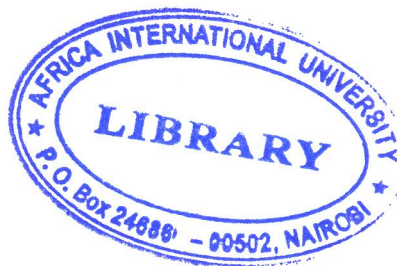


AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR EXPERIENCES
AND WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND THEIR INSTITUTIONS: A SURVEY
OF CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

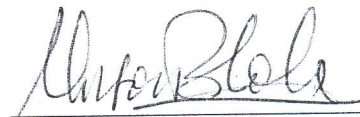
BY
ESTHER F. W. NYAGAH

A Dissertation submitted to the University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Education



Approved:

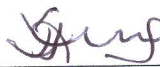
Primary Supervisor:


Prof. Victor B. Cole

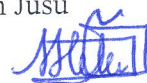
Associate Supervisor:


Dr. Rosemary Mbogo

Internal Examiner:


Dr. John Jusu

External Examiner:


Dr. Peter C. Kigwilu

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ABSTRACT

The support of students' movement across borders for higher education has seen a rise in intra-regional student mobility in Africa. However, there is still limited feedback on the experiences of international students studying in African universities. If these universities are to thrive as hosts to international students, the attraction, satisfaction, and retention of international students should receive the attention it deserves from the leaders and administrators of university education. Feedback on international students' satisfaction with their university experiences and their willingness to recommend their institutions is therefore important to inform university administration on areas that may need improvement. Such information is also critical as a contribution to knowledge of the role that African universities play in hosting international students.

This research adopted a quantitative survey design that is correlational as well as causal comparative, using cross-sectional data of international students studying in selected Christian universities in Kenya in 2017. Stratified random sampling was done for inclusivity of the various sub-groups of interest to the study. A questionnaire with mainly closed-ended questions and some open-ended questions was used for data collection among 187 randomly selected international students from 5 purposively selected Christian universities. Testing for differences in students' overall satisfaction based on various student characteristics was done using Mann-Whitney U tests and Kruskal Wallis tests. Correlation tests were also done between students' overall satisfaction and their satisfaction with various experiences in the university and between students' satisfaction with their experiences and their willingness to recommend their institutions.

Mann-Whitney U tests and Kruskal Wallis tests revealed significant relationships between students' satisfaction and the variables of age $H(4) = 13.21, p = .01$, gender ($r = .154, r^2 = 0.024$), current type of residence $H(2) 7.167, p = .028$ and the preferred kind of accommodation $H(2) 10.114, p = .006$. Younger undergraduate students were significantly less satisfied than their older postgraduate counterparts but with small effect size and female international students were significantly less satisfied than the male students, also with a small effect size. University accommodation off-campus was not just the least popular type of accommodation among international students; it also generated the least satisfaction. There was medium to large effect size based on the difference in satisfaction between university housing off-campus and the other two options, university accommodation on campus and self-rented housing out of the campus.

Spearman's Correlation tests also generated significant positive correlations between international students' overall satisfaction and their satisfaction with various experiences in their student lifecycle such as application ($r_s = .252, p = 0.001, r^2 = 0.064$), learning ($r_s = .256, p = 0.001, r^2 = 0.066$) and living ($r_s = .270, p = 0.000, r^2 = 0.073$) although the effect size was small. The correlation between overall satisfaction and satisfaction with the usage of support services was also positive and significant but with medium effect size ($r_s = .300, p = 0.001, r^2 = 0.09$). A niche contribution of this study to the literature is the significant association established between

international students' overall satisfaction and their satisfaction with institutional support services above all other experiences.

Overall, international students' willingness to recommend their institutions was significantly associated with their overall satisfaction ($r_s = 0.276$, $p = 0.000$, $r^2 = 0.076$) as well as satisfaction with their specific university experiences such as application ($r_s = 0.309$, $p = 0.000$, $r^2 = 0.095$), learning experience ($r_s = .351$, $p = 0.000$, $r^2 = 0.123$), living experience ($r_s = .383$, $p = 0.000$, $r^2 = 0.147$) and support services ($r_s = .415$, $p = 0.001$, $r^2 = 0.147$). Weak but significant correlations were also detected between students' willingness to recommend their universities and arrival ($r_s = .218$, $p = 0.004$, $r^2 = 0.048$), orientation ($r_s = .215$, $p = 0.005$, $r^2 = 0.022$) and visa experiences ($r_s = .216$, $p = 0.006$, $r^2 = 0.047$). This shows the importance of enhancing all international students' experiences to make them satisfying since that has implications on whether the students would be willing to recommend their institutions or not.