

AFRICA UNIVERSITY

(A United Methodist-Related Institution)

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT RETENTION AT AFRICA
UNIVERSITY

BY

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Abstract

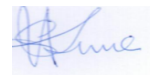
The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that affected student retentions at Africa University. Student retention plays a critical role in any institution's sustainability, as it poses a significant opportunity cost when institutions must compensate for student departure through increased new student recruitment or other revenue-generating functions in order to meet financial objectives. The objectives of the study were: To identify factors that influence student retention at Africa university; to understand the relationship between factors that influence student retention at Africa university; To analyze Africa University's performance versus student expectation; and to find out if Africa University was the student's first choice of learning. The study was approached from a multi theoretical approach using Swail' geometric model and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Geometric model comprised of institutional factors, social factors, and cognitive factors, whereas the hierarchy of needs comprised of psychological needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs and self-actualization. The research employed a survey design using a quantitative approach targeting the undergraduate student at the main campus. Random stratified technique was used to collect data from a sample of each academic year of enrollment. Of the targeted 862 students 716 responded giving the questionnaire an 83 percent return rate. From the sample of first years 88 percent responded, second years had 82 percent respondents' rate, third years had 91 percent responds rate and fourth years had 72 respondents rate and this resulted in an overall of 83 percent responds rate. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages. SPSS was used to analyze the data. Quantitative data was analyzed using formulated variables from the questionnaires' responds. The results showed that there was a strong relationship between cognitive factors, social factors and institutional factors that influences student retention. The study also reveals that a student has to be motivated in order to be returned. Student background also plays an important role as revealed by the study. The study recommends that the institution should put more emphasis on institutional, social and cognitive factors to possibly influence the student retention within the institution. Further area of study may include student recruitment in private institutions, as well as learning environment in Universities.

Key words: Retention, persistence, brand, reputation.

Declaration Page

I declare that this dissertation is my original work except where sources have been cited and acknowledged. The work has never been submitted, nor will it ever be submitted to another university for the award of a degree.

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14 April 2024

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15/04/2025

.....

.....

Main Supervisor' Full Name

Main Supervisor's Signature (Date)

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I would like to thank Mr. T Nemaunga my project supervisor who gave me courage and confidence, as he guided me throughout this study.

I would also like to thank the management team of Africa University who permitted me to carry out this study at their institution and the students who also actively participated in the research by sparing their valuable time to complete the questionnaire.

Dedication Page

This research is dedicated to my wife Tsvakai, son Devine, Daughters, Lorna, Lynne and Leslie.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
AUREC	Africa University Research Ethics Committee

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduced the concept of student retention in private universities followed by statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, assumptions and significance of the study. The chapter concluded by stating delimitation and limitation of the study.

1.2 Background of the study

Many private institutions do not access large endowments from the government they are driven by tuition revenue. A reduction in student numbers directly leads to reduction in budgeted funds available to operate, maintain, and grow the institution. Reduction in student numbers not only creates a negative economic impact on the institutions but also reduces the amount of institutional options for the students.

A large amount of university budget is spent on first year student recruitment drive, and therefore it has become prudent to retain these first years to degree completion. Research on students retention indicates that decisions to pursue a degree to graduation in higher education are related to 1) student's individual and parental influences, such as student academic performance, socioeconomic status, parental support, and parents education background; 2) institutional influences, such as costs and financial aid, location, availability of programs, and reputation; 3) institutional communication influence, such as recruitment efforts and how well students interact with institutions; and 4) significant others such as peers, counselors, and teachers (Dial, M. 2014) citing Chapman, D (1981). Students are not only concerned with the nature of service they receive but also with the quality of output they receive. In the context of ensuring sustainability of higher learning, Universities are required to strive towards meeting and exceeding student expectations (Anderson, E. 1994) in order retain the student up to

degree completion. The above mentioned facts are some of the factors which need to be taken into consideration when assessing factors that affect student retention in a university set up. This research on student retention was conducted on Africa University for two main reasons, it is the first private university in Zimbabwe and the second reason is that most of its students come from different countries with different backgrounds.

Africa University is a private institution found in a former British colony known as Rhodesia, renamed Zimbabwe at independence in 1980. Zimbabwe is a landlocked country which is located in the central part of southern Africa. It has about 16 million people as reported by Zimbabwe central statistics in 2014 and it occupies 375 thousand square kilometers of land. Like many other developing countries, soon after independence Zimbabwe reformed its educational systems to align them with the new national goals, because prior to the reforms, they were skewed in favor of the colonizers. Prior to independence in 1980, very few native black children had access to education as the education system favored the elite. This scenario ended after independence when the government formed a universal system which did not permit discrimination of any form.

According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2016) Annual Statistical Report, Zimbabwean education system comprises of primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. The primary education level is a seven-year cycle and the official entry level is six years. It starts from grade one to grade seven and the normal teacher student ratio is one is to thirty. Although students are tested at the end of grade seven the results do not necessarily affect the progression of the student to secondary education. However, some secondary schools are selective and they set

selection criteria based on those grade seven results. Primary and secondary education falls under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

The secondary education is divided into two phases, the ordinary level phase and the advanced level phase. For a student to proceed to advanced level phase, one should have passed the ordinary level phase. Ordinary level phase is composed of four years. For a student to be said to have passed this phase they should have passed at least six subjects including Mathematics and English subjects. Normally students who continue to advanced level are those aiming to enter university, otherwise with a pass in ordinary level one can successfully apply to enroll at any college of their choice. Advanced level is a two-year phase program and the minimum number of subjects taken is three.

Tertiary education covers all universities, technical colleges, polytechnic and other vocational skill training centers. Tertiary education falls under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. Zimbabwe now has twenty universities and one of them is called Africa University.

Africa University sits on 3242 acres of land, seventeen kilometers north of Mutare city. The university's main campus is located in the prime farming area on a valley sitting, coupled with beautiful mountains terrain which provides a scenic tranquil and breathtaking environment. Mutare is the third largest city in Zimbabwe. The institution was established by charter and approved by the government in 1992. It recently merged its six faculties and an institute to form three colleges, College of Health, Agriculture and Natural Sources, College of Social Science, Theology and Education, and College of Business Peace Leadership and Governance. The envisaged ratio of student enrollment according to charter is forty percent should be Zimbabweans and sixty percent should be internationals. According to the Board minutes of November 2018 Africa University

has students from twenty-nine different African countries. These include students from Anglophone, Lusophone, Francophone and some Arabic speaking countries such as Sudan and South Sudan. This philosophy facilitates communication among students in Southern Africa Development Countries, Economic Community of West African States and other regional blocks in Africa. Harmonizing such a diverse student background and convincing them to return up to degree completion is a challenge of no small proportion.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Africa University in 2016 merged its seven faculties to form three colleges (Africa University Board Minutes, 2016). Out of its four campuses Africa University closed its Chimoio campus in 2017 leaving the University with three operating campuses due to poor student retention. Some of its faculties could no longer sustain themselves and had become loss making entities as they could no longer maintain student numbers to justify their existence, The Faculty of Education had a total number of 13 students, Faculty of Theology had 72 total number of students and Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance had 65 total number of students (Africa University Board Minutes, 2016). The low student numbers resulted in the institution failing to meet its expenses as revenue was going down significantly. In universities the student is a short duration customer who will hopefully stay with his or her chosen institution of choice for the whole degree program. Strong student orientation and student centeredness will ensure strong retention numbers and nurture positive word of mouth that will bring in more students. The Africa University Academic Statistics Report of March 2025 state that 1497 students were registered in the first semester of 2020 to 2021 academic year and 1452 students returned for the second semester. The period 2021 to 2022 first semester had 1520 students and second semester had 1385 students. Academic year 2022 to 2023

first semester had 2187 students and second semester had 2117 students. A total number of 2041 of students were registered in 2023 to 2024 first semester and total of 2037 students returned for the second semester. In 2024 to 2025 first semester had 2247 registered students and 1956 students returned for the second semester. The numbers of students who did not return for the second semester for the five years is an average of 109 students per academic year. On average, the university is losing six percent (6%) of its recruited students per academic calendar. In private institutions student's numbers determine the continual existence of the university as they are the major source of income. At Africa university, the consequences of poor student retention led to the closure of its' Chimoio campus, merging of seven faculties to form three colleges, and losing of revenue in the form of tuition as the institution was losing 109 students averagely for the past five years. The institution also went through a retrenchment phase as some workforce were now redundant and the government was now losing revenue as some of the students were internationals who paid their tuition using foreign currency. This study specifically attempted to analyze and evaluate the factors affecting student retention at Africa University.

1.4 Research objectives.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the factors influencing student retention at Africa University.
2. To understand the relationship between factors influencing retention of students at Africa University.
3. To analyze the differences between what the student expected and what is being offered at Africa University.
4. To find out if Africa University was the student's first choice of learning.

1.5 Research questions

This research was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the factors that influence student retention at Africa University?
2. To what extent do these factors predict student retention at Africa University?
3. Are there any significant differences in student expectation prior to joining Africa University and what they are experiencing now?
4. What is the relationship between student retention at Africa University and student's university choice selection?

1.6 Assumptions.

1. It is assumed that the respondents would fully understand the questions they would be asked.
2. It is also assumed that information collected was correct and accurate.
3. It is assumed that respondents cooperated freely.

1.7 Significance of the Study.

This study was meant for all the stakeholders of the university especially the church related and private institutions, the researcher, students, university administrators, parents and the government. Firstly, this study would contribute to the literature concerned with student retention in private or church related institutions in an Africa context as much study done already focused more on the developed countries. To the university administrators, academics and staff of Africa University this study would be beneficial as it would give a clear picture of factors affecting student retention and this would allow them to develop programs and strategies that would prevent students from dropping out.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study.

Restrictions imposed by the researcher are:

1. The study focused on factors influencing student retention.
2. Data collection was limited to Africa university main campus only.
3. Only a sample of conventional undergraduate students was targeted.
4. Data collection was for the period 2025.

1.9 Limitations of the Study.

The limitations of the study were:

1. Time constraints, the researcher had to balance the research and work pressure. The researcher had to work during weekends in order to make up for the time he was at work.
2. Resources, the study was only conducted at Africa University main campus in Mutare because of financial challenges to travel to other Africa University sites and other universities campuses to get firsthand information as opposed to use of secondary data which had the shortcomings of having been collected for some other purpose. The researcher had to be meticulous in choosing secondary data which would be useful to the study. Furthermore, the researcher had to use a sample which was representative enough to minimize the element of bias. Due to limitation of resources the researcher did not manage to contact the student who had dropped out.
3. Privacy, management personnel were reluctant to release some of the required information as they classified it as too confidential to be released.

4. Comfortable. Some of the respondents to the Questionnaires were very uncomfortable and the researcher minimized the impact of this limitation by assuring the respondents that their identities would remain anonymous and that the data collected would be used for academic and scholarly purposes only.

1.10 Summary

This chapter highlighted the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, assumptions and significance to support this study, limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter two embarked on literature review, relevance of the theoretical framework and it further explored literature surrounding the topic and identification of research gaps. The next chapter focused on the research methodology which was used for the study.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The literature in this study explored the undergraduate student retention through the use of the Swail et al.'s (2003) geometric model and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1956). Swail et al.'s (2003) geometric model discusses the relationship between the cognitive, social, and institutional factors of the student's experiences (Swail et al., 2003). The geometric model equilibrium is of critical importance in student persistence in higher education. Therefore, when equilibrium was not present the student was at risk of not returning to the learning institution. There is a close relationship between student attrition and student retention, if there is high student retention there will be low student attrition and the reverse is true, high student attrition results in low student retention.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that guided the research questions, research design, choice of sample, and data collection tactics in this study was Braxton's (2000) proclamation that the problems of student retention need a multi theoretical approach. In terms of university student attrition and student retention, three specific forces account for the entire range of student outcomes: cognitive, social, and institutional factors as proclaimed by (Swail et al., 2003). In a nutshell, the cognitive factors form the academic ability which relates to the student's decision-making and problem-solving capacity. The founding father of student persistence in higher education Tinto (1993) describes the decision-making process regarding goal commitment and dropout, Bean (1982) describes an intention to leave, and Anderson (1985) identifies value conflicts and career indecision among the important variables that a student controls through the set of social and cultural values instilled in him or her. Social factors, such as the skill to network effectively with others persons, personal attitudes, and cultural history, form a

second set of external factors that define the individual. A student who is well groomed in a culturally and educational rich settings will develop abilities critical to post-secondary, career, and personal success. Students coming from less supportive backgrounds may bring with them deficiencies in their self-esteem and effectiveness, especially as they relate to academics when compared with students from more advantaged upbringings. The third set of factors, institutional factor, refers to the practices, strategies, and culture of the institution that, impact student persistence and achievement. University environment presents challenges, at some point, to all students. Considerable research exists on the challenges faced by undergraduate students, especially the first generations. Irrespective of one's view to Genep's social anthropology theory (Tinto, 1988), how the institution reacts to students is of primary importance to retention, persistence, and degree completion. Examples include faculty teaching ability, academic support programming, financial aid, student services, recruitment and admissions, and curriculum and instruction.

This theory is important to this study because it includes ways of monitoring undergraduate students, not only to perform but also to remain in universities. This theory helped this study to come up with the interventions to motivate students in universities to return, and also to retain students in universities through improving their perceptions of performance to enhance the value that these students place on them.

2.2.1 Definition of retention.

Retention and persistence are two words that are normally viewed and used interchangeably although they mean different things. To clarify, retention is an institutional problem because universities retain students. Measured as a major element of university's organizational format, most universities already have a designed systems and programs to retain the students they initially enroll (Reason, 2009), although

program execution is easier said than done. Universities' student retention rates and percentage of student who actually complete their academic programs are usually seen as a measure of the institutions' worth, quality and focus (Reason, 2009). Persistence, on the other hand, according to Reason (2009), is viewed as a personal problem to the student who wants to achieve their intended goal and not the activities of the institutions. Students have many reasons and goals for attending university and the goal of graduating might not be one of them. This fact is normally overshadowed but it does bring out clarity between the two terms. The fact that students define their own goals means that a student may graduate successfully without the institutions making an effort to retain the student (Reason, 2009). In this research, the term retention was used to describe continuous enrollment throughout to graduation in the institution.

The distinct number of goals within which the student returns also complicates the issue. The fact that students can drop out or stop at any point in their studies becomes crucial that institutions must be ready to implement intervention programs to directly stop the situation (Reason 2009). For this reason, some universities have adopted the use of academic calendar as a means of knowing when to best intervene and address the student's drop out decision. Although student retention up to graduation is the desirable goal for institutions of higher learning, there are many research studies on retention of students for varying lengths of time (Reason, 2009). There are studies that explore semester retention and other explores yearly retention. Even if the institution's goal is to fully graduate all the enrolled students, it is certainly a desired goal of any institution but there are still some variables that will affect the date and time the student will graduate. Most institutions naturally report on four, five and six year graduation rates in order to include those students who are delayed to graduate because of other various reasons (Reason, 2009).

2.2.2 Student retention in Universities

Student retention and graduation is complex, personal, social, and academic projects that require a broad organizational partnership to connect students to proactive provisional schemes that encourage success, engagement, development, and completion Moxley, Najor-Durack, & Dumbrigue, (2013). Factors that state precisely why students persist to degree completion vary and are very hard to separate and classify as they overlap into each other. Naturally, findings that apply to the majority of student populations are difficult to classify due to uncontrollable factors related to individual students and their unique personal situations and circumstances (Tinto, 2006). As a result of difficult economic times that have produced increased attention to performance-based funding models, programs on Universities perpetually have to defend their worth as stated by Madison, & Madison, (2011). That can be difficult when assessment and statistical proof are not viable options, leaving some programs to depend on self-funding means to support their cause. Many early involvement, student engagement, and retention initiatives search for tangible ways to prove that their existence is warranted and deserves funding and institutional support. Finding causes for student attrition and solutions to improve low retention and graduation rates are complex ventures, but are very vital for the future of universities. Hagedorn, (2005) notes that, extensive consequences exist when students leave college prior to completing an undergraduate degree. The resolution to continue until graduation is a decision that has challenges and benefits, not only for the student, but also for future employers, institutions, parents, and governmental entities (Wyrick, 2014). Attrition also has a negative impact on learning institutions, because students who leave signify a major loss in a specific academic department, which can be seen as a loss of human capital in that field (Trowler, 2010). The retention of students is important to

institutional mission in higher education. High rates of student attrition not only make financial issues for colleges, but represent a significant failure by the institution to accomplish its purpose, to educate.

Student retention and graduation research are normally based on individual students and the life situations they experience in institutions of higher learning. Most of student persistence literature found for review comes from the later part of the 1980s to the present, notably due to the increased interest in student development as it relates to retention and graduation rates (Barefoot & Gardner, 1993). Also, during that same time frame, there was an abundance of retention initiatives that flooded higher education systems and become commonplace in learning institutions, (Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 2008).

The question of why higher education institutions should pay attention to retention revolves around student development issues, financial issues, and obligations to admitted students (Seidman, 2005). Developing critical thinking skills, potential contributors to society, a prepared workforce, tolerance of diversity, and appreciation of life-long learning opportunities are key components of the student development that Seidman (2000) described. Seidman (2005) also observed that financial consequences of students not being retained are extensive and include burdens to students, parents, taxpayers, and institutions. On average, students who earn a bachelor's degree earn more than those who do not (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Keeping students enrolled in college through degree completion is financially cost-effective in many ways. Institutions boasting high retention and graduation rates are typically viewed as more successful by stakeholders and in the eyes of the public (Hagedorn, 2005).

Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010) and Knutson (2012) explain that present-day students in higher education institutions are educational customers,

equipped with a sense of academic privilege and a confidence that they must shop for the best university deal. This phenomenon places pressure on universities to see themselves as businesses, seeking to meet the needs of the consumer. Associated with the institutions' obligation to retain students are the reasonable expectation for success, loss of non-renewable time, limited future educational opportunities, the ability to upgrade skills for job advancement, and the detrimental effects of unhappy students telling about their experience (Seidman, 2005). In addition to the world focus to keep students enrolled and progressed to graduation, institutions face the simple pressure from students and their parents to retain the students they recruit, provide them with quality educational experiences, and prepare them for future endeavors. Students not retained face financial, social, and employment hurdles and the effects of low retention rates damage the reputation of institutions (Reason, 2009).

2.2.3 Factors Associated with Student Persistence

Steven (as cited in Day and Newburger, 2002) states that many economic benefits exist for students who are university graduates compared to those who did not graduate. Steven, (2015) went on to state that student persistence theory history indicates that students' academic, social, and cultural combination have a major influence on intentions to persist. Universities have great opportunities to provide integration skills to increase student retention and graduation rates based on several key factors that influence student persistence (Stevens, B. 2015). Tinto's (1975) model of student persistence, along with his later revisions and additions from other investigators, confirm that. The students who are more integrated academically and socially are likely to be successful in their tertiary studies (Steven 2015). Jensen (2011) states that other factors that does influence student to continue with their studies up to graduation are

individual characteristics and set goals, interactions with peers and faculty, and extracurricular experiences.

Institutions of higher education cannot afford to disregard student persistence, they are supposed to incorporate tactics to increase retention and graduation rates (Steven, 2015). Student attrition is a costly matter to tertiary education institutions (Braxton, 2000). Berger and Lyon (as cited in Steven, 2015) states that studies on factors influencing student persistence and existing best practices to make institutional improvements are lengthy. Much of the literature related to factors influencing student persistence at the individual and institutional level is based on Tinto's (1975, 1993) model on student integration in higher education (Steven, 2015).

2.2.4 Historical Student Persistence Perspectives

Initially higher learning institutions were not really concerned about student retention up to graduation (Berger & Lyon, 2005; Goodchild & Wechesler, 2008; Thelin, 2004). Stevens (as cited in McNealy, 1937), states that the impression of college student mortality that examined factors in college student retention including time to degree, specific times during education when attrition was prevalent, and even the impact of college size. Berger & Lyon, (2005) stated that the college student mortality theory gave birth to the importance of examining student failure to graduate and student attrition in higher education institutions. For many years the student mortality theory remained the focus of student retention study forming the basis of higher education research on why some students were not graduating. Gekoski and Schwartz (1961), Panos and Astin (1968), and Feldman and Newcomb (1969) fueled the study of undergraduate retention through the mortality attrition model and began to shape this subfield of study in higher education (Steven, 2015).

Steven (as cited in Thelin, 2004) states that the second wave of retention consciousness was a direct result of the invasion by nearly two million veterans who made their way into higher education at the end of World War Two via accommodations provided by the G.I. Bill (P.L. 78-346, 58 Stat. 284m) G.I. Bill. Institutions campuses in the 1960s were greatly strained because of the increase in student numbers being enrolled. (Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski, 2012). Steven (2015) explained that, access expansion on educational opportunities for middle and low-socioeconomic students, underserved student populations who required more institutional resources, and strained campus facilities. Student attrition increased during this period which forced the institutional administrators to become more concerned with enrollment, retention, and graduation rates (Berger & Lyon, 2005). The American Higher Education Act of 1965 provided the absolute push needed by the college and university administrators to invest resources and strategies fully to increase retention (Steven, 2015). By providing monetary and academic support to the under privileged students, the Act increased student enrollment and retention in institutions of higher learning (McDonough & Fann, 2007). Steven (as cited in Berger and Lyon, 2005) state that, as the 1960s ended, the American Council on Education was calling for a comprehensive and systematic examination of student attrition. The decade thrust research and development of retention and graduation-based initiatives into the forefront of the conversation within higher education (Steven, 2015).

This phase set the platform for in depth research into student retention theory. This resulted in increased publications from student development theorists working to investigate college student attrition (Steven, 2015). Summerskill (1962) initiated the idea that students' personality traits, characteristics, and attributes were direct indicators of retention and attrition (Steven, 2015). Modern student development was

paved well by combining personality awareness with existing retention efforts. This resulted in student engagement and retention initiatives that are person-centered and individualized. The major findings of Summerskill that formed his cornerstone were that of the attention that was to be given to students in relation to student attrition. Steven (2015) states that, the idea that students' behavior, attitudes, and satisfaction can be influenced by external and internal factors suggest that retention and attrition are multi-causal and challenging to foresee. Morrison & Silverman, (2005) stated that in the 1960s, attrition and retention factors were greatly manipulated. Student-centered, individualized approaches to student engagement and involvement programming, academic outreach opportunities, and extracurricular experiences continue to be major aspects of college student retention research (Steven, 2015).

The advent of research of tertiary student retention and development as it occurs today as believed to started in the 1970s (Berger And Lyon, 2005). The time period of the 1970s introduced dynamic researches that proved to be field-altering and foundational in nature (Steven, 2015). Steven (2015) states, from Summerskill's findings, Spady (1970) explored the interaction between student personality characteristics and the actual campus environment, bridging the gap between the individual student and the student college choice. Aiming to serve different niche markets, institutions of higher learning are assorted bodies, established upon different missions, goals, and student populations, thus having exclusive organizational cultures (Birnbaum, 1988). The theoretical additions of the 1970s also introduced the concept that institutional enrollment can influence retention and graduation rates (Steven, 2015). The notion that institutions with larger enrollment and complexity had lower attrition rate and higher retention rate was demonstrated by Kamens(1971) when data from several institution was used. Furthermore, Kamens (1977) pointed out institutions of higher education,

specifically those with larger enrollments, affect individuals and the educational environment by creating membership categories, legitimizing the social rights and meanings attached to these groups, and officially certifying individuals as members (Steven, 2015) the foundation of Kamens' effort is based on provision of students with chances to be involved and to belong. Steven (as cited in Kamens, 1977) states that even before student retention and graduation research was yet to be considered a science, identifying that there are various factors affecting attrition prepared higher education for the foundation of student development theories that would be introduced later.

Students in higher learning institution are in a continuous state of change and are, therefore, continually facing developmental crises (Coon, 1970). Among these challenges are the changing relationships with parents and friends, developing a value system, and choosing a major and career path (Steven, 2015). What the student experience academically, socially and personally, either positively or negatively is directly related to the challenges faced by that same student (Rogerson & Poock, 2013). Such progression through developmental crises needs students to form priorities. Maslow (1943) proposes that the development must go through ranked stages based on student needs. According to Maslow, individual student development will be hindered if lower level needs such as belonging and connection are not met. Student perception, engagement, and involvement tend to be strong predictors of retention and attrition, as stated by Kuh & Love, (2004).

The findings of Perry (1970) add to the theory of student growth by addressing cognitive maturation and by following the development of cognition related to knowledge, truth, values, responsibility, and beliefs about life. Perry's work presented four schemes that explain college student intellectual growth. The first stage, dualism,

is indicative of the student assumption that there is a single right answer to questions and lecturers are purely fact providers. Next in the development is multiplicity, where students develop subjective knowledge and acknowledge that conflicting answers exist; therefore, one's inner voice, judgment, and beliefs should be trusted over external authority. Relativism, the third stage in Perry's theory, is where students learn to make judgments and opinions that are based on values, experiences, and knowledge. Finally, students reach commitment, the fourth stage in Perry's model, where knowledge learned from others is integrated with personal experience and reflection to establish active affirmation of self and identity in this stage. Perry's intellectual and moral development stages serve as a useful framework for understanding students and how they develop and provide information to assist in implementing retention programming opportunities, Gibbs, (1981); Perry, (1970).

Spady (1971) also underlined the connection between academic performance and student attrition, mentioning that students with better grades tend to be retained at a higher rate compared to those with lower scores. Although Spady (1970, 1971), addressed the sociological model of university student attrition, Tinto's (1975, 1993) model transformed the research. Tinto's model of student integration linked structured and unstructured academic experiences with social integration factors. He established that the amount of academic success a student has in higher education directly influences the level of commitment a student has to the institution, academic goals, and career goals (Tinto, 1975).

Throughout the history of higher education, whether considering student mortality, attrition, persistence, retention, or graduation to be the chosen word, awareness and attention to student degree completion has considerably increased. Starting as a theoretical deliberation in its earliest iteration, student retention can be considered one

of the existing cornerstones of higher education's success. Although analysis of student retention has evolved over time, the commitment to providing quality instruction and educational experiences to students is important. Student retention and attrition are lasting topics. Identifying at-risk students can help institutions sharpen their recruiting efforts, refine its marketing methods, and identify any needed developments in services to students in the educational process. The movement throughout the history of student persistence research in higher education has become more technologically dependent by the decade (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & Gonzalez Canche, 2012; Woodley & Silvestri, 2014).

Moving into contemporary student retention planning requires institutional commitment to innovative ways of thinking and doing regarding strategic retention development. Tinto's (1975) research article sparked nearly a 40-year discourse on student retention and persistence in higher education. Today, although criticized, reviewed, and expanded, the literature associated with student navigation through postsecondary education remains linked to the idea of students and how they interact with institutions. Nonetheless, the history of student persistence details the difficulty and intricacies involved in strategic retention planning.

Tinto's work (1975, 1987, 1994, 1997, and 2012) has been influential in broadening retention and attrition research in higher education. Retention initiatives are grounded in student development theory, involving growth and development of the whole student through opportunities for students to improve self-awareness, strengthen academic skills, and build a base of knowledge (Clarkson, 2007). Tinto (1993) revised his student integration model to describe academic and social integration with the formal and informal academic and social structures within an individual institution. Tinto also elaborated on specifics related to decision making processes concerning student goal

commitment and dropout, the need to mesh student expectations to campus mission, and the transitions made by students in the college process (Swail, 2004). The factors responsible for student attrition, such as a feeling of isolation, difficulty adjusting to a new environment, and an inability to integrate new information and knowledge with previous learned information and knowledge, are fundamental to Tinto's (1987) retention theory.

Nevertheless, the need to comprehend the "web of events that shape student leaving and persistence" continues (Tinto, 2006, p.1). Early investigators repeatedly described students who did not stay in college as not having the right personality for traditional college course work, or as being less able, less motivated, or less willing to adhere to the requirements of a college education (Spady, 1970, 1971; Tinto, 1975, 1982, 1993). The belief was that "Students failed, not institutions" (Tinto, 2006, p. 2). In the 1970s, a move in the direction of understanding the relationship of the individual within society guided educators to a richer analysis of why students leave or stay in Universities. Most notably, Tinto's initial effort led others to evaluate student retention through the lens of involvement and persistence.

2.2.5 Present student retention perspective

Presently, great emphasis is focused on why students are not completing their degrees and diplomas (Steven, 2015). Tertiary institutions are trying to find solutions to this challenge. Tinto (as cited in Steven, 2015) state that, over five decades of research on student retention has led to the assumption that reconsidering student retention is necessary when workforce needs change, when college enrollment practices change, or when educators see differences and changes in the needs of students. Many variations have been made to entrance requirements, student eligibility, lecturing, college services and resources based on some of these studies (Stevens, 2015). Tinto (as cited in Steven,

2015) stated that research on student retention has given us an improved appreciation of the multitude of forces that contribute to a student's retention, in particular, cultural background, economics, social support, and the characteristics of the institution.

In tertiary institution there still remains a gap in research to be fulfilled although much research has already been done (Cook, 2010). With direction from the growth of retention concepts, universities may be able to combine some similar definitions of retention, maintain precise measurements of retention, and identify tactics that help students to remain in universities (Steven, 2015).

Stakeholders in the learning institution have been greatly influenced by the traditional theories and models of student retention. Although much research on retention has been done, there still remain some discrepancies about how to employ retention strategies in learning institutions. Continuous research on student retention has resulted in having some theories being combined, whilst others have grown into quite different explanations of student success (Ashar & Skenes, 1993; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1993; Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, & Jenkins, 2006; Jeffreys, 2004; Monroe, 2006; Summers, 2003; Tinto, 2006).

Steven (2015) states that, classic theories and models of student retention include Spady's (1970, 1971) explanatory sociological model of the dropout process; Tinto's (1975) student integration model; Astin's (1984) model of student involvement; Cabrera et al. (1993) integrated model; Metzner and Bean's (1987) non-traditional student attrition model; and Pascarella's (1985, 2005) conceptual model for research on student-faculty informal contact, Jeffreys's (1994) model of undergraduate retention and success (NURS), a seventh theory, incorporates the non-traditional student.

2.2.6 Conceptual framework

As it has been conceptualized in the Figure 2.1, the retention of undergraduate students in higher learning institutions is highly dependent on various factors. Understanding what motivates students in higher learning institutions has been noted to affect undergraduate student retention in universities. According to Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003), understanding institutional factors, social factors and cognitive factors from both the student and institutional perspective have a direct impact on student retention in universities. Student retention is supposed to be tackled from both student and institutional directions according to the triangle formed which was later named the geometric factors by Swail et al (2003). The main thrust of the geometric factors was to show that both the institution and the student should have mutual and individual goals as the student's aim is to learn and then graduate hence the institution's aim is to teach a student who will graduate (Swail, 1995).

The framework components of Maslow hierarchy of needs, and Swail geometric model are further broken down into categories based on the specialization and subsequently into specific objectives. Merging the two models will produce a comprehensive analysis of factors that affect student retention in institution of higher learning. In this research two conceptual framework were used, the Swail's geometric model and the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. The main conceptual framework in this research was the geometric model by Swail et al (2003), which focuses more on social factors, institutional factors and cognitive factors that affect student retention in universities. The secondary conceptual framework for this research was Maslow's hierarchy of needs which dwelled on the students' needs and motivational factors that normally shapes his or her effort. It should also be noted that these variables overlap into each other and none is greater than the other if the student is to be retained.

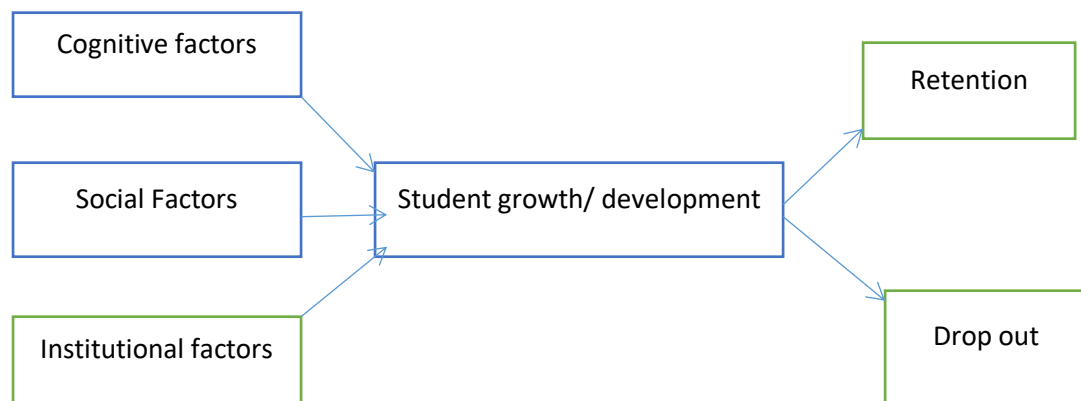


Fig 2.1 Conceptual Framework (Swail’s Persistence and Achievement Model)
 adapted from “The ART of Student Retention” by W.S. Swail, 2004)

2.3 Relevance of theoretical frame to the study

Maslow’s’ hierarchy of needs model in connection with Swail’s Geometric Model formed the basis of the theoretical framework of the study.

2.3.1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

To assist with the interconnectedness of human nature and student retention, this study used Abraham Maslow, the “spiritual father” of humanistic psychology (Schultz & Schultz, 2012:339) and his five needs to possibly identify in-depth cognitive, social, or institutional factors that often go unaddressed among undergraduate students. Prescott and Simpson (2004) conducted a study using Maslow’s needs to frame their interviews of students with poor attendance and persistent absenteeism which leads to student attrition. Prescott and Simpson (2004) used Maslow and Hertzberg to identify what caused a student to be dissatisfied. The authors proposed that the learning environment must be fulfilling before a student could achieve success in the higher order of needs.

Failure to address the basic need to be successful results in a lack of motivation, increased withdrawal, and retention issues.

2.3.2.1 Physiological Needs

Corresponding to the simple desires of living were the basic fundamentals needed for a student to be successful while in pursuit of a university degree. According to Montfort (2017), these essentials may include tuition, supplies, resources, books, Internet access, computer access, and access to course resources. In order to achieve a higher level of satisfaction in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Milheim (as cited in Montfort, 2017) stated that essential components and tools are required to be presented at the first level of the hierarchy, which includes the conduciveness of the learning environment, without these basic elements, students would not be able to realize higher levels of satisfaction. Students who often lag behind are those who have deficiencies in simple needs and normally found it difficult to stay on track than students who are better equipped. Of great importance is the role which the institution plays in the readiness of its students. Milheim, (as cited in Montfort, 2017) states that administrators, staff, and lecturers should try to communicate with the students before the beginning of a course to make sure that they have all the necessary resources required for smooth progression. Lack of preparation and complex individual lives, makes undergraduate students more vulnerable, therefore providing resources was an essential service (Montfort, 2017). Once the physiological needs were met, then a student could address other areas of the hierarchy.

2.3.2.2 Safety and Security

Prescott and Simpson (as cited in Montfort, 2017) states that, security and safety needs were referred to as hygiene factors. Student withdrawal is normally caused by frustrations which are often linked to factors affecting student attrition. How many

people have access to their hostel, or how often do the students lose their valuables within the institutions has a direct bearing on their decisions to retain to the institution in the next semester. Of great concern is how their confidential information is handled by the administrators or those who are in authority (Prescott & Simpson, 2004). When an undergraduate entered an unaccustomed place especially the first generations, these challenges and frustrations may cause unwanted nervousness. Montfort (2017), states that safety and security needs include order, peace of mind and confidence in students although to some it may seem unimportant. Being uncomfortable could result in the student being uncertain, worried, or uncomfortable with the environment.

2.3.2.3 Belonging and Love Needs

Prescott and Simpson (as cited in Montfort, 2017) states the next stage of Maslow's theory as belonging and love needs, stated to as social and academic inclusion. Student's inclusion to the classroom environment, participation in university activities, clubs, and even finding new friends validate the notion of belonging. Montfort, (2017) state that, the student-lecturer relationship could affect the way the student perceives his or her academic involvement. The learning environment could ultimately make the student withdraw from the learning experience altogether because of lack of community among students (Montfort, 2017). Sadara et al (as cited in Montfort, 2017) stated that, the community had four key components: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs and shared emotional connection. A student who feels neglected or isolated is most likely not going to retain during the next semester.

2.3.2.4 Esteem Needs

The basis of this stage was respect, validation, and encouragement. Montfort (2017) states that, in a student-lecturer relationship, the lecturer was mandated to respect that he or she would have a distinctive relationship with each undergraduate or graduate

student. O'Toole and Essex (as cited in Montfort, 2017) states that the lecturer should be aware of the fact that no two students would have the same needs or would have the same experiences. The lecturer may also use encouraging tactics or any other form of reinforcement to help those students who may found themselves stressed in the learning environment (Montfort, 2017) For those undergraduate and graduate students who found themselves stressed in the classroom, the lecturer may use encouraging tactics or other forms of motivational reinforcement (Montfort, 2017). Montfort, (2017) states that, Skinner's behaviorism and reinforcement theory was frequently referenced by Milheim (2002) when trying to improve behaviors and to stimulate motivation. Skinner's theory used positive reinforcement along with simplifying errands which was assumed to be perfect model when fostering student esteem needs (Maznoor, Ahmed and Gill 2015). According to Montfort (2017), students can improve their classroom performances; build their self-esteem by starting simple and gradually advancing to more complex tasks and having constructive criticism.

2.3.2.5 Self-actualization

At the last phase of the hierarchy of needs was the ability for the student to experience the feeling of achievement, reached goals, or dominated fears (Montfort, 2017). The main factor that plays an important role in the student self-evaluation of his or her performances and capabilities to achieve the intended goals is the student-lecturer relationship. Montfort (as cited in Schultz and Schultz, 2012) used the example of a mother-child association of positive respect where the child learned from the mother's reaction those behaviors that were encouraged and those that were not encouraged. According to Montfort (2017) lecturers could tailor-made their student assignments and coursework to produce results that can motivate their students. An added encouragement to the student would not hurt as there is no exact way to recognize the

best possible way that would work for the student at this phase. Schultz and Schultz (2012) included the perspective from Carl Rogers, known for his work in psychotherapy. Montfort (as cited in Schultz and Schultz, 2012) stated that Rogers supposed that self-actualizing meant having a strong psychological state and a few of these qualities were, sense of freedom, a high degree of creativity, tendency to live fully in every moment, and the continual need to maximize their potential. Also in Montfort (as cited in Prescott and Simpson, 2004) states that the lack of individual attention in large settings can lead to poor academic progression along with exclusion from peers and the denial of their insufficiencies proved to have a negative effect on the student's outcome and ability to persist in college.

The Maslow's hierarchy of needs formed the basis for the foundational perspective of how to identify student problems, solutions and programs that can be executed in order for the students to be successfully in their endeavors by reaching their full potential. Students have often found themselves among two worlds where they needed to learn adapt to their new environment and cope with their academic challenges. Often, students have needed to learn how to merge their complex personal lives where they were seemingly in control, into a world of which many had little knowledge. Montfort (as cited in Swail et al, 2003) state that, for some students, university life in itself was viewed as a new world that had the tendency to cause fear and doubt, students live in multiple realities and lead cyclical lives that demand a high degree of biculturalism.

2.4 Geometric model introduction

One concern that academia has sought to address has been how to retain its most valuable asset; human capital, also known as its students. The upsurge of untraditional undergraduate students in universities has been, to some degree, a result of company cutbacks, layoffs, and outsourcing.

As institutions of higher learning continue to expand, one significant element was to understand why students leave, drop out, or even flunk out of school (Montfort, 2017). This fact is of great importance to institutions that are aiming to increase their student numbers. Montfort (as cited in Freire 2007) wrote that people are fulfilled only to the extent that they can create their world. Students have joined in universities as traditional or nontraditional students for many varied reasons and at different points in their lives. As Markowitz & Russell (2006) observed, both traditional and nontraditional students are naturally faced with similar logistical, academic, and financial problems when trying to achieve access and success in higher education. Montfort (2017) stated that all students had different capacities in comprehending what was taught. The author further stated that comprehending what was being taught depends on what motivates the student, attitude towards teaching and learning along with prior preparation. The lack of academic preparation in tertiary education often makes the undergraduates more vulnerable especially the first-generation students. Montfort (as cited in Swail, 2003) stated that, this placed greater emphasis on the need to offer support to undergraduate students' social and academic interactions. The models that were used to address the problem of students institutional departure among first-years were of Tintos's (1993) model and Swail et al's (2003) model. Economic factors, transferring to another institution, academic difficulties, personal responsibilities, personal issues, problems with residential life, poor academic performance, and poor advising or teaching were some of the obstacles that challenged the student's progression (Montfort, 2017) as cited in Madgett & Belanger (2008). Family members, friends, aspiring student's role model and even the community have either a positive or negative contribution to student's success or failure in student performance in tertiary education. Montfort (as cited in Brill, 2013) state that, institutions were not giving undergraduate students the

adequate support needed to be successful in fulfilling their studies. According to Swail et al.'s (as cited in Montfort, 2017), geometric model of student persistence and achievement places the student's experience at the heart of an equilateral triangle identifying the three sides as cognitive factors, social factors, and institutional factors. Motivation have a chief role to play in this student retention model as it is the center of the social, cognitive and institutional triangle factors areas of the student's experience.

2.4.1 Factors of the Geometric Model

All things being equal, it would be perfect of all undergraduate students to continue to persist without any academic challenge; regrettably, that is not always the case. Undergraduate students enter universities for diverse reasons. Furthermore, the causes that disturb their ability to persist could also differ.

2.4.1.1 Cognitive Factors

Montfort (as cited in Swail et al. 2003), states that cognitive factors are viewed as the ability for the student to demonstrate academic degree completion, which originates from his or her own motivation. Traditional students generally decide to follow their tertiary education in reaction to their peer pressure and from counsel and guidance hence nontraditional students are guided by their personal or professional chosen life. Montfort (2017), states that undergraduate students usually have some form of achievement in their academic or nonacademic that can be either physical, technical or mental capabilities that could be replicated in their academic accomplishments. Montfort states that it was vital for undergraduate students to be involved enthusiastically in the learning process so that they could make the connection between what they were being taught and the responsibilities they foresee in their personal lives. Montfort (as cited in Lunden, 1958) states that Tinto (2012) used Durkheims' suicide ideology as the foundation for his student integration theory. Dhurkeims' suicide theory

centered on socialization and social isolation. Kember (1995) states that Arnold Van Gennep's idea of the rite of passage was borrowed by Tinto who viewed life as occurring in stages. Tinto (2012) further expanded on the theory of rites of passage by focusing on the transition of graduating high school students who decided to enter tertiary education (Montfort, 2017). O'Tool and Essex (as cited in Montfort, 2017) states that the transitional period as he viewed it was similar to cultural rite of passage of a child transforming into adulthood within a society. The need to view students as individuals and understand that each student learns differently was expressed by O'Toole and Essex (2012). The authors continued to state their findings by stating that undergraduates learned better when they saw the value in what they were learning.

2.4.1.2 Social Factors

Montfort (2017) states that social integration has been discovered to be just as significant for undergraduate students as it has been for graduate students. A sense of belonging is needed by both graduate and undergraduate students in a learner's environment. Kambutu and Thompson (as cited in Montfort 2017) stated that culturally responsive educators make a conscious effort to create learning environments that are empowering to all learners. The academic support of lecturers played a main role in how students feel while in the classroom (Montfort, 2017). A case study conducted by Glowacki-Ddudka et al (2012) formed a transformative learning environment where the students engaged freely in topics related to cultural acceptance and opposing views (Montfort 2017). Montfort (2017) further states that the lecturer promotes inclusion by respecting the students' different backgrounds and cultures by encouraging them to use their voices to participate in institutional events. Irrespective of their different cultural views and backgrounds, the students had developed a sense of comfort and family atmosphere at the end of their programs. Montfort (as cited in Robson-Funk, Yopp,

McMurtry, Phillips-Miller, and Young 2000) stated that students and lectures in tertiary education should understand and develop new social, familiar, and professional roles with each other while becoming aware of their own short comings. Culturally responsive leaders have the ability to engage students with social justice issues because of their strong understanding of race, gender, class, and ethnicity (Montfort, 2017). Montfort (2017) further states that, for education to nurture the needs of undergraduate students, equitable and social responsibility must become a priority. Brown (2004), state that, innovation and understanding from leadership should be used to prepare students better for the shift needed for educational equality. Freire (as cited in Montfort 2017) states that lecturers should speak the language of the people and should not create programs that have little to do with a student's own doubts, fears, hopes, or preoccupations because the programs could actually increase oppressed consciousness. Although students might encounter barriers that block their abilities, they are often motivated by growth and development (Knowles 1989). The barriers consisted of negative self-concept, inaccessibility of opportunities, time constraints, and unhealthy programming for students (Montfort, 2017). O'Neill and Thomson (as cited in Montfort, 2017) explained that if an adult student experienced exclusion from their peers, struggles with teachers, school administrators, and/or was labeled as a bad or slow student because of predetermined or undetermined disabilities as a child, these experiences could have negative effects in their adulthood (Montfort, 2017, p38). Monfront (2017) further states that the instructors need to recognize the ways that would best educate these types of students so that they too can be successful. Unfortunately, these experiences often make it difficult to adapt to new learning environments. Exposure plays a pivotal role in student development as students who were exposed to various environments, develops set of skills that are essential in

adaptation of higher education (Swail et al., 2003). Students from less supportive environments are viewed as having lower self-esteem (Montfort, 2017). According to Montfort (2017), Vincent Tinto was one of the most well-known names among researchers and specialists concerned with student retention, first-year learning communities, social integration, and attrition. The author further states that Tinto deliberated on trends in student involvement and found that involvement from one year to the next was very important in a student's decision to return yearly (Montfort 2017). Student social integration consisted of both academic and social involvement. These factors overlap one another simultaneously. These overlaps include interactions with faculty members and engagement in learning activities in which students who are more involved were more likely to persist than those who experienced loneliness or a lack of involvement (Montfort, 2017).

2.4.1.3 Institutional Factors

Institutional factors consist of rules, regulations, and the cultural environment in which learning takes place. Tinto and Pusser (as cited in Montfort, 2017) states that even, with all the research on student persistence and attrition, there was no longitudinal model of student success that could be put into use by institutions aiming to improve retention rates. The elements of the institutional factors of the geometric model are comprised of the student support offered to the student by the institution and the created conducive environment for academic interaction. Getzlaf, Sedlacek, Kearney, and Blackwell (as cited in Montfort, 2017) used Tinto's similar constructs of individual attributes, past educational experience, goal commitment, institutional commitment, social integration, and academic records. The research of Getzlaf et al (1984) used Tinto's model of institutional attrition at Washington State University to separate withdrawers from persistent students.

Tinto's conceptual frames was greatly debated on by Tierney (1999), as he explained that the concept of the rites of passage took an undergraduate student out of his or her natural environment and forced him or her to appeal to the rites within a foreign society (Montfort 2017). When either national foreigners or cultural foreigners in an institution were forced to adapt to a culture outside of their norm, they undergo rites of passage framed within this 'foreign' culture (Montfort, 2017). Montfort (2017), states that, under the pretense of Durkheimian's suicidal theory, Tierney (1999) dismissed the notion that those foreigners must submit to cultural suicide to be successful in institutions of higher learning. He also elaborates on the idea that divorcing oneself from his or her previous cultural relationship or committing metaphorical suicide of one's culture to allow integration was not always true (Montfort, 2017). Tierney agreed that Tinto's theories had authority when bearing in mind that the evaluation of residential or traditional campuses that provided services that created a sense of society and social life for their students (Montfort, 2017). Undergraduate students from low-income economic environments did not have family members who had gone to university, this type of thinking may be helpful (Tierney, 1999). He also accepted that retention at socially integrated institutions was higher and provided greater participation opportunities in comparison to part-time and non-resident students (Tierney, 1992). Non-resident students who were often non-traditional students lacked social integration into the university culture because not all non-resident institutions have been designed to engage students with a social community (Montfort, 2017). Tierney (1999) conducted a research initiative, The Neighborhood Academic Initiative, which encouraged the inclusion of family as part of social integration rather than viewing family as a weakness to the student's success (Montfort 2017). Braxton and Hirschy (as cited in Montfort 2017) stated that the supporting conceptual positioning of

economic feasibility, organization's integrity, psychological support, and social affluence assisted to decide a student's departure. As Tinto's models suggested, social integration used related concepts and stated that all individuals of ethnicity experienced the cultural idea of the rite of passage. However, Tierney thought that these assumptions were not culturally competent or useful. Recognition was given to Tinto (2012) for his initial effort because although he received much disapproval, the subject of retention in higher education would be void without reference to his work. Swail et al. (2003) used Tinto's absence of multiculturalism as an opportunity to design a model that could address foreign and undergraduate student retention. Scale (1960) recommended improving counseling and guidance services, better orientation, honor, and tutorial programs. He also mentioned improving financial aid funds, increasing grants, and deferred payment programs.

2.5 Limitations of the Student Retention Theories

Studies of the student retention, persistence and attrition matters in higher learning institutions, as well as the theoretical models, as in other research areas, have their deficiencies and restrictions. A well-known drawback of the student retention, persistence and attrition studies is their generalizability (Jeffreys, 2012). Most student retention, persistence and attrition researches were carried out in particular institutions and their findings are usually not easily transferable to other institutions (Boston & Ice, 2011; Pascarella, 1980). This might be for the reason that low student retention is a campus-based phenomenon (Berger et al., 2012) hence, every scenario has unique features and conditions that make it hard to simplify its findings to other cases (Cabrera et al., 1993; Caison, 2007; Chapman & Pascarella, 1983; McInnis & James, 2004). Nevertheless, the high rate of these theoretical models and famed observed studies being tested and copied in other settings should enhance their generalizability (Cabrera

et al., 1992; Ho Yu, DiGangi, Jannasch-Pennell, & Kaprolet, 2010; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfle, 1986).

Additional boundaries of student retention studies relate to the research strategies they apply and the kinds of sample institutions and participants they study. One of the criticisms of student retention researches is that they have mainly concentrated on traditional academic institutions and traditional types of students (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Braxton & Lee, 2005). As observed by Bean and Metzner (1985), most of the primary studies were done in ordinary four-year institutions with students of regular age group and social background. These writers stated that among the great number of studies that investigated the low student retention problem, only a few studies focused on the non-residency four-year institutions (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Furthermore, there was absence of research on students of marginal groups and part-time older undergraduate students.

Concerning the research strategies used, one of the limitations of the student retention works has been the reliance of the prominent theoretical models and early distinguished studies on the quantitative research techniques (Jones, 2008; Ozga & Sukhnandan, 1997). As a result, students' involvements in the academic and social systems of their academic institutions and in their own external off-campus communities might have been incompetently explored.

Lastly, on the topic of the theoretical and conceptual background, Bean (1982) pointed to an accumulation of non-theoretical descriptive studies in the area of student retention researches. He claimed that such studies are only valuable if they intent to find who is leaving rather than why they are leaving. Instead, he recommended that the relationships between the variables of these researches should be reinvestigated using

theories. Nevertheless, as observed by Bean and Metzner (1985), many student retention studies have depended heavily on the assumptions of Tinto's models (1975, 1993), which were not aimed to study non-traditional students and exclude some of the major attrition factors such as the organizational issues. Furthermore, Tinto (1982) deliberated on the student retention models' shortfall in distinguishing between transferring and withdrawing completely from the higher education system.

2.6 Summary

The literature review revealed several factors that result in students leaving institutions of higher learning without completing their degrees. Based on the literature reviewed, there were gaps identified when trying to determine what specific factors affect undergraduate student retention. In the next chapter, the researcher discussed the methodology, research design, population, sampling procedures, and the organization of data analysis.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methodology that was used in this study to investigate the factors affecting student retention at Africa University. The chapter includes: research design, population and sampling, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, analysis and organizational of data, ethical consideration and the summary.

3.2 The Research Design.

Research design is defined as a blue print for conducting a study with maximum control of factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings (Burns and Groves, 2003: 195). According to Jwan (2010), research design is the structure that guides the execution of a research method, and the subsequent analysis of acquired data which provides a framework for the generation of evidence that is suited both to a certain set of criteria and to the research question in which the investigator is interested. Parahoo (1997) describe research design as a plan that describe how, when and where data are to be collected and analyzed. Polit et al (2001:167) defined research design as the researcher's overall plan for answering the research questions or testing the researcher's hypothesis. In the case of this study, a survey research design was adopted. This design generally involves the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to the data collection instruments. This design was used in this study owing to its versatility, efficiency and generalizability. It was the ambition of the researcher to combine these definitions to come up with concrete research design that would address and solve the mystery behind the factors affecting student retention at Africa University for the period of between 2020 and 2025 academic years. The answer to the questionnaires brings about clear focus of the study. This study was conducted

through a case study of Africa University's main campus only. Specifically, the study answered the following research questions.

- 1) What are the factors that influence student retention at Africa University?
- 2) To what extent do these factors predict student retention at Africa University?
- 3) Are there any significant differences between student expectation prior to joining Africa University and what they are experiencing now?
- 4) What is the relationship between student retention at Africa University and student university choice selection?

3.3 Population and Sampling

Parahoo (1997:256) defines population as the total number of units where data can be collected, such as individuals, artifacts, events and organizations. Burns and Grove (1997; 236) define target population as the entire aggregation of respondents that meet the designated set of criteria. In this research, Africa University undergraduate students at the main campus in Mutare were the population, a total number of 1956 were the registered undergraduate students. The sample was drawn from Africa university current undergraduate students Mutare main campus only. A carefully selected sample can provide data representation of the population from which it is drawn from. A sample was drawn from each academic year group being the first year, second year, third year, and fourth year students otherwise known as freshman, sophomore, junior and seniors (respectively) in an American university system.

In order to generalize from a random sample and avoid sampling errors or biases, a random sample had to be of adequate size. While the larger the sample the lesser the likelihood that findings will be biased does hold true, diminishing returns can quickly set in when the sample gets too big which needs to be balanced against the researchers'

resources (Gill et al; 2010). If the sample size is too small, even a well-conducted study may fail to answer its research question, fail to detect important effects or associations, or it may estimate those effects or associations too imprecisely. Similarly, if the sample size is too large, the study will be more difficult and costly, and may even lead to a loss in accuracy. A sample is affected by two measures, thus the margin of error (confidence intervals) and the confidence level. For this research the confidence level was set at 95 percent and the margin of error was set at 5 percent.

In this study, the total number of different categories of students that was listed was four, grouped according to their year of study. Out of 1956 students, the total number of the sample size was 862 students. The sample was calculated using Krejcie and Morgan (1971) table.

Table 3.1 Research Sample

Academic year	Population	Sample
1st year	475	214
2nd year	480	214
3rd year	483	217
4th year	518	217
TOTAL	1956	862

Source: Survey data

A stratified random sampling is one in which the population is divided into relevant strata or subgroups and then using simple random method, a sample is drawn from each strata, (Deng et al; 2006). Stratified random sampling was appropriate especially when

we expect that the respondents vary across strata or groups in the population. The researcher covered all the intended population of undergraduate students enrolled at the university. With this technique, the researcher had high statistical precision when comparing it to other sampling methods because of lower variability within subgroups than dealing with the entire population.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The collection of data was carried out in the month of January and February as this was the period of student registration for the second semester. The targeted respondents were the undergraduate returning students. Data was collected through questionnaires which were hand delivered by the researcher. This instrument was considered simply because it is used to reach a large number of respondents within a short period of time, it gives the respondents adequate time to respond to the items, offers a sense of confidentiality to the respondents and lastly it tends to be objective since there is no bias resulting from the personal characteristics (Paton, 2002). The questionnaire was divided into various sections based on the research objectives. The first part of the entire questionnaire dealt with the background information of the respondents whereas the other parts solicited information about institutional factors affecting student retention at Africa University.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

A research permit was obtained from the university management as well as an approval letter from the AUREC office. The selected classes were visited and the questionnaire administered to the respondents prior to have notified the lecturers. The respondents were assured that strict confidentiality would be maintained in dealing with the responses.

3.6 Analysis and Organizational of Data

The collected data was analyzed using mixed data analysis approach. The quantitative approach was descriptive where simple frequencies and percentages were used. This type of data was presented in tables and figures. The quantitative data was derived from section A and B of the questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 14.0 Software) was used to run descriptive analyses to produce frequency distribution and percentages. Its main advantage was that it was fast in computing large quantities of data and easy to use. It is also reliable and produces credible results. The second step involved grouping the responses according to their respective themes. The themes basically fell under respective research areas which were informed by the research objectives. The qualitative data was derived from section C of the questionnaire which was comprised of open-ended questions. The respondents were asked to briefly state and explain their answers. The responds were then grouped basing them on their similarity to form variables.

3.7 Ethical consideration

The researcher made a number of considerations prior to, during and after the study to ensure that the research was conducted within the acceptable standard of any scientific work. First, the researcher contacted the university administration to seek permission to carry out the study among its students. Then the researcher asked for consent from the intended respondents before soliciting for information.

Finally, the researcher guaranteed the respondents and the university management of their privacy and assured them that any data that were collected during the study would be used strictly for the purpose of the research study only.

3.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology that was used to execute this study. The research design, population, sample and sampling process, data collection instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis and finally ethical considerations were discussed. The next chapter dwelt on data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter described the presentation and analysis of data followed by the interpretation of the research findings. The findings relate to the questions that guided the study. The data was analyzed to identify, describe and explore the factors that affect student retention at Africa University to determine the need for increasing student retention in this volatile environment. The data was acquired from self-administered questionnaires, completed by 715 students, which was an 83 percent response rate.

A total number of 715 students responded although a total number of 862 questionnaires were sent out through personal hand delivery distribution by the researcher. The researcher chose this method of acquiring data because it was a random stratified research.

The researcher's findings were presented in tables, pie charts, graphs and textual descriptions. The researcher first focused on the response rate then attempted to paraphrase questions from the questionnaire in order to bring out key concepts on the issues of factors affecting student retention at Africa University. This research was aimed at answering the four research questions of the study.

4.2 Data Presentation and analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to identify frequencies and percentages to answer all the questions in the questionnaire section A and section B, in sections C thematic analysis is used to analyze the open ended questions. Not all respondents answered all the questions therefore the percentage reported corresponded to the number of students answering individual questions. Data analysis was done using the SPSS Version 14.0 software. Each research objective had four questions on the

questionnaire that addressed it. The researcher was helped to distribute these questionnaires by the class representatives. Questionnaires were distributed during lunch hour in order to avoid lecture disturbances.

The questions on the questionnaire were crafted under three headings, the cognitive factors, the social factors, and the institutional factors that affect students in learning institutions. These three headings were then split up to form the four research questions of the study. The first part of the questionnaire viewed the number of students who responded to the questionnaire, their gender, their year of enrollment, mother and father level of education, and who was funding their education.

Table 4.1 Distribution of year of study of participants

Category	Sample	Number of respondents	Response percent rate of respondents
First years	214	188	88
Second years	214	175	82
Third years	217	197	91
Forth years	217	156	72
Total	862	716	83

Source: Field Data

There was a good response rate from all the four intakes of students the university that had been targeted by the researcher. Of the 214 questionnaires sent to the first year students, 188 questionnaires were returned, thus 88 percent return rate of the first year sample. A total of 214 questionnaires were sent to second year students, 175 students

responded representing 82 percent return rate of the second year students' sample. A total of 217 questionnaires were sent to third year students and only 197 students responded, thus 91 percent return rate of the third-year student sample.

The last questionnaires were sent to 217 students in fourth year, 156 fourth year students responded, thus 72 percent return rate of the fourth years students. The total number of students who were targeted was 862 and 716 students responded resulting in an 83 percent response rate.

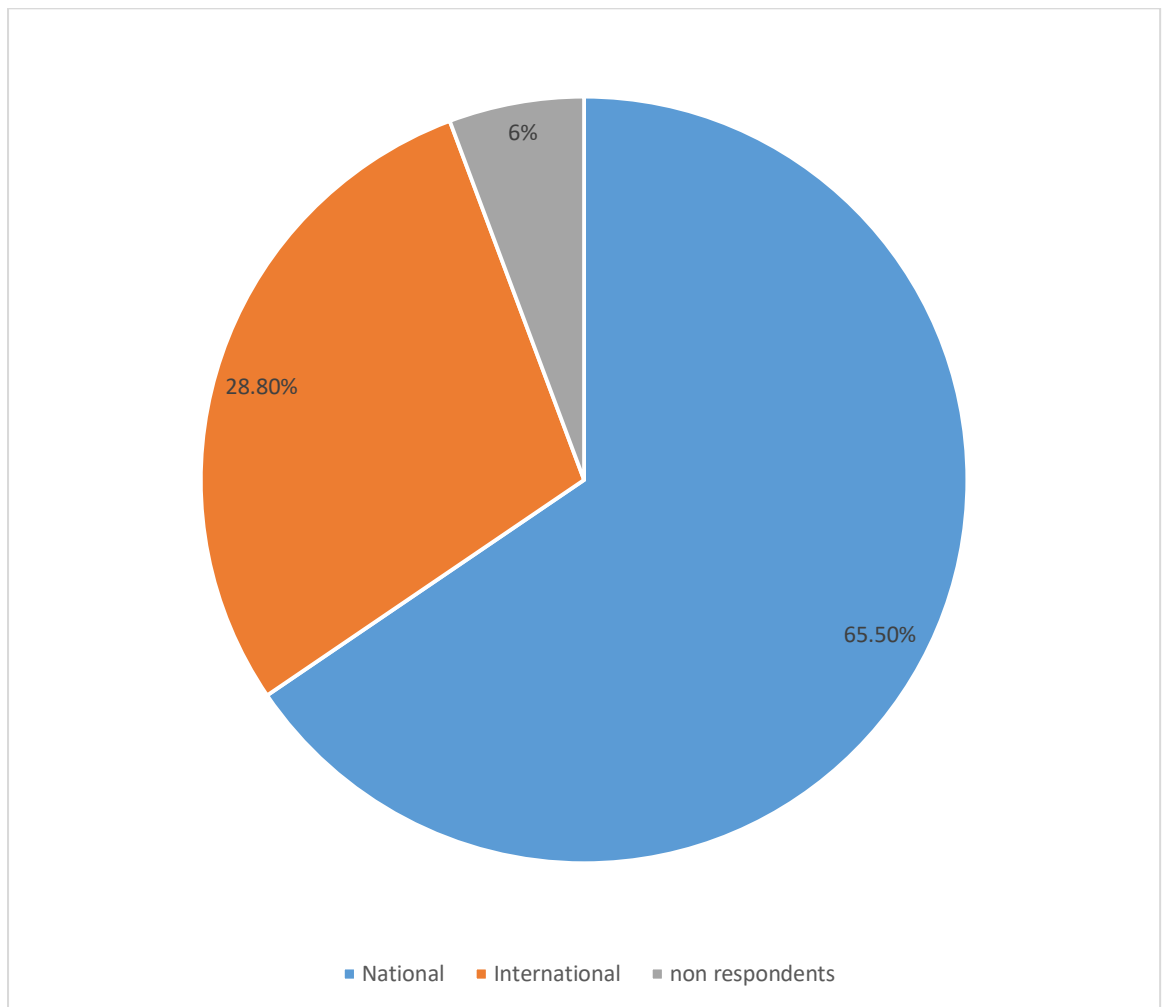
Table 4.2: Gender of Respondents

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	347	40.3	48.3	48.3
	Female	372	43.1	51.7	100
	Total	719	83.4	100	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

The researcher asked the respondents to state their gender. Of the 862 students who were chosen as the sample, 416 students, that is 48.3% of the students who responded were male and 446 students that is 51.7% were female. A total of 143 which translate to 16.6 percent of the students did not respond. The statistics shows that more female were willing to participate in responding to the questionnaires than their male counterparts.

Pie Chart 4.1: Nationality of Students



Source: Field Data

The researcher further asked the respondents to state whether they were national or they were international. A total of 469 (65.5%) of the students who responded were nationals and 206 (28.8%) were international leaving 41 (0.06) students who did not respond to the questionnaire. The majority of the students who responded were national students. All in all, a total number of 675 students responded out of 862 questionnaires that were sent to the student sample. The researcher also asked the education level of the student's parents because they are crucial in the shaping, developing and influencing

the student's future outcome. Students are also guided and motivated by their guardians' achievements.

Table 4.3 Mother's Education Level.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Primary level	24	2.8	3.4	3.4
	Secondary level	304	35.3	42.5	45.9
	Tertiary level	328	38.1	45.9	91.7
	Not applicable	60	6.9	8.3	100
	Total	716	83.1	100.0	
Missing	system	146	16.9		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

The researcher asked the respondents to state their mother's highest educational level. From the 266 students who responded to this question, 24 students 3.4% of the student's mothers had primary level education, 42.5% had secondary level education, 45.9% had tertiary education level and 8.3% did not responded to the question. Literacy rate was high as most of the mothers had some form of formal education above primary education level. Women plays a crucial role in a child's up bringing as normally they spend much of their time with the child than the fathers and there are more single mothers than single fathers.

Table 4.4 Father's Educational Level 1

		Freque ncy	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Primary level	2	.002	.004	.004
	Secondary level	186	21.6	29.5	26.3
	Tertiary level	423	49.1	59.0	85.3
	Not applicable	105	12.2	14.7	100.0
	Total	716	83.1	100.0	
Missing	System	146	16.9		
Total		862	100.0		

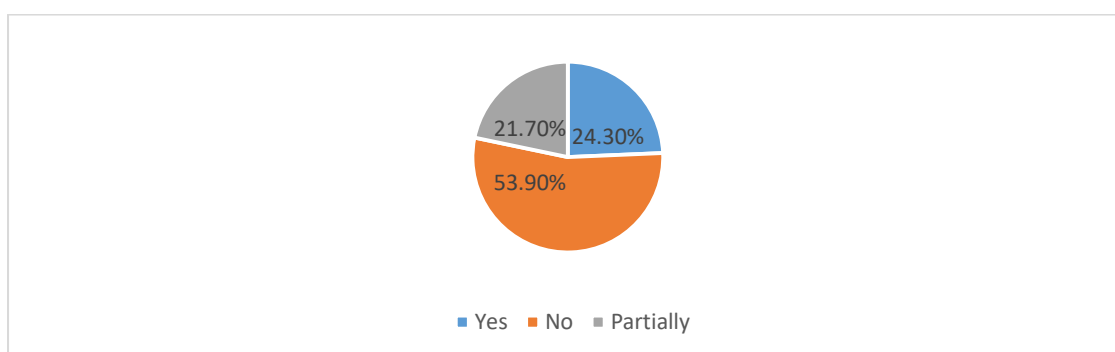
Source: Field Data

Only 0.004% of the respondent's fathers had primary level education, 25.9% had secondary level education, tertiary level education had 59% and 14.7% did not want to comment about their fathers.

The two tables showed that both father and mother's educational level was high as the majority of them had tertiary level education. The literacy level was high in both

parents. The researcher also asked how the students were funding their education. The following pie chart and tables showed the response from the respondents.

Pie Chart 4.2: Financial Aid from the University



Source: Field Data

A total of 53.9% had not received any financial aid from the university, 24.3% had and 21.7% had partially received. Thus a total of 46% of the respondents had benefitted from the financial aid from the university.

Table 4.5: Scholarship

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes	85	10.0	12.0	12.0
	No	577	66.9	80.1	92.1
	Partiall y	57	6.6	7.9	100
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

A total of 12% of the respondent were on scholarship, 80.1% did not receive scholarship and 7.1% had partially received scholarships. The statistics showed that the majority of the respondents were not on scholarship.

Table 4.6: Family Funded Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes	675	78.4	94.0	94.0
	No	44	0.05	6.0	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	189	22.0		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

A total of 94% of the respondents were being funded by their families and 6% were not funded by their families. The majority of the respondents depended on their families for funding their education.

Table 4.7: Self-Funding Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes	13	1.6	1.9	1.9
	No	705	81.9	98.1	100.0
	Total	718	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	144	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: field data

Only 1.9% of the respondents were funding their own education with 98.1% being funded. The university should increase the enrolment of non-traditional students who could fund their own education.

The above three tables showed that the students depended much on being funded than funding their own education, which may affect the student retention rate in universities. A scholarship might be offered in a program that is not of interest to the student which may result in the student being less motivated and drop out if another opportunity arises which might be more interesting.

The following part of the questionnaire was on cognitive factors that were affecting student retention at Africa University. The cognitive factors focuses more on the student's input as an individual. All other factors being equal, cognitive factors determines the students' competitiveness academically. Students who shows deficiencies cognitive factors are candidates to student dropouts. The questions on cognitive factors that students were asked to rate were:

- How challenging are your studies?
- How do you rate the degree you are undertaking?
- Are you satisfied with your intellectual development?
- Is your academic performance up to your expectation?
- Have you been transferred to another faculty, and
- Are you meeting your family expectation in your studies?

The following table shows how the students responded.

Table 4.8 Challenging of studies.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Very challenging	56	6.6	7.9	7.9
	challenging	417	48.4	58.1	65.9
	Neutral	242	28.1	33.7	99.6
	Not challenging	4	.3	.4	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

The total number of students who responded to the question on challenging of studies was 719. A total of 7.9% of the respondents viewed their studies as very challenging and 58.1% viewed it as challenging. The results also showed that 33.7% of the students viewed their studies as neutral and 0.4% of the students were not challenged by their studies. This meant that more than half of the respondents viewed their studies as challenging.

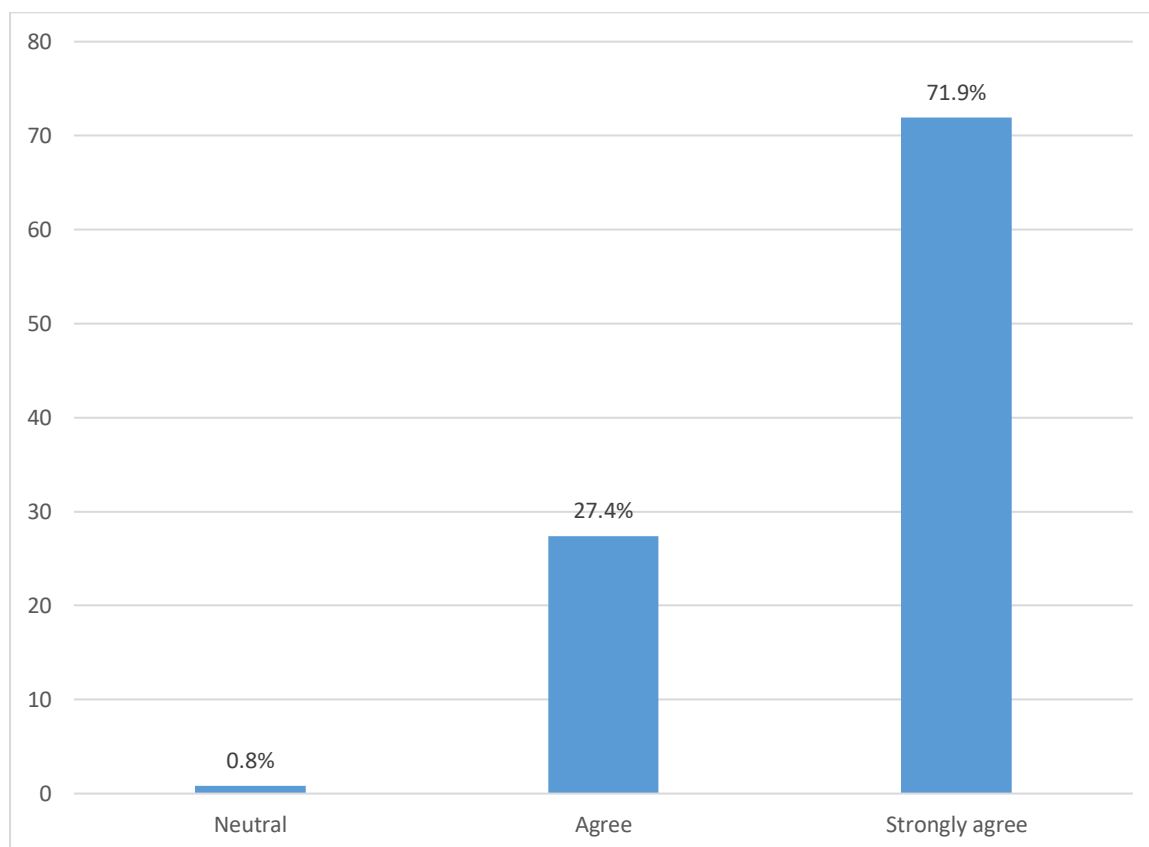
Table 4.9 Degree Rating

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Very challenging	76	8.8	10.5	10.5
	challenging	525	60.9	73.0	83.5
	Not challenging	70	8.1	9.7	93.3
	neutral	48	5.6	6.7	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

A total of 10.5% viewed the degree they were doing as very challenging, 73% rated it as challenging. The results also show that 9.7% of the respondents rated it as not challenging and 6.7% was neutral. Students who rated their degree as not challenging are prone to student attrition.

Graph 4.1: Importance of Getting Good Grades



Source: Field data

Only 2 students remained neutral on commenting about the importance of getting good grades in their academic performance. A total of 72 students agreed that it was important and 189 students strongly agreed that it was important to them. The graph shows that the majority of the students were motivated to get good grades in their education.

Table 4.10 Satisfaction with Intellectual Development

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	36	4.4	5.2	5.2
	Disagree	128	14.7	17.6	22.8
	Undecided	40	4.7	5.6	28.5
	Agree	407	47.2	56.6	85.0
	Strongly agree	108	12.5	15.0	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

From the total number of 719 students who responded only 15% strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development and a total of 56.6% agreed. A total of 5.2% strongly disagreed followed by 17.6% who disagreed. Although more than half of the respondents were positively satisfied with the extent of their intellectual development, those who disagreed are more likely to drop out if they are not motivated well enough.

Table 4.11 Academic Performance**My academic performance is up to my expectation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Disagree	14	1.6	1.9	1.9
	Undecided	46	5.3	6.4	8.2
	Agree	398	46.3	55.4	63.7
	Strongly agree	261	30.3	36.3	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

Out of the 719 respondents to the question of their academic meeting their expectation, 1.9% of the respondents were not happy with their academic performance whilst 6.4% was undecided. A total of 55.4% agreed that their performance was up to their expectation and 36.3% strongly agreed that their academic performance was up to their expectation. More than half of the respondents were positive about their academic performance.

Table 4.12 Faculty Transfer

I have been transferred to another faculty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Agree	110	12.8	15.4	15.4
	Disagree	608	70.6	84.6	100.0
	Total	718	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	144	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

Out of 718 respondents to the question of being transferred from one faculty to another 15.4% of the respondents had been transferred from one faculty to another, and 84.6% were in their original degree class they first enrolled for. More than half of the respondents were pursuing their initial chosen degrees. Students are transferred from more challenging faculties to lessor challenging faculties, normally as seen fit by their assessors.

Table 4.13 Meeting Family Expectation

Meeting family expectation in educational studies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes	682	79.1	94.8	94.8
	Partially	33	3.8	4.5	99.3
	Not applicable	4	.6	.7	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862			

Source: Field Data

A total of 94.8% of the respondents agreed that they were meeting their family expectation as far as education was concerned, 4.5% was partially meeting their family expectation and only 4 students from the sample stated that it was not applicable in their case. Most students were meeting their family expectation.

The third set of questions asked on the questionnaire was on the social factors that affected the student retention. The respondents were asked to rate these statements

- How often do you feel home sick?

- Since coming to Africa University I have developed close relationship with other students.
- I once considered leaving Africa University.
- Have you ever asked another student to join Africa University as a student?

The responds to these statements were as follows:

Table 4.14 Feeling Homesick

How often do you feel homesick?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Very often	5	.006	.007	.007
	Often	91	10.6	12.7	13.5
	Neutral	278	32.2	38.6	52.1
	Not often	334	38.8	46.4	98.5
	Not very often	11	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

Of the 719 students who responded, a 0.007% of the respondents very often felt homesick. A total of 12.7% often felt homesick with 38.6% being neutral about the subject of feeling homesick, whilst a total of 1.5% did not very often feel home sick

and 46.4% did not often feel homesick. The majority of the students did not often feel homesick.

Table 4.15 Developing Relationship

I have developed close relationships with other students.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Disagree	3	.003	.3	.4
	Neutral	6	.006	.8	1.1
	Agree	390	45.3	54.7	55.8
	Strongly Agree	315	36.6	44.2	100.0
	Total	714	82.8	100.0	
Missing	System	148	17.2		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

On the question of having developed a close relationship with other students, out of 714 respondents, 0.04% of the respondents had not developed any close relationship with other students and 0.06% of the students remained neutral on the matter. A total of 54.7% and 44.2% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they had developed close relationship with other students. These statistics show that the students were interacting with each other.

Table 4.16 Different Values and Attitudes

Many students have values and attitude different from mine

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	11	1.3	1.5	1.5
	Undecided	29	3.4	4.1	5.6
	Agree	412	47.8	57.5	63.2
	Strongly agree	263	30.6	36.8	100.0
	Total	715	83.1	100.0	
Missing	System	146	16.9		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

From a total of 715 students who responded to the question of having different values and culture, 1.5% strongly disagreed and 4.1% were undecided on that matter, 57.5% agreed and 36.8% strongly agreed that many students had values and attitudes that were different from theirs. More than half of the respondents agreed that they had different value and attitudes.

Table 4.17 Leaving the Institution

I once decided to leave Africa University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	46	5.3	6.4	6.4
	Disagree	313	36.3	43.6	50.0
	Undecided	99	11.6	13.9	63.9
	agree	256	29.7	35.7	99.6
	Strongly agree	172	.2	.4	100.0
	Total	716	83.1	100.0	
Missing	System	146	16.9		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

From a total 716 students who responded to this question, 35.7% agreed to have once thought of leaving the institution. A total of 43.6% of these student disagreed with the notion of once deciding to leave Africa University. The majority of the students had not thought of leaving the institution.

The fourth set of questions was on institutional factors that affect student retention in universities. The questions which the students were asked to answer and rate were:

- Is Africa University living up to your expectation?
- How do you rate Africa University comparing it to other universities?
- My non-classroom interaction with faculty has had positive influence on my personal growth.
- Most faculty members I have contact with have genuine interest in students
- I will recommend Africa University to other aspiring students
- In general, how satisfied are you with the quality of service you are receiving at Africa University.

The following were the responses that were received from the questionnaire

Table 4.18 Living up to Expectation

Is Africa University living up to your expectations?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Yes	81	9.4	11.2	11.2
	No	288	33.4	40.1	51.3
	Partially	350	40.6	48.7	100.0
	Total	718	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field data

Out of 718 students who responded 11.2% of the students agreed that Africa University was leaving up to their expectations and 48.7% said it was partially living up to their

expectation. A total of 40.1% of the respondents disagreed with the notion that Africa University was living up to their expectations. The majority of the respondents viewed the institution as partially meeting their expectations.

Table 4.19 Comparing to other institutions

Comparing Africa University to other universities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Very competitive	261	30.3	36.3	36.3
	Competitive	436	50.6	60.7	97.0
	Neutral	17	2.2	2.6	99.6
	Not very competitive	5	.003	.4	100.0
	Total	719	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	143	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

A total of 36.3% of the respondents rated Africa University as very competitive whilst 60% rated it as simply competitive, 2.6% remained neutral whilst 0.4% rated it as not very competitive. The majority of the respondents rated the institution as competitive.

Table 4.20 Genuine Interest of Faculty Members**Faculty members have genuine interest in students**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	38	4.4	5.3	5.3
	Undecided	81	9.4	11.5	16,8
	Agree	350	40.6	49.6	66.4
	Strongly Agree	236	27.5	33.6	100.0
	Total	705	81.9	100.0	
Missing	System	157	18.9		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

Out of 705 respondents of genuineness of faculty members, a total of 5.3% disagreed that faculty members had genuine interest in them. A total 11.5% remained neutral and 49.6% viewed faculty members as having genuine interest in them. The remaining 33.6% strongly agreed that faculty staff had genuine interest in them. On average, many students rated faculty members as having genuine interest in them.

Table 4.21 Influence on Personal Growth

Interaction with faculty had influence on personal growth

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	11	1.3	1.5	1.5
	Disagree	70	8.1	10.0	11.6
	Undecided	22	2.5	3.1	14.7
	agree	422	49.1	60.6	75.3
	Strongly agree	172	20.1	24.7	100.0
	Total	697	80.9	100.0	
Missing	System	165	19.1		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

Out of the 697 students who responded to this question, a total of 1.5% strongly disagreed whilst only 10% disagreed. A total of 3.1% of the respondent remained neutral on the matter. A total of 60.6% agreed and 24.7% strongly agreed that their personal growth was being influenced by their interaction with the faculty. The majority of the

respondents agreed to have been influenced in their personal growth by interacting with the faculty.

Table 4.22 Recommending Africa University

I will recommend Africa University to others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Disagree	151	17.5	21.1	21.1
	Undecided	67	7.8	9.4	30.5
	Agree	339	39.4	47.4	77.8
	Strongly agree	159	18.4	22.2	100.0
	Total	717	83.1	100.0	
Missing	System	146	16.9		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

A total number of 47.4% stated that they would recommend Africa University to other aspiring students, and 22.2% strongly agreed to that notion. A total of 21.1% did not agree to that notion of recommending the institution to other aspiring students. Many students responded positively to recommending the institution to other aspiring students.

Table 4.23 Living Arrangements**I am happy with my living arrangement**

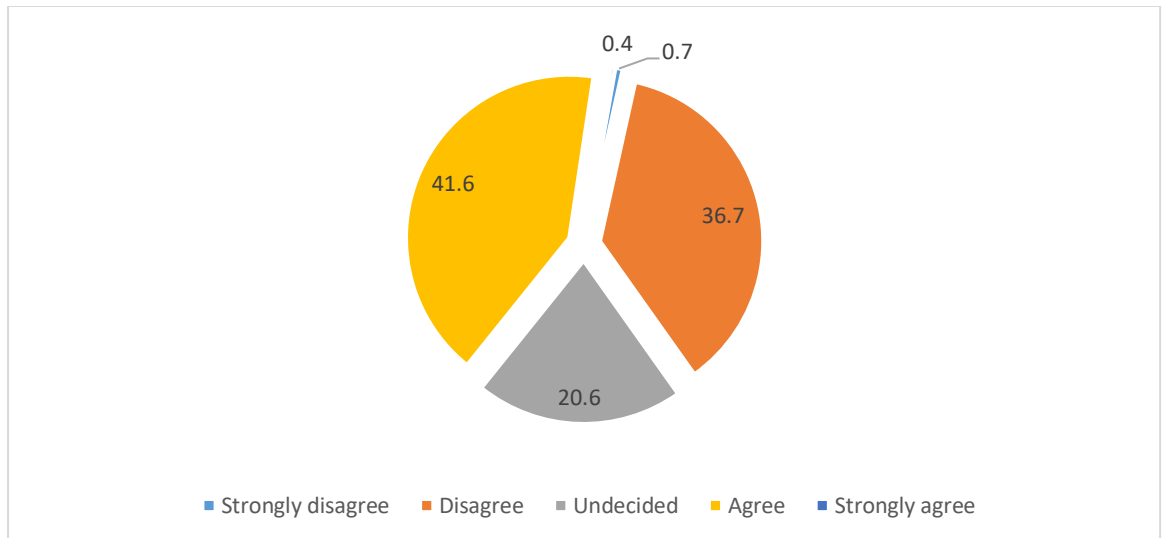
		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	11	1.3	1.5	1.5
	Disagree	301	35.0	41.9	43.4
	Undecided	65	7.5	9.0	52.4
	agree	334	38.8	46.4	98.9
	Strongly agree	7	0.09	1.1	100.0
	Total	718	83.4	100.0	
Missing	System	153	16.6		
Total		862	100.0		

Source: Field Data

A total of 43.4% of the respondents were not happy with their living arrangements whilst a total of 47.5% were happy with their living arrangements. More than half of the respondents were not happy with their living arrangements. Although those who agreed and strongly agreed were slightly more than the other half, both were below half of the students who responded.

Pie Chart 4.3: Contact with Faculty Members

I am satisfied with the time I spent in contact with faculty members

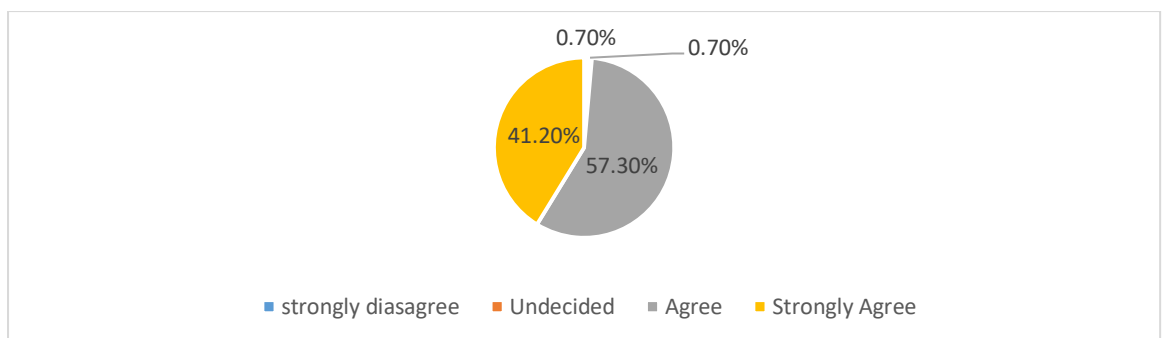


Source: Field Data

A total of 37.7% from the respondents of 267 students were not satisfied with the time they spent in contact with their faculty members. The results also show that 20.6% remained neutral on the matter whilst a total 42% felt positive about the amount of time they spent in contact with their faculty members. Less than half of the respondents were satisfied with the time they spent in contact with their faculty members.

Pie Chart 4.4: Comfort with the learning environment

I am comfortable with the learning environment

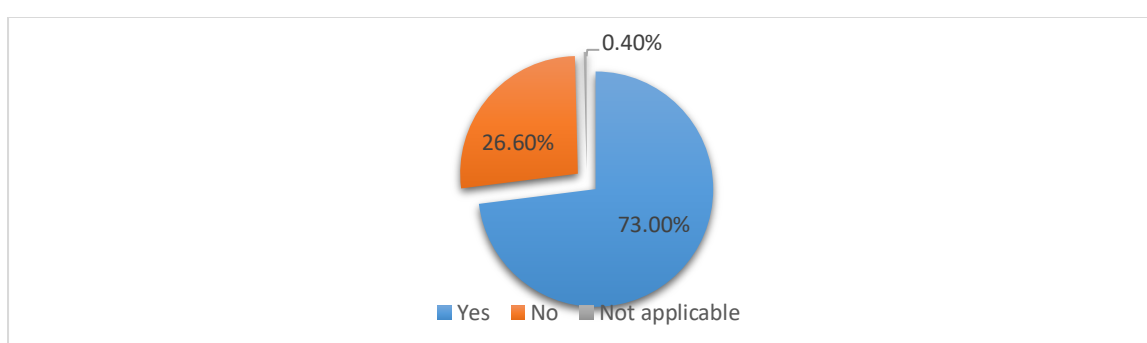


Source: Field Data

Out of 267 students who responded only 2 students were not comfortable with their learning environment and the other 2 students were undecided on the matter. The remaining 57.3% and 41.2% respectively agreed or strongly agreed that they were comfortable with their learning environment. More than 75% of the respondents were comfortable with their learning environment.

Pie Chart 4.5: Inviting other Students

Have you ever asked another student to join Africa University?

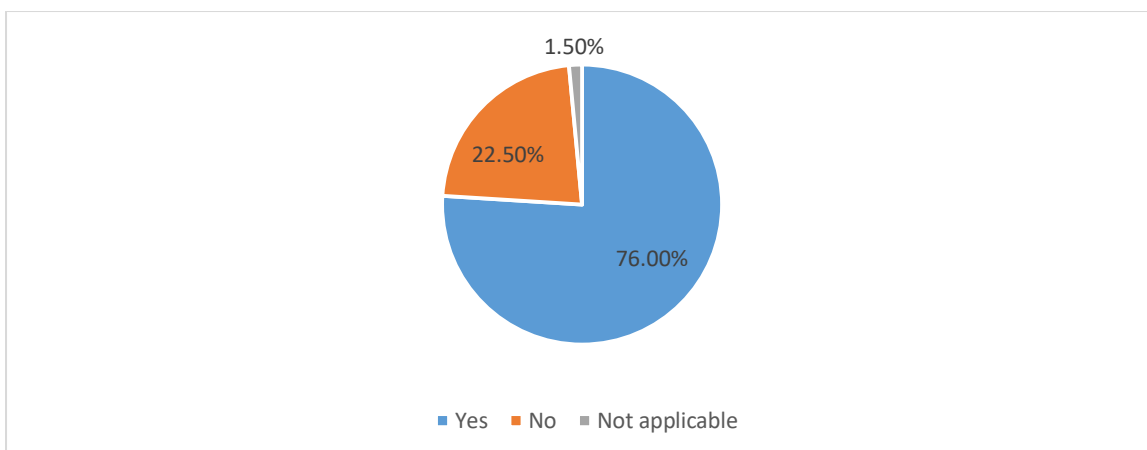


Source: Field Data

Responding to the questionnaire, 73% of the students had at some point asked another student to join the institution whilst 26.6% had never done that. Only 1 student rated this question as not applicable. Most of the respondents had asked other aspiring students to join the institution.

Pie Chart 4.6: Being an Ambassador

I am proud to be an ambassador

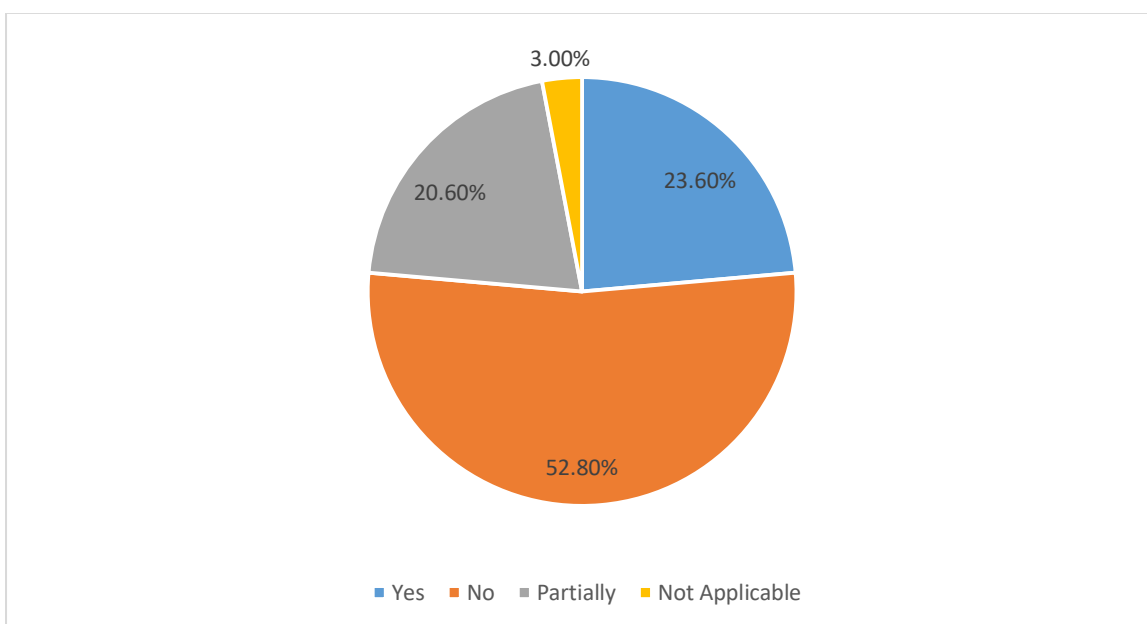


Source: Field Data

A total of 76% of the respondents stated that they were proud to be Africa University ambassadors; whilst 22.5% stated that they were not proud to represent Africa University as ambassadors. Most of the respondents were proud to be ambassadors of Africa University.

Pie Chart 4.7: Regretting joining the institution

Do you sometimes regret joining Africa University?

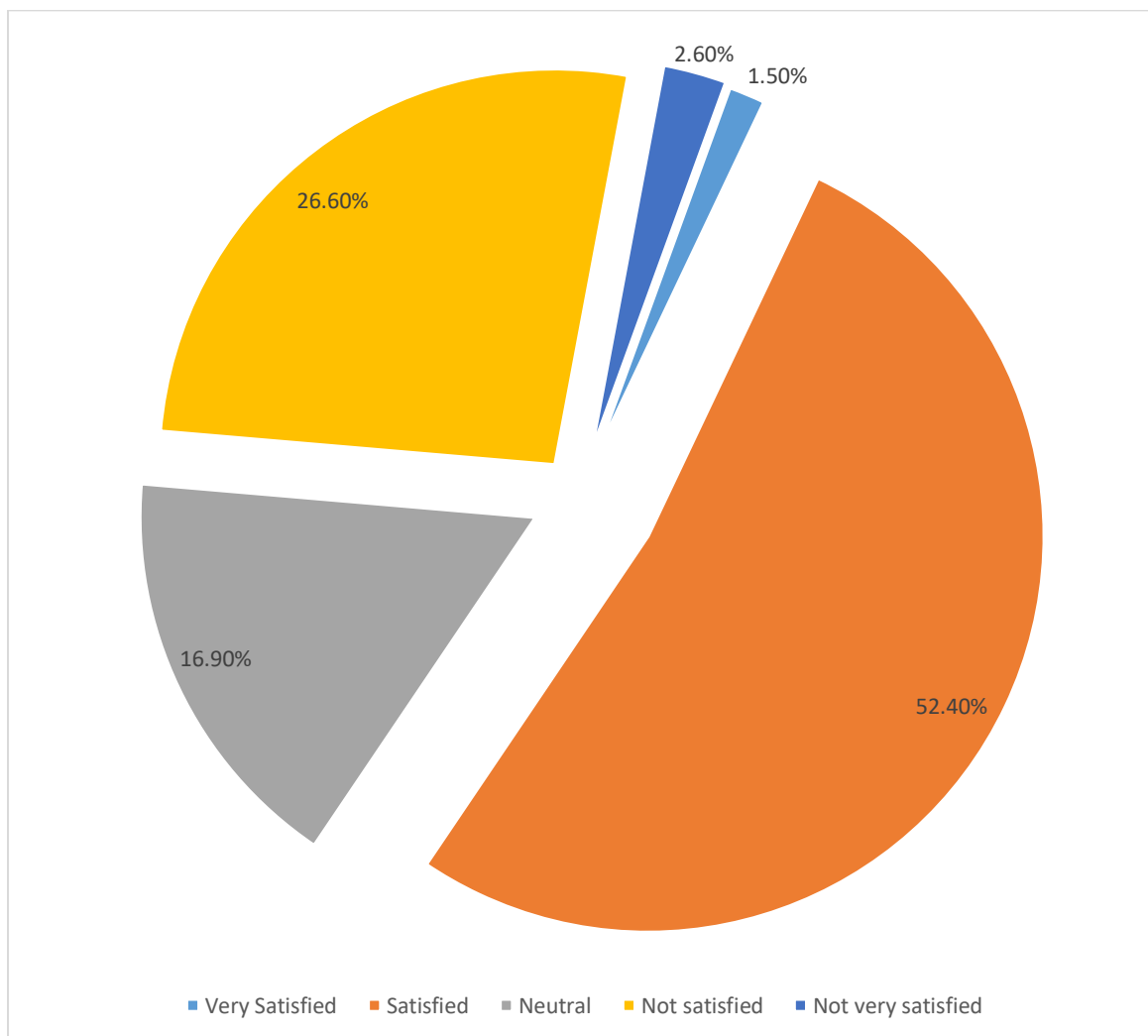


Source: Field Data

The results show that 23.6% of the students regret joining Africa University at times whilst a total of 52.8% did not regret joining the institution. A total of 20.6% of the respondents partially regretted joining Africa University. The majority of the students never regretted joining Africa University.

Pie Chart 4.8: Quality of service

Are you satisfied with quality of service at Africa University?



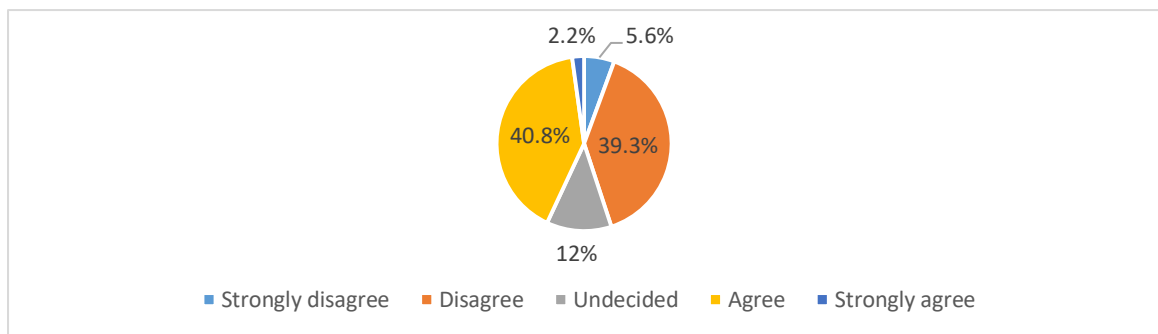
Source: Field Data

Only 1.5% of the respondents were very satisfied with the quality of service being offered at Africa University whilst 52.4% were satisfied. A total of 16.9% of the respondents remained neutral with 26.6% being unsatisfied. Only 2.6% was not very

satisfied. Although most respondents were satisfied, the percentage of those not satisfied was significant. Some of the students who come from poor families may view the services quality as high yet those from rich families may view the service quality as poor.

Pie Chart 4.9 Value for Money

I am receiving value for money



Source: Field Data

A total of 39.3% of the respondents disagreed whilst 40.8% of the respondents agreed that they were receiving value for their money. Less than half of the respondents were of the view that they were not receiving value for their money.

The next phase was of assessing the level of student motivation using Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The questions that were asked on cognitive factors, institutional factors and social factors were still the same questions that were used to assess the hierarchy of needs but were grouped differently. These questions were also grouped according to the stages of the hierarchy. On physiological level, the students were asked to rate how important it was for them to graduate from the institution and if getting good grades was important to them. More than half of the students, 59.1% agreed that they were concerned with getting good grades.

On safety, the students were asked to rate how they were funding their education and the majority of the student were being funded by their families. The respondents were also asked to rate the degrees they were undertaking and the majority rated them as challenging which kept them motivated. Those who rated their degrees as very challenging were very few and were considered as risky student who could drop out of education any time.

On the stage of a sense of belonging, the 54.7% of the respondents agreed that they had formed friendship with other students. A total of 44.2% of the students strongly agreed to the notion of making friends with other students. Thus more than half of the respondents had found common ground to interact amongst themselves, creating a relationship.

On self-esteem stage, 55.4% of the respondents agreed that their academic performance was up to their expectation. A total of 36.3% of the respondents strongly agreed to academic performance living up to their expectation. More than half of the respondents were enjoyed high self-esteem as far as their academic performance was concerned.

On self-actualization stage, 73% of the respondents were proud to be ambassadors of the institution and 56.6% were satisfied with the extent of their intellectual growth.

4.3 Discussion and Interpretation

In answering the first research question, a multiple framework was adopted from chapter one that tackled the problem from both sides the student's side and the institutional side to have a complete over view of the research question. According to the theoretical framework, the Swail's geometric model identified three factors that affected student retention in universities which are cognitive factors, social factors and

institutional factors and in conjunction with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the researcher used these to respond to the research questions of the study which were to:

1. To identify the factors influencing student retention at Africa University. On cognitive factors the researcher observed that on average 7.9% of the respondents rated their studies as very challenging, 58.1% rated it as challenging whilst 33.7 percent were neutral on the matter. Only 0.4% of the respondents were not challenged by their studies. On the question of how satisfied were they with the extent of their intellectual development, 5.2% strongly disagreed and 17.6% disagreed whilst 5.6% remained neutral. A total of 56.6% and 15% agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they were satisfied with their intellectual development. A total of 94.8% were positive that they were meeting their family expectations in educational studies.

On social factors the researcher observed that a 0.7% very often felt home sick whilst 12% of them often felt home sick. A total of 38.6% remained neutral on the matter while 46.4% and 1.5% did not often and not very often respectively felt home sick. It was also noted that 57.5% agreed that other students had different attitudes and values than theirs and 1.5% disagreed. A total of 43.6 % of the respondents disagreed that they once thought of leaving the institution whilst 35.7% agreed that they once thought of leaving the institution.

On the institutional factors the researcher observed that 11.2% were of the view that Africa University was living up to their expectation and 40.1% did not agree whilst 48.7% partially agreed that the institution was living up to their expectation. A total of 60.7% of the respondents rated Africa University as competitive and 36.6% rated it as very competitive. It was noted that 49.6% agreed that faculty members had genuine interest in them whilst 33.6% strongly agreed. A total of 5.3% disagreed with that notion of faculty members being genuinely interested in them as students while 60.6%

and 24.7% of the respondents respectively agreed and strongly agreed that their interaction with faculty members had positive influence on their personal growth. A mere 10% did not agree with that notion of having positive personal growth due to interaction with faculty members. It was also noted that 52.4% of the respondents were satisfied with the quality of service that was offered at the institution.

2. To understand the relationship between factors influencing retention of students at Africa University.

Having stated the factors that affect student retention at Africa University, the researcher wanted to understand their relationship. A perfect triangle had to be formed between all the factors that affected student retention with institutional factors forming the base of the triangle. On cognitive factors 58.1% rated their studies as challenging and 73% rated the degree they were undertaking also as challenging. A total of 56.6% were satisfied with their intellectual development and 55.4% positive about their academic performance meeting their expectation. Averagely, the cognitive factors were positively influenced. On social factors 54.7% of the respondents agreed to have developed a close relationship with other students, 46.4% had not felt home sick and 57.5% accepted that other students had different values and attitude than theirs. Averagely, on social factors students were integrating positively with other students. On institutional factors, 60.7% of the respondents rated the institution as competitive comparing it to other institutions. A total of 60.6% of the respondents agreed that their interaction with faculty members had a positive influence on their personal growth and 52.4% were satisfied with the quality of services that was offered at the institution. At least 48.7% stated that the institution was partially living up to their expectation hence 40.1% stated that the institution was not living up to their expectation. The relationship

of the factors observed did not form a perfect triangle hence the need to improve on all the factors concerned especially on institutional factors.

3. To analyze the differences between what the student expected and what is being offered at Africa University.

If service offered does not meet expectation, the customer is dissatisfied and if the service meets or exceeds expectation, the customer is satisfied. A total of 34.1% of the respondents agreed that they were receiving value for their money whilst 32% disagreed. It was noted that 47% stated that they would recommend the institution to other students whilst 21% disagreed. Although 43.6% disagreed, 35.7% once considered leaving the institution. According to these statistics, there is wide gap between what the students expected and what the institution was offering that resulted in students feeling dissatisfied.

4. To find out if Africa University was the student's first choice of learning.

Institutional choice selection has direct impact on student retention as second choice is always second best. The researcher wanted to find out if the institution was not used as a substitute to students who will have failed to be enrolled by other competitors. A total of 35.2% disagreed whilst 36.3% agreed that the institution was their first choice of learning. At least 53.2% of the respondents agreed whilst 42.7% strongly agreed to re-enroll at the institution if given the opportunity to start afresh other things being equal.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this research was to identify factors that affect student retention at Africa University. Data collected from this research was analyzed using SPSS version 14.0 software. For the first research question which asked to identify factors that influence student retention at Africa university, three factors were identified, institutional factors,

cognitive factors and social factors which formed a triangle with the student hierarchy of needs in the center of the triangle.

For the second research question it was observed that though it was very challenging, a perfect triangle had to be formed using the cognitive factors, the social factors and the institutional factors as the base of the triangle. The triangle that was formed by the data collected formed almost an isosceles triangle with the institutional factors variables forming the shorter side. These results can be interpreted to indicate that the institution has to improve its institutional factor variables.

For the third research question, it was also observed from the data collected that the institution was performing below the expectation of the students which resulted in students being dissatisfied. The result of this analysis can be interpreted as that the dissatisfaction had direct impact on student retention at the institution.

Finally the fourth research question was of finding out if the institution was the student's first choice of learning. The data collected showed that less than half of the respondents considered the institution as their first choice. These results can be interpreted to mean that the institution is a non-selective university and it survives on residue from other institutions which can negatively impact on retention.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the statistical data analysis and interpretation of the results. This chapter presented a brief summary of the study. There are five sections in this chapter. Section one reviewed the discussions of the study followed by the section which reviewed the conclusions which were made from the study. The third section discussed the implication with respect to the researchers, educators and students. The next section pointed out few recommendations for the institution's administrators and the last section proposed the direction for future research.

5.2 Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to discuss the findings of the objectives of the study by answering the following research questions:

1. What are the factors that influence student retention at Africa University?
2. To what extent do these factors predict student retention at Africa University?
3. Are there any significant differences in student expectation prior to joining Africa University and what they are experiencing now?
4. What is the relationship between student retention at Africa University and student's university choice selection?

5.2.1 What are the factors that influence student retention at Africa University?

This first research question was based on Swail's (2003) Geometric Model of student's persistence and achievement. The researcher's main focus was on student retention in private institutions of higher learning in an African context.

The main factors that were cited in this research were cognitive factors, social factors and institutional factors. Each of these had its own variables. In a nutshell cognitive variables relates to factors forming student academic ability, thus student decision making and problem solving capacity. On cognitive factors 48.4% of the respondents viewed their studies as challenging and 6.6% viewed them as very challenging while 28.1% remained neutral on the matter and 3% were not challenged at all by their studies. Those who viewed their studies as very challenging were likely to drop out if no extra help is offered as they may feel that they would not be able to graduate or the duration of their program would be extended. Those who were not challenged by their studies were also likely to drop out as they might feel like they are not developing intellectual. Those who felt that their studies were challenging were those who were likely to return as they would feel like there were developing intellectually. On social factors variables which relates to the student's ability to network with other students and staffs, a total of 54.7% of respondents agreed to have formed a relationship with other students and 44.2% strongly agreed to have formed a positive relationship with other students. At least 0.4% had not formed any relationship with other students. A student who felt isolated from others is a candidate for dropping out. The third factor was the institutional factors, whose variables relates to the practices, strategies and culture of the institutions. A total of 98% both agreed and strongly agreed that they were comfortable with their learning environment, although 39.3% believed that they were not receiving value for their money. A total of 34% agreed that they were receiving value for their money. The risky students who were likely to drop out are those students who felt that they were being short changed of their money. As they would likely look for places where they would get more value for their money.

5.2.2 To what extent do these factors predict student retention at Africa University?

Cognitive factors, social factors and institutional factors have to form a perfect triangle in order to minimize student attrition. Student motivation should also be included in the center of the triangle. Averagely, the cognitive factors were positively influenced. 58.1% rated their studies as challenging. 56.6% were satisfied with their intellectual development and 55.4% were meeting their academic performance expectations. Averagely, on social factors students were integrating positively with other students. 54.7% of the respondents agreed to have developed a close relationship with other students, 46.4% had not felt home sick and 57.5% accepted that other students had different values and attitude than theirs. On institutional factors, 60.7% of the respondents rated the institution as competitive comparing it to other institutions. A total of 60.6% of the respondents agreed that their interaction with faculty members had a positive influence on their personal growth and 52.4% were satisfied with the quality of services that was offered at the institution. At least 48.7% stated that the institution was partially living up to their expectation hence 40.1% stated that the institution was not living up to their expectation. The relationship of the factors observed did not form a perfect triangle hence the need to improve on all the factors concerned especially on institutional factors.

5.2.3 Are there any significant differences in student expectation prior to joining Africa University and what they are experiencing now?

A total of 34.1% of the respondents agreed that they were receiving value for their money. The .47% stated that they would recommend the institution to other students. 35.7% once considered leaving the institution. According to these statistics, there is wide gap between what the students expected and what the institution was offering -

that resulted in students feeling dissatisfied. The institution's brand name is stronger than the service being offered.

5.2.4 What is the relationship between student retention at Africa University and student's university choice selection?

Only 36.3% agreed that the institution was their first choice of learning. At least 53.2% of the respondents agreed whilst 42.7% strongly agreed to re-enroll at the institution if given the opportunity to start afresh other things being equal. On one hand institution should strive to work towards being the first choice of student enrollment rather than being a substitute and on the other hand it should also work towards convincing the enrolled students that it is the best such that the students will not regret joining.

5.3 Discussion and interpretation of Qualitative Data.

The variables of section 3 were formed by how the questions were responded to by the respondents. Common stated facts were grouped together to form a variable. The first question in section 3 was

5.3.1 What is it that made you enroll at Africa University? The answers to this question when grouped according to their similarity formed these variables, university continuity, awarded a scholarship, recommendation from others, university first choice selection and offered space to study. One of the respondent stated "Africa University has been operating in both the country's political and economic meltdown, that's what I want, to finish what I have started", University has it not for the scholarship I received," the other student stated "I have always wanted to join Africa University; I am impressed by its diversity". On

recommendation one respondent stated, “More than half of the people I talked to about my prospect in joining a university recommended Africa University, and here I am.” The positivity of these respondents showed how much they value their relationship with the university.

5.3.2 State and explain the difference between what you expected and what you are experiencing now at Africa University. The variables that were formulated in response to this question are food quality, accommodation status, play grounds, swimming pool and gym services. All these variables were rated as world class. Africa University is doing a good job by benchmarking its services with world class standards as it surpassed the student’s expectation.

5.3.3 State what impresses you at Africa University. In response to this question these variables were formulated interaction, benchmarking of services, student involvement. On interaction one respondent wrote, “Even the Vice Chancellor does take time to respond to some questions on virtual platforms”, the other stated, there is no much that goes on within the institution without us being informed”. Student involvement plays a crucial part in their development as a sense of loyalty belonging is fostered in them.

5.3.4 What challenges are you experiencing at this institution? The variables that were formulated in response to this question were security and safety issues. One of the respondents stated,

illegal miners are seen roaming around the campus, and we do not exactly know what they are capable of doing to us,” although I am happy that the management is now fencing the campus”. “There have been many cases of student missing their valuables, although some the items are recovered, it still remains worrisome”. this shows that some student were worried about their security and safety measures although they were now taking comfort in knowing that the university was now taking corrective measures to address their problems.

5.4 Conclusion

- 1) In identifying factors that influence student retention at the researcher used Swail s, geometric model and Maslow, s hierarchy of needs. The researcher observed that institutional factors, cognitive factors and social factors play an important role in student retention. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs also plays an important role in student retention from the student’s perspective.
- 2) The second research objective was to understand the relationship between factors influencing retention of students at Africa University. The researcher observed that a perfect equilibrium of the geometric factors must be maintained in order to retain student at the institution. The Maslow hierarchy of needs must be included in the execution of the geometric model.
- 3) The third research objective was to analyze the difference between what the student expected and what the university was offering. The researcher observed that not all students were receiving what they expected from the university. There was a gap between students’ expectations and what the university is delivering. The might be

caused by the different student were the student comes from as some are from poor background and others are from rich family backgrounds.

- 4) The last research objective was to find out if Africa University was the student's first choice of learning. There were a considerable number of students who came to Africa University because they had failed to get places to their first choice university. Some simply joined Africa University because they were offered scholarships. Both the quantitative and qualitative approach came to this same conclusion.

5.4 Implications

The researcher's findings from the analysis respond to the study's research questions and help to achieve its goals, which are to identify the factors influencing student retention, to understand the relationship between factors influencing retention of students, to analyze the differences between what the student expected and what is being offered, and to find out if Africa University was the student's first choice of learning. These findings have significant implication for both the students and the universities. Universities management will have deeper understanding of factors that directly affect student retention. The university management will also have an understanding of student motivational factors that will lead to high student retention.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that:

- The first objective was to identify the factors that influence student retention at Africa University. The researcher recommends that the Africa University management should put more emphasis on a) institutional factors, these are conducive rules, regulations and the environment in which learning takes place, B) social factors, these are factors that

results in each student having a sense of belonging to the institution, C) cognitive factors, the ability of the student to demonstrate academic degree completion traits.

- The second objective was to understand the relationship between factors influencing retention of students at Africa University. The researcher recommends that Africa University management must strive to have a perfect equilibrium of Swail's geometric model factors, thus the institutional factors, social factors and cognitive factors must be equally triangulated in order to convince the student that Africa University is the best. Also the student must be motivated in order to be retained.
- The third objective was to analyze the difference between what the student expected and what was being offered at Africa University. The researcher recommends that Africa University management should strive meet and exceed both students and family expectations of learning and living environments which are conducive and competitive in order to retain students. Africa University should convince the students that they are getting value for their money.
- The fourth objective was to find out if Africa University was the student's first choice of learning. The researcher recommends that Africa University management should make relentless efforts to move away from being a last choice institution to a first choice one which selects students rather than grab whatever is left by benchmarking its programs and standards to be the best university in Africa.
- There are many reasons that causes student to depart from their studies, and it is the duty of Africa University management to make some follow ups to those departed students, create a database of the causes and craft strategies that will counter future student departures from the universities.

Africa University management should adopt the above strategies and refine some of the strategies already in use. Student retention is a dynamic subject and as such the

institution should keep on revisiting these strategies and update them according to the needs of the students. The university caters for the whole continent, so it must realize that the factors that affect student retention may differ from country to country, region to region because of the cultural differences and level of family incomes, therefore the institution must adopt strategies that fit all without compromising its integrity for it to succeed.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

Based on the results of this research and the review of the related literature, the researcher recommends that further research be carried out on the analysis and evaluation of factors influencing student enrollment at institutions of higher learning with a view to complementing the current research.

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APPENDIX I: Questionnaire Survey Instrument

Dear Respondent.

Thank you for your time.

My name is Njerere Gerald an Executive Masters in Business and Administration student at Africa University. I am carrying out a study to examine the factors that affect student retention at Africa University. I am kindly asking you to participate in this study by answering the questionnaire provided below. You were selected for this study because you are a student at Africa University.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and there is no right or wrong answer. It is expected that answering the questionnaire will take no longer than ten minutes of your valuable time. The information obtained will be treated as strictly private and confidential. Your response will provide important information that will help Africa University in planning better ways to support your academic success and increase student retention.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Section A

Please circle the answer that best represent how close you agree with the statement at the present time.

1. State your gender.
A) Male B) Female
2. Year of enrolment
A) First year B) second year C) third year D) fourth year
3. Nationality
A) National B) International
4. What is your mother's formal education level?
A) Primary level B) Secondary level C) Tertiary level D) Not applicable
5. What is your father's formal education level?
A) Primary level. B) Secondary level. C) Tertiary level. D) Not applicable
6. Have you ever received any financial aid from Africa University?
7. A) Yes B) No C) Partial
8. How do you rate your family support in your studies
a) Very supportive B) supportive C) not supportive
9. How often do you feel home sick?
a) Very often b) often c) not at all
10. Who influenced you to choose Africa university?
a) Family members B) church members c) friends
11. Are you meeting your family expectations?
a) Yes b) no c) partially
12. How challenging are your studies.
a)Very challenging B) challenging C)not Challenging
13. Is Africa University living up to your expectations?
a) Yes B)no c) partially

14. How will you rate Africa University comparing to other universities.
- a) Very competitive b) competitive c) not competitive
15. Are you on scholarship?
- a) Yes b) No c) Partial
16. Is your family funding your education?
- a) Yes b) No c) Partial
17. Are you self-funding your education?
- a) Yes b) No c) Partial
18. How will you rate the degree you are undertaking
- a. a) very challenging b) challenging c) not challenging
d) neutral

Section B

The key for the following section is as follows.

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
19. It is important for me to graduate from Africa University.
- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
20. I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend Africa University.
- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
21. It is likely that I will re-enroll at Africa University next semester.
- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
22. Getting good grades is important to me.
- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
23. Since coming to Africa University I have developed close personal relationship with other students.
- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
24. My non classroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my personal growth attitude and value.

a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

25. Most of the faculty members I have contact with are genuinely interested in students.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

26. I am satisfied with the extent of my intellectual development since enrollment.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

27. Most students at Africa University have values and attitude different to my own.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

28. I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

29. I once considered leaving Africa University.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

30. No one influenced me to study at Africa University.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

31. I will recommend Africa University to other aspiring students.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

32. I have a friend/close relative that have studied at Africa University before me.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

33. Africa University was my first learning choice in higher education.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

34. I am happy with my living/residence arrangement.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

35. I am satisfied with my opportunities to meet and interact with my faculty members.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

36. I am receiving value for my money.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e)
Strongly agree

37. The degree I am taking was my first choice.

- a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
38. I am comfortable with my learning environment.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree c) Undecided d) Agree e) Strongly agree
39. I have been transferred to another faculty than the one I initial chose
a) Yes b) No
40. With the experience I have got, given another chance I will still enroll at Africa University.
a) Yes b) No c) Not sure
41. Africa University is living up to its brand name.
a) Yes b) No c) partially
42. I am proud to be an Africa university ambassador
a) Yes b) No C) Partially

Section C

In this section may you please give more details to your answers?

- 1 What is it that made you enroll at Africa University?
.....
.....
.....
- 2 State and the difference between what you expected and what you are experiencing now at Africa University.
.....
.....
.....
- 3 State what impresses you at Africa University.
.....
.....
.....
- 4 What challenges are you experiencing at this institution?
.....
.....
.....

Thank you.

APPENDIX 2: AUREC Approval Letter



"Investing in Africa's future"

AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUREC)

P.O. Box 1320 Mutare, Zimbabwe, Off Nyanga Road, Old Mutare-Tel (+263-20) 80875/80826/81611 Fax: (+263 20) 81785 Website: www.africau.edu

Ref: AU 3518/24

21 November 2024

NJERERE GERALD GEORGE

C/O Africa University

Box 1320

MUTARE

RE: FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT RETENTION AT AFRICA UNIVERSITY IN 2024

Thank you for the above-titled proposal you submitted to the Africa University Research Ethics Committee for review. Please be advised that AUREC has reviewed and approved your application to conduct the above research.

The approval is based on the following.

a) Research proposal

- **APPROVAL NUMBER** AUREC 3518/24
This number should be used on all correspondences, consent forms, and appropriate document
- **AUREC MEETING DATE** NA
- **APPROVAL DATE** November 21, 2024
- **EXPIRATION DATE** November 21, 2025
- **TYPE OF MEETING:** Expedited
After the expiration date, this research may only continue upon renewal. A progress report on a standard AUREC form should be submitted a month before the expiration date for renewal purposes.
- **SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS** All serious problems concerning subject safety must be reported to AUREC within 3 working days on the standard AUREC form.
- **MODIFICATIONS** Prior AUREC approval is required before implementing any changes in the proposal (including changes in the consent documents)
- **TERMINATION OF STUDY** Upon termination of the study a report has to be submitted to AUREC.



Yours Faithfully

MARY CHINZOU

ASSISTANT RESEARCH OFFICER: FOR CHAIRPERSON

AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPENDIX 3: Permission to Carry Out Research



REGISTRAR'S OFFICE

1 UNITED METHODIST- RELATED INSTITUTION

P.O. BOX 1320, MUTARE, ZIMBABWE. TEL (263-220) 60075/60026/61611/60618. FAX (263-28) 61785. E-MAIL: registrar@africau.edu

26 November 2024

Mr Gerald Njerere
C/O Africa University
Box 1320
MUTARE

E-mail: njerereg@africau.edu

Dear Mr Njerere

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT AFRICA UNIVERSITY;
STUDENT RETENTION AT AFRICA UNIVERSITY

We acknowledge receipt of your email 21 November 2024 regarding the above.

We have pleasure to inform you that your application to carry out the above titled research at Africa University has been approved in line with the Africa University Research Ethics Committee (AUREC) terms and conditions.

Please liaise with relevant offices to access secondary data for your research.

We wish you success in your studies.

Yours faithfully,

DR. P. L. MANGEZVO
REGISTRAR

cc AUREC