

The Influence of Residence on Undergraduate Students' Engagement and Learning Outcomes in Tanzania.

Zuena Mwalutambi

Institute of Education, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, China
zmwalutambi@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to determine whether the residence has an influence on engagement and engagement has an effect on students' performance in undergraduate education course. It examines the relationship between independent variable residence, dependent variable engagement, and the overall average grade performance. The researcher conducted this research at the University of Dar-es-salaam in one of its Education College using descriptive statistics, correlation coefficient, independent t-test and regression analysis. Random sampling procedures were used during data collection from a population of 1438 students; a sample of 400 students was drawn. Out of 400; 61% were male, 39% were female. The on-campus respondents were only 29.3% (117), and off-campus respondents were 70.8 (283). Independent t-test indicates that there was a significant difference between on-campus and off-campus students in their engagement level ($t=11.812$, sig. <0.01). Moreover, the findings indicate that there was also a significant difference in students' performance between on-campus and off-campus students ($t=7.887$, sig. <0.01). There was a positive correlation coefficient ($r=0.705$, $p < 0.01$) when students engagement level and students' performance was analyzed. A plausible explanation is that the more students engaged themselves the more they had good performance grades earned.*

Keywords— Residence; Engagement; Students' Learning Outcome

1. INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is generally considered to be among the better predictors of learning and personal development. The premise is deceptively simple, perhaps self-evident: The more students study or practice a subject, the more they tend to learn about it. Likewise, the more students practice and get feedback on their writing, analyzing, or problem-solving, the more adept they should become (Kuh, 2003). Thus engagement is a growth-producing activity through which an individual allocates attention in active response to the environment. Engagement related to school activity has become an important concept related to multiple educational outcomes like achievements, attendance, dropouts, graduation. As a result of its demonstrated relationships with a variety of outcomes, it is postulated that an understanding of student engagement might help educators prevent injurious outcomes and promote positive ones for at-risk students. On the other hand Students' hall of residence has been a hot topic to many higher education stakeholders as well as students affairs practitioners. Many higher institutions have been addressing this issue with much attention though it is still a challenge to many countries and institutions which are mostly depending on government aid for their expenditure. The issue has even increased now that we have overpopulation in enrolments systems of most higher education's institutes. Globally, student enrolment in higher institutions has been increasing in recent times, and it is estimated that there has been about 160% increase in tertiary education globally (Sharma, 2012). However, in many countries of the world, the provision of accommodation facilitates for tertiary students continues to remain a challenge for the government (Centre for Global Education, 2002). The situation of government participation

in the provision of affordable student accommodation has been a major concern to educational management by ensuring that students' accommodation facility they provide meets the required standards and conditions and enhances students' learning.

In Ghana, the enrolment rate in tertiary education was estimated at 9.7%, though this may be low as compared to that of developed countries that stood above 50% (Ghana Education Performance Report, 2010, p. 38).

In Nigeria, the demand for higher education is so high because education has been considered as not only an investment in human capital but also a pre-requisite for economic development and yet the government provides more than 80% of the total higher education funding (Ahmed, 2015). Therefore residence and engagement are two concepts which affect the learning outcomes. These two concepts are also becoming complex as the number of students is increasing. According to the 2014 Education Policy report, in Tanzania, the enrolment rate in tertiary education was estimated to increase from 16,727 in 2001 to 162,510 in 2013. In the University of Dar-es-salaam vision 2061, it has been stipulated that there has been a trend of increasing enrolment of students for the past 50 years of its existence from 14 to 17,000. This has also been supported by (Poverty and Human development Report 2012). Students are considered whole persons that learning involves a multifaceted process extending beyond the purely intellectual domain, and that In-class and out-of-class learning experiences are mutually enhancing and have become foundational assumptions in student affairs in general and campus housing or residence in particular.

Student engagement is the frequency with which students are involved in activities that represent good educational practice. In this research, the concept of engagement is used to mean involvement of the student in activities or program within the institutions they are in.

These program and activities have been established by the university to enhance student academics. Therefore the term engagement is the frequency with which students are involved in activities that represent good educational practice and are related to positive learning outcomes. They are also related to the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities same as it was once defined by Chambers in 2009. The term engagement has been studied for so long in the field of student's affairs in the US. In African Higher Education, the term has been practiced to fulfil the Institutional policy; that is to enhance the ways of enabling easier students' participation in the campus.

In general, a student involvement is when students are involved in their institutions and they are willing to be involved in both programmed and out of program activities within the institution. It is widely accepted that student's engagement is always stimulated by the presence of residential halls in the campus. It is also widely accepted that engagement is among the factors that influence positive students' performance. There has been a lot of research done in the US about the influence of residence on engagement and students learning outcomes. However, in Tanzania, these three concepts have received little research attention despite their importance in students' growth and development. While a variety of definitions of the terms residence, students' engagement and students learning outcomes have been suggested, this research will use the following definitions.

First, student engagement will be discussed as the way a student involved himself/herself inside the class and outside of class. Secondly, the term residence hall will be only used to mean inside the campus. Lastly, the term learning outcomes will be used to refer students' performance after they have been assigned an examination at the end of the semester. Research internationally (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Thomas 2012 as quoted by Gormley 2015 P.1) has shown that students living in on-campus accommodation have higher retention rates than commuter students, and also exhibit higher scores on developmental scales (Chickering and Reisser, 1993 as quoted by Gormley 2015 P.1). Scholars in residence, engagement, and performance suggested that these three concepts are very sensitive when it comes to students' holistic development. By holistic development, they refer to general growth and development of students cognitively and socio-culturally. It is in line with this background.

This research is meant to quantitatively investigate the relationship between residence, students' engagement and students' learning outcomes of undergraduate students in a comprehensive university in Tanzania. As we will be seen,

involvement theory provides a theoretical foundation that helps to rationalize this research. The key concepts will be addressed by the guide of previously researchers and the above theory.

Student engagement has become a much-studied topic in higher education because engagement is highly correlated with learning and personal development (Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). The level of educationally purposeful activities such as student-faculty interaction, active and collaborative learning has also been emphasized as an alternative measure of collegiate quality (Kuh, 2003). Research suggests that looking at engagement as a way forward is sensitive to both student differences and the current economic climate faced by institutions of higher education (Chambers, 2009). As Astin (1993a) notes, institutional practices that promote student engagement are achievable within the confines of existing institutional resources. Little research has been conducted, however, on how residence hall for student influences the attainment of positive engagement in African countries.

In general little research has been done to explore whether higher levels of students engagement remained influential in improving the continued good performance of students into the institutions. In Tanzania specifically, there has been no specific research on residence and students engagement. Thus this research ought to quantitatively seek the exploration of residence on students' engagement and learning outcomes.

This research was conducted at the University which sets as an umbrella of higher education in Tanzania. At that university, there has been very little research about student affairs in general. Thus the research will provide a framework as internal data for the institution to assess its daily performances on students' residential hall with relation to student's engagement and performance.

Pike and Kuh (2005a) suggest that such internal institutional studies will provide informative data, with a level of relevance that will encourage faculty members to take a greater interest in engagement.

As student engagement varies more within institutions than it does between institutions (Pascarella&Terenzini, 2005; Kuh et. al., 2006), a single institutional focus may reveal nuances lost in larger, multiple institution comparisons.

Therefore the purpose of this study is to examine the potential role that student engagement, has on student performance at a single institution of higher education. The research will also provide a narrative exploration of the motivational factors for engagement and their contributions to learning outcomes. Such knowledge is valuable when considering how best to allocate monetary resources to improve student residence halls, students' activities, and students programs.

There are 5 major questions to be addressed in this study. The first three questions will be analysed by using descriptive statistics while the second last two questions will be addressed by using linear regression.

- (1) Is there any remarkable difference in engagement level between on campus and out campus students? The hypothesis: there is a remarkable difference in engagement level between on campus and out campus students.
- (2) Is there any remarkable difference in academic performance between on campus and out campus students?
- (3) Is there any remarkable correlation between students' engagement level and their academic performance? The hypothesis: there is a remarkable correlation between students' engagement level and their academic performance.
- (4) Is there any remarkable influence of residence on students' engagement?
- (5) Is there any remarkable influence of residence on students' academic performance?

This research contributed to existing literature on student performance and engagement. It provides new information on whether increasing student engagement in higher education has effects on good performance in later years of college. The research also gives knowledge on the engagement level between on-campus students and out campus students. Further, the research provided knowledge on the importance of investing in students housing and students' engagement in relation to learning outcomes. It is useful enlightenment for other researchers who might need to conduct further research on students' affairs in Tanzania.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research employed the quantitative method. The design of this research was a descriptive non-experimental. Since the research was explanatory then, it examined the relationships among multiple variables. (Tuckman, & Harper; 2012, Cohen & Marrison 2000). This research used correlation investigation which was meant to yield a correlation coefficient of the strength of the association. The independent or predictors a variable of this study is residence while the dependent or criterion variable of this study are the participants' involvement and the participants' university examination results in the form of GPA.

The setting of this research was the University of Dar-es-salaam which is located in the coastal area of Tanzania. The University is the highest ranked among the other higher institutions in the country with a student population of 17,000 (ibid).

It was established since 1961 which makes it older than other institutions. It is an accredited public university which serves as an umbrella of most of the policies related to student's affairs including residence halls for students. According to the University of Dar es Salaam Vision 2016 report; "The

University is committed to promoting constructive student affairs management. This is to be done within the framework of the students' affairs policy which is normally reviewed and updated from time to time. Areas of students' welfare that will be prioritized include not only the general state of wellbeing but also specifically their good health stability, comfort, prosperity as well as offering an environment which is conducive for studies". (pp. 20). It is imperative here that the university is the role model for all universities in Tanzania and some parts of East Africa which have well-structured students affairs services. This enabled the researcher to get the appropriate sample to give valid responses for the study. Since the university is big and has a lot of schools, this research was specifically conducted at the Dar-es-salaam University College of Education which is one of the constituents of the University of Dar-es-salaam. The use of single institution in the research has also been supported by Astin (1993a) who pointed out that, institutional practices that promote student engagement are achievable within the confines of existing institutional resources. As student engagement varies more within institutions than it does between institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Kuh et. al., 2006), a single institutional focus may reveal distinctions in large than multiple institution comparisons.

Pike and Kuh (2005a) suggest that such internal institutional studies will provide informative data, with a level of relevance that will encourage faculty members to take a greater interest in engagement.

The population for this research was students from the faculty of education from Dar-es-salaam University College of Education. The faculty of education from this university has three major departments, which are the department of arts with education (BA with Education), the department of science with education (BSc with Education) and the Department of Education (BED). The total number of respondents was 400 third-year students from the three departments of the faculty of education. According to Tuckman and Harper, (2012) good sample for any correlation research should consist of at least 30 participants to ensure the accuracy of the relationship. The participants were those who have stayed in the University and completed five semesters. These respondents were selected through random sampling. Random sampling is often applied in quantitative research. Random sampling frequently takes participants' characteristics such as their grade and gender into account when sampling. Out of 400 respondents, 39% (156) were female and 61% (244) were male. Those who reside on-campus were 29.3% (117) and those who are off-campus were 70.8% (283). This shows a full picture of students' residence in Tanzanian higher education. Students' residence in Tanzanian higher education is still a big challenge to both public and private universities. Recently on June 2016 his excellence head of state together with the Minister of Education were the witness at the construction of a new student's residence of the University of Dar-es-salaam

which aimed at accommodating more than 3800 students. In April 2017 they were at the opening of the new students' residence. However, those efforts are not enough to cater for the challenges available. The number of off-campus students is increasing each day in all universities.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (2009) was adopted by the researcher to solicit responses from the participants. These questionnaires explored curriculum engagement, extra-curriculum engagement, students' performance and demographic so as to answer the five research questions. The following data were collected based on the dimension of the questionnaire; demographic, learning outcome and engagement. According to Tuckman and Harper (2012), most correlation designs are straightforward whereby each variable is measured in each participant and the validity is the extent to which the instrument measures what it purports to measure. On addition to that, they argued that the use of questionnaires enable the researcher to measure knowledge, values, preferences, attitudes, beliefs and experiences depending on the formation of the items as guided by research questions.

For the purpose of this study some of the items were deleted /eliminated and the survey was shortened due to the limited research time. Thus only 28 items were adopted and the scale range was from very often, often, sometimes and never. The operationalization of these variables is shown in Table 2 and the questionnaire used in this study is included in the appendix. Control variables or students characteristics were measured using age, gender, and status. Age was measured using three variables students can choose: 20-22, 23-25 and 26-30. Gender were defined as female and male. Status was divided into two: on-campus and off-campus.

3. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

All data were collected at a comprehensive university in Tanzania. To be precisely the students from the faculty of education were involved.

In order to ensure that the research instruments were readily and interpretable for students, a pilot study was conducted using a group of 20 students at the same university. The English language was retained since English is the medium of communication in Tanzanian higher education.

The data collected from participants was analysed through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Since this research was descriptive, the use of bivariate correlation method was employed. The correlation design was employed for the purpose of explaining the complex concept. Again, in correlation studies, the variables themselves are not influenced by the researcher. The researcher is instead interested in the nature of the association as stated by Cohen, Manion, and Marrison (2000). During the analysis, the coefficient was used to determine whether there is either positive, negative or no correlation. Regression was also employed by the researcher. After the coding of data, the first and second question was analysed by using sample t-test. The third

research question was analysed using linear regression and the fourth and fifth question was analysed using regression. The aim was to check whether there is an influence of variables against one another. Basically, it was meant to check if residence can be an influencing factor to both students learning outcomes and students engagement level in Tanzanian higher education. Statistics knowledge argued that some variables can have positive correlation but it does not always mean that those variables can influence one another. Thus correlation does not mean influence.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study was designed to exploring the influence of residence on undergraduate students' engagement and learning outcomes in Tanzania. The data were gathered through questionnaires. The results are presented hereunder as it was analysed by using statistics data.

The data for this research were collected through questionnaires and analysed through SPSS. The population of this research was 1438 and the sample used was 400. In the selected sample males were 244 which are 61.0% while females were only 156 which are 39.0%. Those who were inside the residence hall were 117 and those who were outside the university were 283 which are 29.3% and 70.9% respectively.

The respondents of this research were third- year university students at Dar-es-salaam University College of Education in Tanzania. The demographic reveals that the number of male's students in the study (61%) was slightly higher than a number of females students (39%). This reflects the general proportion distribution of male's students versus female's students in most of the universities in Tanzania.

Regarding the age vast majority of my respondents were between the age of 20-25 and only 47 respondents were above 25 years but not exceeding 30years. Furthermore, it was revealed that 70.8% were off-campus and 29.3% were on-campus which gives the general trend of Tanzanian universities lack of student's residences.

An independent sample test between groups was used. The results show that there was a statistically significant difference between the means in engagement level between on-campus and off-campus. ($t=11.821$, sig. <0.01)

To explore the difference in performance between on-campus and off-campus an independent sample test was used. The independent sample t-test was found to be significant between on-campus and off-campus performance's ($t=7.887$, sig. <0.01)

Furthermore, the relationship between engagement level and performance Pearson correlations were computed. All correlations were found to be significant ($r=0.705$, $r= -0.503$, $p<0.01$).

On the Other hand to examine whether residence predicts engagement regression model was used. From the analysis of variance (ANOVA), the general regression conducted for

the research question was significant at 0.01 significant levels. It was found that above 70% $R^2 = .521$ of the variation in students engagement level can be explained by residence.

The regression result shows that ($B = -9.909$, $sig. < 0.01$). This means that whenever there are any variations in students' engagement level then the 70% of the variations can be explained by the influence of residence.

Again, the results of the regression analysis to explore the influence of residence on students' performance was ($B = -.394$, $sig. < 0.01$). From the analysis of variance (ANOVA), the general regression conducted for the research question was significant at 0.01 significant levels. It was found that above 58% $R^2 = .347$ of the variation in the learning outcomes can be explained by residence. This means that whenever there are any variations in students' learning outcomes then the 58% of the variations can be explained by the influence of residence.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.

This study has explored the influence of residence on undergraduate students' engagement and learning outcomes in Tanzanian higher education. It addressed and answers five research questions as presented here under:

The first question the study answered was whether there is a remarkable difference in engagement level between students who reside on-campus and those who reside off-campus. The results reveal that there is a significant difference in engagement level between the two groups. The findings show that students living on-campus engaged more in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. In the context of Tanzanian higher education, the results show that students who engaged in extra-curricular activities tend to give much attention to spiritual and God related activities than sports. This finding is in line with earlier findings by (Chickering, 1968; Constantinople 1967; 1970; Fry 1976; Hood and Jackson 1986 as cited in Feldman, 1991) that students who are living near or on-campus tend to engage more than those who are far or off-campus. This tells that residents can be one of the best determinants for students' engagement.

The second question of this study focused on investigating the remarkable difference in learning outcomes (performance) between students who are on-campus and those who are off-campus. The result reveals that there is a significant difference between on-campus and off-campus. Most of the students residing on-campus had better GPA compared to those residing off-campus. This explanation corresponds to earlier findings of Terenzin and Pascarella (1984) that involvement is stimulated by residence and that involvement itself is one of the contributing factors to either low or high performance. At this point, it should be noted that different activities students engaged can be among the factors for their differences. Again the context and environment caused them to engage can also tell why there are differences. Therefore this is to say that even though studies and findings show there is a remarkable difference in

engagement level and learning outcomes (performance) between on-campus and off-campus, students' characteristics such as where they came from should also be considered. Astin (1977) is also in line with these findings that residents tend to participate more than commuters and hence their participation influences their learning outcomes.

The third question in this research focused on investigating the relationship between students engagement level and learning outcomes (performance). It was found that there is an extremely positive correlation between students' engagement level and their learning outcomes. This indicates that the more students engage themselves the more they have positive better learning outcomes.

Again there was a negative correlation between a number of hours spent on engagement and learning outcomes among third-year students. This finding is in line with Pascarella (1985) who argued that living on campus was positively associated with students' development by promoting a higher level of interactions and participation and then involvement is positively associated with learning outcomes.

The fourth question was designed to investigate the influence of residence on engagement. The result shows that students' engagement is highly depending on residence, and other students characteristics like gender, age, the number of hours spend on curriculum and number of hours spend on extra curriculum activities. Thus residence can be termed as a predictor for students' engagement when considering gender, age and hours spend on activities. This result is corresponding with the study conducted by Chickering (1974) where the results found out that even though commuters and residents begin their college at the same time but their gap grows, residents have access to find and encounter diverse experience. These diverse experiences enable them to develop their ability to deal with different challenges.

The fifth question of this research was designed to investigate the influence of residence on performance. Basically, the marginal response plot gives a pictorial view or idea of the dependence of the predictor variables on the response variable. A critical glance at the plot revealed that there existed some degree of linearity in the relationship between residence and learning outcomes (performance). This is to say that residing on-campus increase the possibility of higher performance.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the present research support the results of the research work conducted in the USA which shows that there is a relationship between residence, engagement and learning outcomes. Most of the study done in US higher education suggests that there is a strong association between residence, engagement and learning outcomes. This has been proven by this research finding which shows the strong association between engagement and performance (learning outcome). This finding shows that there is a difference in engagement level between on-campus and off-campus students. Thus the study calls our attention to look at how students' engagement

influences learning outcome and residence as a stimulating factor for engagement. It suggests that to improve students learning outcomes students' affairs administrator should pay more attention to students' life which includes residence life. These implications should be acknowledged by Tanzanian Ministry of Education and students affairs administration. To improve students' engagement, students should be residing on-campus and at the end the more they engage themselves the better performance they will get. They also need to focus on students' characteristics such as gender and age since they also helped in improving students' engagement and students learning outcomes. Therefore these results have implications for the ministry of education and students affairs office in Tanzania.

Further research should focus on the types of engagement such as extra-curriculum or academic curriculum engagement since this study concentrate on both types. Again, further research should focus to determine what types of engagement students give much attention in Tanzanian context and how do they influence their learning outcomes. In the sample selected, it is obviously that many students engaged in the spiritual activities than sports like watching films, music, and dance. Furthermore, future research should focus on why there is a difference in engagement between on-campus and off-campus and relate the reasons with personal characteristics like gender and age. Apart from that this research can be duplicated by using a qualitative method to get in-depth information as to why students engage more or less, is it because of where they are residing? Since there are few researches in this field, it is better to conduct a comparison study between a university which has enough residence for students and a university which has insufficient residence hall for students in Tanzania.

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