established that one of the main considerations as students transfer from one institution to another is the quality of student engagement in the institution. According to the two separate studies, there exists a positive correlation between the engagement of students and student outcomes. Consequently, student engagement is positively related to student retention

rates. Nevertheless, because of differences in the level of student engagement between colleges, student transfers across universities have increased.

The findings of this study concur with Kuh (2009), who found that engagement also implies the deliberate efforts by learning institutions to create environments of quality learning and development. For this reason, most students who are conscious about the quality of learning would always opt for institutions where student engagement is guaranteed (even if it means seeking transfers to such institutions). In this regard, institutions must strive to provide environmental conditions that are rich with learning experiences aimed at developing critical thinking, creativity, and social as well as academic engagement (Murphy & Stewart, 2017). Consequently, student engagement needs to involve student participation (Klemenčič, 2012) and the development of productive partnerships (Healey et al., 2016). According to Klemenčič (2012), the level of participation ranges from access to consultation to information and dialogue, which consequently lead to the development of partnership.

The findings of this study are also in agreement with Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who noted that student engagement is associated with a high preference for learning institutions since the latter is known to positively influence outcomes of higher education. For student engagement to take place effectively, the relevant institutions need to create a conducive environment through the establishment of activities that enhance student engagement irrespective of the students' contextual or former experience with higher education. With improved college access, students are able to make conscious choices regarding where to pursue their college education. Consequently, more students are now changing institutions at least once before they finish their degrees (Hossler et al., 2012).

This study concurs with Thomas (2012), who examined seven higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (UK) and reported that student engagement is one of the factors that affect student choice of remaining in their current institutions or endeavour to transfer to other institutions. Students

were observed to consider withdrawing their registration from institutions that were poor in student engagement. According to Thomas (2012), improving student belonging is best achieved through increasing efforts that could enhance student engagement in academic education among institutions of higher learning.

The findings of this study agree with Denovan et al. (2020); according to them, student engagement plays a vital role in promoting learning and enhancing institutional effectiveness in universities. It is very crucial for universities to endeavour to develop a broad understanding of engagement and, more importantly, to undertake student engagement activities as a process with multi-dimensions. In particular, student engagement should be incorporated into all programmes in the universities.

This study is consistent with Bowden et al. (2021), who found that student engagement was a good way of attracting new students to an academic institution, especially private-based institutions. It should be noted that it is very important to monitor the changing patterns and dimensions of engagement throughout students' academic lives. Such monitoring can be done using both quantitative and qualitative tools. In monitoring student engagement, both behavioural as well as attitudinal dimensions should be included. This approach is important in enabling institutions to accurately understand the nature of student engagement and their respective experiences.

The findings of this study concur with Simone (2014), who found that one of the ways to retain students in an academic institution, especially colleges and universities, is to invest more effort in establishing various student engagement opportunities. The changes in academic environments, including academic, social, and personal experiences of transferring students, are likely to precipitate challenges.

The results of this study corroborate the findings of Tight (2020), who found that students' engagement is key in determining the extent of their satisfaction with the quality of education that they receive in

universities. A student who is not satisfied with the quality of education that they receive tends to be those who are less engaged in academic and non-academic matters by their institutions. Indeed, encouraging student engagement is key to achieving all the other educational processes among first-year learners. This study agrees with Kirk-Kuwaye and Kirk-Kuwaye (2007), who suggested that some institutions of higher learning do not understand how to offer adequate student support through constructive engagement and, hence, are not able to retain them. Their study suggested that students should be given adequate avenues for engagement in order to feel satisfied with the study environment and concentrate on their studies.

The results of this study collaborate with the findings of Krause and Coates (2008), who explored seven aspects of student engagement among first-year campus-based students in Australia. A study by Krause and Coates (2008) shows that student engagement deals with the extent to which they are involved in activities of research (something that is also associated with learning quality). The extent to which students are involved in educational matters that are closely associated with their learning outcomes is a key aspect of student engagement. First-year student requires a lot of engagement in the course of their education and knowledge generation. From a student engagement viewpoint, quality learning is also dependent on the way the universities and their staff are involved in supporting conditions that inspire and reassure student involvement. Student engagement incorporates academic and non-academic/social aspects of their learning experiences. Proper student engagement includes an understanding of the nexus between students and the university as an institution. Universities are responsible for fashioning a conducive environment that makes knowledge transfer possible through student engagement. Students tend to heighten their effort to transfer out of an institution that is characterised by the absence of well-guided student engagement activities.

The findings of this study agree with Murphy and Stewart (2017), who found that the inability of host institutions to relate academic experiences and

engagement in their previous institutions is a matter of concern and a cause for higher mobility among students in universities. According to Murphy and Stewart (2017), although there are other factors that influence student mobility between institutions of higher learning (for instance, number of credits relocated, number of former institutions attended, and time between enrolments, customer care practices), student engagement is a factor that an institution can easily control and thus candidate for more priority.

This study is consistent with the findings of Taylor and Wendy (2021), who investigated key issues surrounding the transfer of students in learning institutions. It was found that student participation and involvement are integral to remedying some of the common obstacles associated with transfer outcomes.

This study agrees with Kampfe et al. (2016), who executed an in-depth examination of student engagement and found that it positively influences retention in honours programmes. The inclusion of students in honours programs is an important determinant of their liking of an academic institution and their ability to be retained. Student engagement requires proper coordination by departments that deal with students directly. Understanding the positive and negative impacts of student engagement on the preference of being placed in particular universities and not others is, therefore, timely.

The findings of this study are also in agreement with Wang et al. (2021), who observed that institutions that work closely with students and engagement them in many activities have the advantage of retaining their students, in addition to gaining increased numbers of students who transfer from other institutions. Student involvement throughout the various stages of the academic period in an institution offers opportunities for solidifying the relationship between students and their institutions.

Discussion

Most of the students' ratings on the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement ranged between 3 – 3.99 (65.5%) and 4 -5 (26.7%). The

overall students' rating on the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement (on a scale of 1 – 5) was a mean of 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.62. The mean difference in the scores on students' rating of the effectiveness of their universities in student engagement (between those willing to transfer and those not willing) was computed as 0.649. The calculated t-value of 6.659 at 163 degrees of freedom indicates that the mean difference was statistically significant at a 5 per cent level ($p < 0.05$). This implies that student engagement significantly influences student mobility in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya. Similarly, the binary logistic regression results confirmed that the coefficient of student engagement (-2.682) was statistically significant at a 5 per cent level. This implies that the null hypothesis, "Student engagement does not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," was rejected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: The study concluded that student engagement significantly influences students' mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya. Institutions of higher learning with up-to-standard student engagement frameworks and platforms attract more clients than those with less student engagement.

Recommendation: Since student engagement was found to influence student mobility, a policy is recommended to stimulate the level of interactions between students and staff who related with delivery of education (academic staff and administrative staff). The Ministry of Education (MOE) should publish some measures that potentially enhance the level of students' engagement in universities and offer them as key requirements in the institution's ratings.

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