

Role of Student Faculty Interaction in Attrition among Students in Private Universities in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between student faculty interaction and student attrition in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was informed by Tinto's (1975) student integration theory and Bean's (1980) student attrition model. The study sample consisted of 387 current and 60 dropout students of 13 private universities in Nairobi, Kenya. Data were collected through a paper based questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The study established attrition levels of 37%. The results also showed a negative significant relationship between student faculty interaction and student attrition rate ($p=.03$). The findings of this study are significant to university administrators, counselors and mentors in higher education institutions. The study provides a number of recommendations on how student attrition can be lowered or controlled by university administrators. Policy makers will also find these results valuable in the search for appropriate remedial action for the problem of student attrition.

Keywords: student- faculty- interaction, attrition, private universities, examination retakes, drop out

INTRODUCTION

When students join universities to pursue various degree programs the expectation is that they would adjust well enough to pursue the programs they enroll for, graduate within the stipulated time and enter the labor market. Timely completion of degree programs is beneficial for the students as it enables social mobility (Hoare, 2006). Student attrition also has a negative effect on national economy because the students who are admitted to the universities in Kenya are some of the best intellectually according to Otieno (2011). However, some students take longer to complete degree programs than structured while others drop out all together a situation associated with negative outcomes identified by Wilkins and Yussof (2005) as personal disappointments, financial setbacks and a lowered chance of successfully entering the preferred job market. Attrition manifests in failing units and retaking them all over again, deferrals of semesters or academic years thus taking longer to complete university studies than the stipulated lime lines and also dropping out from university studies all together. Pursuing degree programs to completion is important because the world, Kenya included recognizes the significance of a knowledge based economy which cannot be achieved if students do not complete degree programs in a timely manner or if they drop out of university.

The factors leading to student attrition have been identified by Herman, (2011) and Herzog, (2005) as student academic background, integration of social and academic school experiences. In addition Kim and Sam (2009); Huntly and Donovan (2009) found student-faculty interaction to play a significant role in determining student attrition through the application of pedagogical skills that enable students to make smooth transitions to university learning. Moreover students' social integration has been found to have a significant effect on attrition (Herman, 2011). Studies have linked students' academic performance with attrition with those who achieve low grades being forced to repeat the units. Academic failure is also associated with frustrations, anxieties and tensions that may cause affected students to drop out of university (Okwilagwe, 2002).

Students' identification with the university is a critical factor determining either retention or attrition. Student who identify with the university have been found to put more effort in their studies and to engage in extra-curricular activities than their counterparts lacking in identification. Such engaged students thus perform well reducing chances of attrition (Johnson, Crosnoe, and Elder, 2001; Guest and Schneider, 2003). To achieve identification with the university and to engage well with academic work and the extra-curricular activities the students need to be exposed

to conducive environmental conditions because student friendly environment are more likely to be related to positive academic outcomes. Faculty support characterized by regular and meaningful interactions, nurturance, mentorship and academic oriented engagements has been found to have protective factors against student attrition (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). In addition, Crisp (2009) found psychological and emotional support, degree and career support, academic subject knowledge support and the existence of a role model to be important faculty support aspects associated with attrition.

Studies have further established that when students find university environments friendly they easily engage socially and academically (Kuh, Kruce Shoup and Kinzie (2008); Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). This has been recently corroborated by Saklofske et al., (2010) who concur that students' inability to cope with daily stressors at the university environment like studying for exams, writing projects, weighing between social and academic activities are related to attrition. Moreover, academic and social integration have been found to be important determinants of attrition as students' with poor relations with faculty especially those who fail to initiate contact with faculty outside the classroom are at a risk of attrition (Schneider, 2010).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

University student attrition has remained one of the least understood areas facing institutions of higher learning. To the student, attrition means reduced opportunities to obtain gainful employment, prosperity and social mobility. To the university, attrition translates into loss of revenue in addition to perceived failure in increasing the graduate population in the country. While majority of studies on attrition have been done among populations in Western countries there is a question of whether the solutions found on the role of student faculty interaction can be generalized to explain the same phenomenon in universities in Africa, more precisely to Kenya. The additional knowledge from this study is envisioned to aid in improving the general understanding of student faculty interaction with the aim of reducing attrition rates.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To establish attrition rates in private universities in Nairobi County.
- ii. To investigate the extent to which faculty support affects attrition among undergraduate students in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

- iii. To investigate how university environmental factors influence attrition among undergraduate students in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study was limited to private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. Given more time and resources, a wider scope, that involves both private and public universities would provide a more data-rich picture of the issues under investigation. Further, to make the results more generalizable to the entire Kenyan context, a wider sample, involving more counties would suffice

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The study was grounded by two theories Tinto (1975) Student Integration Model and Bean's and Eaton (2000) Psychological theory of retention. According to Tinto 1975 attrition results from the interactions among students and their educational environments and as such, the more socially integrated with their environments students, the less likely students are to drop out of the university. In addition students engage in formal and informal interactions with faculty acted as a compensatory influence on university persistence, especially for those who seemed most likely to withdraw. The expectation of the current study was that students who were unable to achieve social integration and who were also unable to interact well with faculty were the most likely to be involved in attrition. In addition, Bean and Eaton (2000) theory informed the study to the extent that student's interaction with the university leads to development of both personal and institutional attitudes. When the attitudes are negative academic performance drops and the students' experiences feelings of not fitting in the institution and declining loyalty to the university leads to attrition (Bean and Metzner, 2002).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is based on Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975) which views absence of attrition as the degree to which students, especially in the first year of university, bond socially and academically within a university. Central to this model is the degree to which each individual is integrated into the social and academic aspects of a university. This framework posits a central role of student interactions with home factors as correlates to student university attrition. Following entry into university the question of whether a student will attain a degree within the stipulated university degree program or not may not be related to one factor but interplay of the variables as depicted in the following figurative representation.

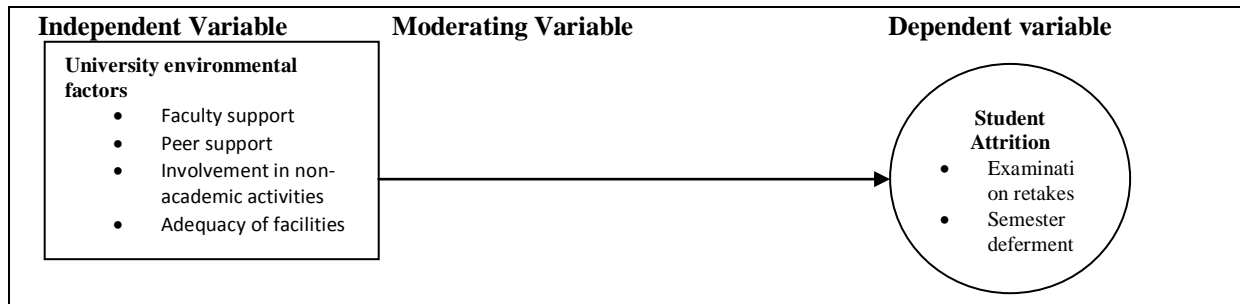


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Nairobi County, Kenya with the rationale that the high number of rural urban migration allows for a heterogeneous population representative of student culture under this study. In addition, Mairura (2010) observed that Nairobi has the largest concentration of education and research institutions in Kenya, and Eastern and Central Africa. The study site was also suitable as most private universities in Kenya have campuses in Nairobi (Kenya National Bureau Statistics, 2012). The study sample consisted of (N=387) students acquired through random sampling from second year students drawn from thirteen private universities in Nairobi County. The sample also included 60 students who had dropped out of university and who were accessed through the snowballing technique. Six faculty members were selected due to their responsibility positions in their respective universities. Quantitative data was collected through paper based questionnaires developed by the researchers while qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews.

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Respondents’ Gender

So as to capture the general characteristics of the study sample gender and age were analyzed and findings reported in figure 2.

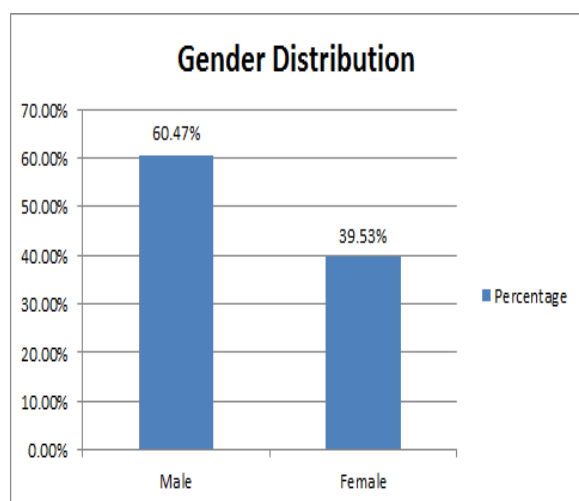


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The findings revealed that more males (60.47%) than females (39.53%) were enrolled for degree programs in the private universities investigated. This distribution is probably the reflection of gender distribution of the target population of university students in private universities in Kenya. This observation is confirmed by a survey done by Otieno (2011) which showed that there were 59% boys transitioning to university as compared to 41% girls.

Age of the Respondents

The respondents were expected to indicate their age bracket and the findings were presented on figure 3.

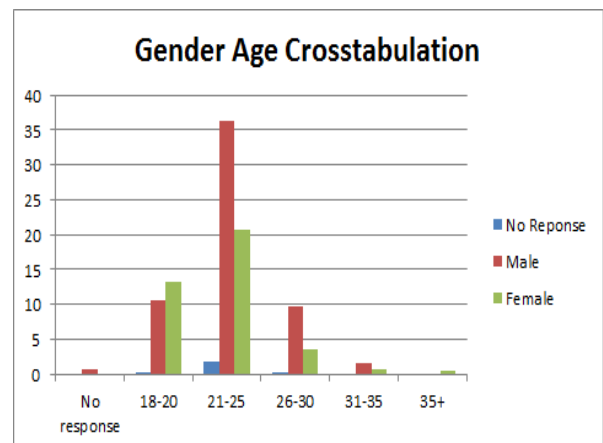


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

The findings revealed that shows that the large proportion of the respondents 36% males and 21% females were between 21 years and 25 years of age. The youngest were between 18 and 20 years 10% of the males and 13% of females while those between 26 and 30 years 9% of males and 4% of females respectively. The oldest students were between 31 and 35 years both below 5% for males and females. This distribution of the mean age of students is as would be expected of university going students. The Kenya schools system provides that a student will be between 18 and 21 years by the time he/she joins university. The target population of this study was students in their second year of university study thus the average age of between 21 and 25 years is as expected. The small number of students who were

older than 26 years could be as result of delayed university enrolment.

Attrition through Retaking Examinations

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the student attrition rates among students in private universities in Nairobi County. To achieve this, students responded to questionnaire items that required them to state if they had repeated examinations or deferred semesters. The findings were presented in figure 4.

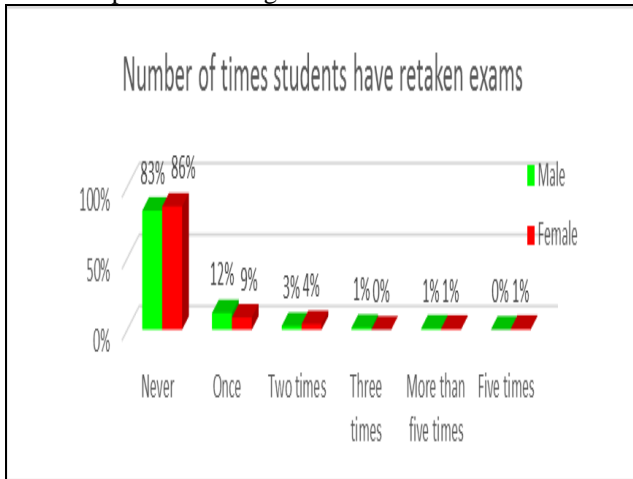


Figure 4: students who reported retaking examinations

The findings revealed that majority of students 83% of males and 86% of females had not retaken examinations. However, there was a small percentage of 12% of male students and 9% of female students sampled who reported having had to retake an examination once and 3% of males and 4% of females having retaken examinations twice. This gave a total of 15% boys and 13% girls who have had retakes in examinations.

Deferment of Semesters

The study wished to establish student attrition through semester deferment. The students were expected to indicate the number of times they had deferred. The results are as shown in figure 5.

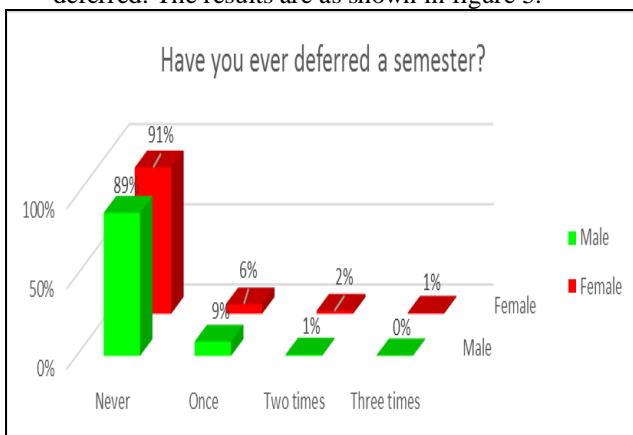


Figure 5: Deferment of Semester as Shown by Gender

The results revealed that majority of students were following the university program according to laid down schedules with 89% of the males and 91% of the females reporting to never having deferred their studies. The students who reported deferring once were 9% of the male and 6% of the females while those who deferred twice were 2% of males and 1% of females as 1% of males reported referring thrice.

Level of student Attrition

The levels of student attrition were computed and results presented in figure 6.

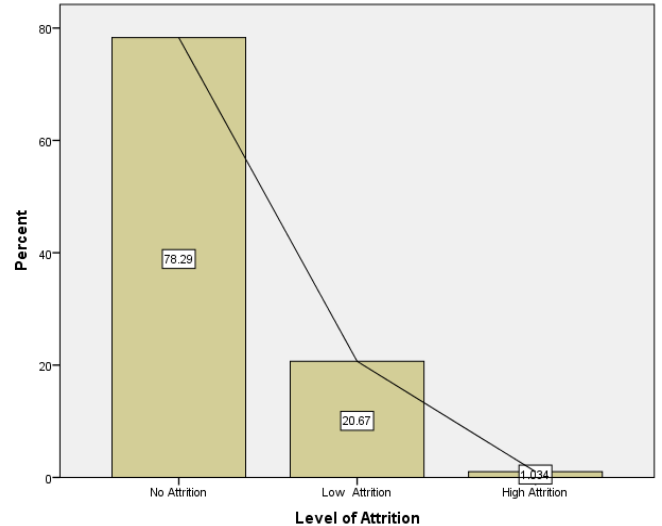


Figure 6: Distribution Showing Level of Students Attrition

The results revealed that 79 % of students were pursuing their degree programs smoothly without deferring studies or retaking. Students who reported low attrition were 20.67% while those with high attrition were 1.034%. in addition 60 students comprising of 15% of the study sample had dropped out of university. The interpretation of this finding is that the attrition rate in this study is a combination of 22% in continuing students and 15% of students who had already dropped out making attrition rate of 37% in private universities in Nairobi County.

Rates of attrition reported elsewhere in the world are much higher than those in this study probably due to the samples studied and methods used elsewhere. Studies in Britain, United States of America and Canada have established rates of attrition as high as 50% (Gardner, 2008). In Kenya one of the closest assessments of attrition was a study done by Mwebi and Simatwa (2013) among private universities in Kenya which established a dropout rate of 3.2%. This reported rate was however made of only those students who had dropped out of university and failed to complete the degree program thus making findings in this study richer as it has taken into account more factors.

Relationship between Faculty Support and Attrition

Another objective of the study aimed at establishing if there existed a relationship between faculty support and attrition among undergraduate students in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Role of Lecturer-Student Interaction

To determine how students perceived the relevance of student faculty interaction, the students were asked in interviews to respond to the question; ‘*What, in your opinion, is the role of lecturer-student interaction in students completing a degree program within the stipulated time?*’ The responses are as depicted in table 1

Table 1: Role of Student-Lecturer Interaction

	Male	Female
Offer guidance and counselling in matters of academics in order to perform well in their education	68%	66%
Build a good foundation in the course work for a better understanding	6%	12%
A plus on students’ performance/ helps in a major way	6%	3%
Advice on how to look for a job	4%	1%
If it’s not efficient this can lead to drop outs	3%	2%

The findings revealed that a high number of respondents, 68% of male students and 66% of female students, were of the view that the role of student-lecturer interaction was for the lecturer to offer guidance and counseling in academics matters. The interpretation of this finding was that students view faculty as necessary while making decisions on career and academic matters. This view was in agreement with Tinto (1997) who emphasized the value of the interpersonal aspect of university life. Tinto argued that lack of social support from faculty was a positive predictor of attrition. With regard to support offered by university staff, students distinguished between staff members who were committed and enthusiastic, and others who were less so. One student made the following comment in regards to faculty who are committed and those who are seen as not being committed.

Some lecturers do not have time for you...if you go to their desks you can get a very bad look and the lecturer will tell you that you need an appointment. If you try to get one...you may be told to come back after two weeks...by that time you have lost ‘psyche’but there are some lecturers who give out their telephone numbers and if you send an SMS...the lecturer will reply and say that you can go talk to them.

In giving their view of the role of student-lecturer interaction, 16% of female students and 13% of male students were of the view that an understanding with faculty was an added advantage in helping in academic performance. This view is in line with previous studies done on attrition that have demonstrated that faculty mentoring and a supportive role is an important ingredient in the fight against attrition (De Berard et al., 2004). In the studies among university students in Australia, Foster et al. (2011) argued that those students who persist in

studies cite family, friends and faculty at university as the main reason for persisting in studies.

Other respondents’ views on the question of the role of student-lecturer interaction contained the assertion that a good understanding between faculty and students helps in understanding university course work, and was seen as a big plus in helping student academic performance. This view resonates with Terenzini and Nora’s (2001) view that saw the interaction of students with faculty demonstrated in students’ change in their aspirations, values and attitudes.

12% of female students saw faculty as being responsible for helping build a better understanding of their studies. The value of student-faculty interaction has been underscored in this objective and would appear to agree with Newton (2002) and Okwilage (2002), who argued that there is a recent ongoing urge in the field of education to look into education as a business-like enterprise where the lecturer is seen as a producer of knowledge, skills and competencies. The student on the other hand is the receiver of such products. To this end, the university must ensure that the student feels that faculty have students interest at heart.

More findings under this objective show that within the answers to the question of the role of student-lecture interaction, a small but important 3% of female students think that the interaction between students and faculty ensure that students comply with the sets of rules and regulations, while another 3% argue that students can only do better if lecturers impact them with talks relating to academic matters. The male students were silent on both points. This is not surprising due to the difference between how men and women view situations. The men are likely to feel that rules and regulations and getting talks are not important. It is however important to note that the

findings in this study to a large degree agree with the findings of Komarraju, Musulkin and Bhattacharya (2010), who found that the role of students' and lecturers' interaction through formal talks or otherwise has positive influences on students' development within the university.

In the qualitative aspect of this study, lecturers were interviewed and asked to give their views on whether faculty support was related to student attrition. The results were an overwhelming agreement that students who took advantage of availability of lecturers outside the class room found university easier than those who did not. A lecturer, who had interacted with students for about four years, put his opinion in the following manner;

The faculty often acts as student mentors for both academic and personal issues. Those students, who drop out of university or who find that they had been deferred for a semester or had to repeat an examination, usually do not bother to create a relationship with lecturers. I would say that it is important for student to seek faculty support.

Another lecturer who has had three years teaching in university viewed faculty support as an integral part of university experience. He puts his views in this manner;

These students are just naughty. They prefer playing with their phones than taking time to seek out a lecturer and iron out areas which are not clear. I can tell you that it is highly unlikely for a student who asks and is concerned about his Continuous Assessment Test (CAT) mark for example to fail an exam if he/she talks to the lecturer about it.

In addition to student-faculty interaction, the campus climate of any university is considered a significant influence on students' sense of belonging and eventual desire to complete studies. Thus in the measure of the objective of student-faculty interaction an eleven item questionnaire scale which sought to find out whether students were aware of the resources available on campus was included. The questions were derived from literature and contain common questions likely to face students while on campus. The students were asked to score on a Likert scale the extent to which they agreed with the statements on the scale.

Table 2: University Environment and Attrition

No	Statement	S. D	D.	N.	A.	S. A.	M.	S. D	S. E. M.
A	I know where to look for help in case I run into academic problems.	1%	8%	19%	48%	24%	3.85	0.92	0.05
B	I have adequate access to books, computers and other educational facilities.	3%	10%	22%	37%	28%	3.79	1.04	0.05
C	I find the courses I am taking more difficult than I originally thought.	10%	32%	33%	18%	7%	2.81	1.08	0.05
D	I find university environment somewhat isolated from the rest of society.	10%	33%	34%	19%	4%	2.74	1.01	0.05
E	I always have leisure time as a way to release stress related to my studies and life.	4%	8%	23%	50%	16%	3.66	0.96	0.05
F	Due to growing workload in the university, I spare more time for studies than anything else in my life.	4%	12%	29%	38%	17%	3.52	1.03	0.05
G	University offers a lot of freedom to us which if not well managed can lead to harmful activities and decisions.	10%	25%	20%	26%	19%	3.19	1.28	0.06
H	I have joined a club in the university to ensure that my free time is well spent.	7%	21%	24%	33%	14%	3.26	1.16	0.06
I	I like growing and practicing my hobbies during my free time in the university	5%	10%	18%	48%	19%	3.66	1.06	0.05
J	The university calendar of extracurricular activities is loaded with many things that can occupy me productively.	5%	14%	29%	35%	17%	3.45	1.07	0.05
K	I have access and frequently interact frequently with lecturers with regards to academic matters.	6%	6%	27%	39%	22%	3.64	1.09	0.06

The findings revealed that the majority of the students, 78% female and 77% male, indicated that they knew where to seek for help in case of academic problems. Consequently, interaction levels were reported to be high with 72% female and 74% male,

reporting that lecturers were accessible to students and that there was frequent interaction. This finding supported by a World Bank Report (2009) which argued that students in private universities saw themselves as the very reason for the existence of the

institution. The students would thus, according to the report, like to be involved in the decision making process. Meeting student demands by availing easy access to faculty has major implications on students' attitude towards a university and completion of a degree program.

Further support on the findings for this objective is from Tinto (2005) who emphasized the value of the interpersonal interaction aspect of university life. He mentioned that lack of social support, especially from faculty was the positive predictor of attrition. Thus the finding that 52% of male and 54 % of female student found university environment isolated is indicative of the challenges students get in fitting into university and may have contributed to the 37% attrition rate already established.

Additionally, students' scores of 62% among the male and 64% among the female students on the statement that said 'university offers a lot of freedom which if not managed well can lead to harmful activities', confirmed that students sometimes find the university environment daunting. Swail (2004) was of the opinion that if a student simply goes to class, then goes home without engaging in campus activities, that student is unlikely to stay on at the university. Thus the agreement with an average of 62% of the students with the statement that they find university environment leaving too much time on their hands may be predictive of attrition.

The importance of the student-teacher relationship has been agreed upon for a long time. Greek philosopher, Plato, some 400 years before Christ, advocated for a good relationship between teacher and student so that learning can take place (McEwan, 2011). Since universities are widely known as places of higher learning, student lecturer interaction then takes a bigger meaning in the fight against attrition. Rather than regarding the lecturer as 'someone who does something to someone, as in pouring knowledge into an empty vessel', borrowing from Plato's view, the lecturer should be someone who does something with the students, as in equal sharing in getting knowledge (McEwan 2011). Other notable educational philosophers and researchers such as Noddings (2010); Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) offer support for the importance of positive relations between student and lecturer. Classrooms, lecture halls and laboratories provide central meeting spaces for structured faculty-student interaction while fields and halls of residence as well as cafeterias allow for informal interactions.

The summary of findings from undergraduate students about the amount of support given to them by faculty members indicate that majority of the faculty members offer students support required during the study program. Studies have shown that

when faculty offers support, the results show the key role played in cognitive development of the student. There is another view, however, which points out that it is not all student-faculty interactions are that useful (Simpson, 2004). Some faculties have been found to have a discouraging effect on students, making them give up on their study pursuits. (Simpson, 2004). Perhaps the dissonance is due to the presence of faculty who are not equipped to meet student needs. In a situation where student needs are not met, the students continue to struggle with academic matters, and attrition rates may continue to rise.

Adequacy of Facilities within the University

Equally, qualitative findings from questionnaires and interviews with the study population made up of students, university administration staff and lecturers revealed that as well as having lecturers interact with students, universities need adequate facilities. The classroom has been known as the place students first get an opportunity to interact with lecturers. Research findings have proven over time that adequacy of facilities is positively correlated to students' good academic performance, and the likelihood of finishing a university degree (Braxton et., Al 2005). While looking into aspects of student-faculty interaction in a recent study, Komarraju, Musuklin, and Hattacharya (2010) found that "students who perceive their faculty members as being approachable, respectful and available for frequent interactions outside the classroom are more likely to finish their degree programs". Indeed, students who perceive that their faculty members care about them as proven in student-faculty interactions are more likely to be satisfied with their academic experiences, and thus stay on at university.

Heads of departments known as managers in some universities agreed that adequate facilities in the universities in form of a well-stocked library, sufficient computer laboratories, enough classrooms as well as enough lecturers went a long way to ensuring that students stayed in universities until completion of a degree without repetition of semesters.

The question posed to the university staff was 'in your view does adequacy of facilities impact on students' attrition rates'? The following are some of the views offered;

It goes without saying that facilities within a university should be sufficient or seen to be sufficient. I have had several students willing to transfer to our university because we are known to have enough computer labs. Some students do not complain...they just do not come to school anymore. We are trying very hard to give enough room in classes so that too many students do not squeeze in one room.

Another university administrator was of the view that students spend most of their time on campus and should thus be catered for adequately. The library space, for example, should be such that a student is comfortable spending time there. She was of the view that;

The library is popular among students as a reading place. I think that students find it comfortable when they want peace and quiet. Our sports fields also attract a lot of these young people. I think they have a lot of energy to spend. It is therefore important that universities have adequate facilities to allow students to express themselves and not to be attracted to other things that are too far away from studies. Places where students can sit during breaks between lessons are a 'must' for universities.

What stands out from these narratives is that informal discussions with faculty outside of the classroom appear to be associated with some sort of greater academic self-confidence and a drive to finish a degree. Komorrajū et al., (2010) saw that students, who frequently participate in informal academic conversations with a faculty member, were more often than not better prepared for their examinations and other university demands. A recent study of the faculty-student relationship among a particularly challenging course content found that interactions between students and faculty had a positive correlation when the interactions were supportive, adding to the student's confidence and motivation, and a negative correlation when interactions between students and faculty were full of worry and alarm over grades and examination pass marks (Micari and Pazos, 2012).

Further analysis of findings as shown in table 4.6 show that students reported knew where to seek help in case of academic problems. The researcher noted that 78% of female and 77% of male students were able to access and knew of the existence of facilities such as libraries and laboratories. The study also found that students were in agreement that they had access and were able to interact frequently with lecturers in academic matters. The findings were cited by 72% of female and 74% of male students. Adequacy of facilities in private universities such as libraries, lecturer halls/rooms, laboratories and health facilities to mention a few, have been the attractive feature over public universities (Odebero, 2010). This study established that adequacy of facilities within a university comes among the first ten reasons for attrition. The respondents were of the opinion that lack of adequate facilities counted for incidents of attrition which could otherwise be avoided. The implication is that when students feel that universities do not have sufficient facilities, they get discouraged.

The evidence in this study indicates that there is a clear relationship between students' perception on adequacy of facilities within the university, both physical (classrooms, laboratories, and library) and faculty (lecturers and supporting staff). The measure in this objective was the result of a Pearson coefficient 0.271 also related to the demographic factor of age, which showed that the higher age group rated university environment as a factor of attrition. The physical environment of a university, its layout, the room temperatures and noise has an impact on learning. For example high levels of noise may interfere with concentration leading to lack of interest and absenteeism (Schneider, 2002). It maybe that layout of the university and the general ambience also add to students feeling of safety and contentedness, thus contributing to persistence in studies.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this study revealed that majority of students had adjusted well to the university program and had neither retaken examinations nor deferred studies. However there are students who experience challenges and had dropped out (15%) while 22% had retaken examination or deferred semesters amounting to 37% attrition rates among the investigated sample. The study further established student-faculty interaction was related to student attrition in agreement with Okwilage (2002), who found a strong relationship between student-faculty interrelationship and student adjustment. In addition to student-faculty interaction, adequacies of facilities carried the same weight as student-faculty interaction in the relationship with attrition. The investigated variables of university environmental factors were found to have a relationship with attrition. It thus becomes important for scholars and all stakeholders in higher education to become aware that attrition is influenced by student faculty interaction and adequacy of facilities within a university. It is recommended that this interplay be taken into consideration when universities are developing mechanisms for prevention of attrition. Since a student coming into university brings with him or her all past experiences from home and other education institutions attended, multifaceted plans may need to put into place to control attrition in universities. There may also be need to tie individuals student's background to the university and faculty interaction. There may be those students who may find it difficult to interact easily with those whom they may regard their superiors. Therefore universities and institutes of higher learning need to look at a variety of factors, including suitability of facilities, adequacy of facilities, safety attractiveness and easy accessibility of facilities and they relate to individual dispositions and characteristics of the families where the student comes from.

One of these measures could be that the counselling department should target first year, first semester students who have done poorly. This is the best time to arrest any potential problems. The counselling department should have access to the results of the first semester exams as soon as they are released. These results should be critically analyzed and students who have failed or not done exams should be gently approached, consoled or mentored. In many universities it is common to find that students are given a one or two day orientation at the beginning of their first year, and after that they are left to struggle on their own and find their way through the challenges of university life. When student meet problems, they may not know how to approach the counseling department because counseling is sometimes frowned upon, they will not go there for help. It is highly recommended here that all universities have a very active counselling and mentoring department with fully trained and qualified personal. This department in conjunction with the office of the Dean of Students should organize all year round activities which could include talks or seminars covering the following topics; the importance of mentoring and/or counselling; life in University; challenges and coping skills; skills for managing academic stress; skills for building and maintaining motivation and skills for managing examination anxiety.

It is clear that there is a direct relationship between lecturer-student interaction and attrition. With this in mind universities need to implement measures to ensure maximum interaction between students and lecturers outside of the lecture room. In this study findings reveal that 28% of the female respondents and 26% of the male respondents found lecturers inaccessible. This could perhaps be due to a heavy work load where the lecturer's entire day is taken up with teaching, grading and research, leaving very little time for students' consultation. Universities should look into ways of encouraging lecturers to make time to interact with students in a bid to bridge the minor percentage of students who find lecturers inaccessible. Some of the measures that could be adopted by universities to this end could be having yearly seminars for lecturers before each academic year to sensitize them about the needs of the students. One of these needs time to talk and be advised in one on one sessions with faculty, and making use of assistants who would be a preparation of succession plans to reduce the lecturers' work load, and hence free up time for student consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions made, the study recommended that university environments be made student friendly in order to reduce or eliminate student attrition. The study recommends that the university facilities such

as lecture halls, laboratories, hostels and eatery joints should be adequate and youth friendly. Universities should ensure that structures to identify students at risk of attrition are identified and supported to enable them to pursue their studies to completion. Such structure should include peer and faculty mentorship programs, counseling services, spiritual support and where possible financial support. University faculty should employ pedagogical skills that empower students to cope with the new knowledge, skills and abilities expected at university level. In particular faculty should make lectures interesting by showing personal passion, use of teaching aids and appropriate technology. In addition, the faculty should be available for consultation and inform students of their availability schedules. Students should be given orientation programs that contain details of the existing support systems and the need to solicit for support early enough before challenges become overwhelming. Moreover students should be encouraged to always take a proactive approach to university life which would help them seek faculty and peer support and to use the university environment in a manner that would benefit them thus reducing attrition. It may also be beneficial to study attrition rates in public universities as well so as to have a more complete picture of attrition rates in Kenyan Universities. This would help in identifying the actual attrition rates in Kenya as well as coming up with methods to reduce or eliminate attrition in all Kenyan Universities as recommended by Kuh et al., (2008).

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