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Relationship between Personal Attitude and Academic Performance of Self-Sponsored Education Students at Africa International University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the relationship between personal attitude and academic performance of self-sponsored education students at Africa International University. The study focused on the personal attitude of self-sponsored education student towards the learning environment, the commitment of teachers to teaching, university social life and the joy that a student derives from the learning experience. Descriptive research design was employed for the study. The population of the study comprised of 28 undergraduate education students who were subjected to census sampling because their number was manageable. Data collection was done using a close-ended questionnaire while data analysis was done using descriptive statistics such as a table and percentage rating. The findings show that students' attitude towards the learning environment, the commitment of teachers to teaching, university social life, and personal interest in learning experience significantly relate to academic performance.

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Introduction

Students' success in academic performance is the primary aspiration and desire of every parent, guardian, teacher, student, and institution of higher learning. This aspiration and desire become of more concern at the university level because at this level the learners are expected to be clearer in their minds regarding their career focus. According to Jayanthi, Balakrishnan, Ching, Latiff, and Nasirudeen (2014), academic success has a great impact on student's self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance in higher education. Poor academic performance or high failure rates may result in unacceptable levels of attrition, reduced graduates, and increased education cost and wastage.

A plethora of research studies have shown that student's personal attitude plays a critical role in academic performance in general (Janssen & O'Brien, 2014) and in specific subjects of study (Attah, Ita & Nchor, 2018). According to Awang, Ahmad, Bakar, Ghani, Yunus, Ibrahim, Ramalu, Saad, and Rahman (2013), there is a positive relationship between students' attitudes and their academic achievement. The strong association existing between individuals' attitudes and academic performance oscillates between a wholehearted dedication to learning or a lackluster commitment on the part of the student. The authors argue that students who have negative attitudes towards academic activities usually exhibit challenging behaviour which may include anti-social and off-task behaviour.

This study sought to establish the relationship between the problem of low academic performance of Self-Sponsored Education students and their personal attitude towards the learning environment, teachers, social life and excitement towards learning at Africa International University. Student's academic performance is a matter of great concern to

universities, students, parents, and other relevant stakeholders. Al-Zoubi and Younes (2015) posit that low academic performance is one of the most challenging problems that faces students as well as teachers worldwide. Poor academic performance may lead to students' dropouts, waste of resources, stress for the affected students and parents, and may also affect the revenue flow of the concerned university. At the time of study, there were limited research and substantive literature on poor academic performance of self-sponsored students in private universities in Kenya. This study aimed at contributing to knowledge in this area.

In Kenya, research studies on students' academic performance have focused more on basic education levels than university levels. For example, Wambui (2017) states the factors influencing students' academic performance in high schools include teacher-student ratio, peer pressure, availability of school resources, students' attitudes, and family background. Mutindi (2018) on his part found out that school-based factors which influence students' dismal academic performance in high schools include teaching resources, physical facilities, teachers' supervisory roles, and teacher adequacy.

From the two studies in Kenya it is apparent that, although there are multiple factors influencing students' academic performance in schools, student's personal attitude is not only the constant factor but the most critical in the overall academic performance. This is because academic success is driven by personal interest, motivation, and alignment with the learning environment. This study aimed at determining the relationship between self-sponsored education student's personal attitude and academic performance at Africa International university. There is

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scarce body of substance literature in Kenya relating student's personal attitude and academic performance in institutions of higher learning.

Literature Review

Student Personal Attitude and Academic Performance

Student personal attitude is key to academic performance at all levels of learning. According to Awang et al (2013), there is a positive relationship between students' attitudes and their academic achievement. This relationship implies that a student's academic performance reflects the interest the student attaches to the learning process. Thus, many students experiencing failing grades and low academic performance indicate that they lack interest in their studies and therefore approach learning with suspended animation. Such students do not see any problem with academic tardiness, absenteeism in class, and low participation in class proceedings because their interest is low (Candeias, Rebelo, Oliveira & Mendes, 2010).

A study by Afzal, Hussain, Sarwar, Gilani (2019) affirm that the most significant factor affecting academic performance is personal attitude which they rated at 78%. The outcome of this research implies that majority of students have negative attitude towards learning in general but more specifically towards certain units or lecturers. Based on their negative attitude they end up performing poorly or discontinuing from their studies. It was apparent from the study that when students develop good learning attitudes, they improve in their academic performance regardless of study levels. This study sought to bridge the gap in knowledge regarding the relationship between students' personal attitudes and academic performance in a chartered private Christian university in Kenya. There is a cute shortage of research in this area at the higher education institutions in Kenya.

In Kenya, the few studies done point to multiple factors influencing academic performance at different levels of learning. First, a research done by Karimi (2015) among four hundred and ten (410) students on *Factors Contributing to the Academic Performance of Students in a Private University* found that students with positive attitudes, which include high levels of self-efficacy and internal locus of control, also tend to employ high levels of intrinsic goal orientation that result in the adoption of good self-regulatory learning strategies that significantly enhance academic performance of undergraduate students. From the study, student's personal attitude has a great bearing on the eventual learning outcome. The finding did not differentiate self-sponsored students and government sponsored students which was the focus of this study.

Second, another study by Lang'at (2011) regarding students' attitudes towards specific subjects indicates that under-achievement of students in some subject is because of their attitude towards the subject. This means students who

try to make progress in their academic studies with positive attitudes succeed regardless of the subject of study. with a positive attitude towards a specific subject and studies in general perform well in the end. Student attitude reflects the values, intention, and belief of the student towards learning in a specific context based on the learning environment, the motivation of teachers, the prevailing social life and the enjoyment attached to the learning. The study focused on student's attitude towards specific subject of learning and not learning in general. This study aimed at determining the relationship between the personal attitude of self-sponsored education students and their academic performance at Africa International University.

Finally, Maina (2010) in his study found out that goal-oriented students usually possess positive feelings regarding their school experiences. Such students therefore possess the traits of discipline, diligence, and resourcefulness, are avid readers, and tend to devote less time towards recreation and leisure activities. The study emphasizes the vital need for the students to possess positive thinking in terms of their schools, learning environment, teachers, and academic subjects. Thus, with positive attitude students can dedicate themselves wholeheartedly towards learning and generate the desired academic outcomes. The study was done in the context of secondary schools in Kenya while this study focused self-sponsored undergraduate education students in a private university context in Kenya.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design in line with the quantitative approach to analyze the influence of personal attitude on the academic performance of self-sponsored students at Africa International University. As Shuttleworth (2008) observes, a descriptive research design helps to provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a research problem. Using census sampling, the study targeted a total of 28 self-sponsored undergraduate education students in AIU. The research instrument used was a closed-ended questionnaire which was administered to all the 28 self-sponsored undergraduate education students. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics with percentage rating being the main methodology of analysis.

Results and Analysis

The study objective was to establish the relationship between personal attitude and academic performance of self-sponsored education students at Africa International University. All the respondents were subjected to the same type of questions which were measured using a five-level Likert scale comprising of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). The analysis with respect to each of the respondents is as shown in below.

From Table 1, it was established that 60% of the respondents strongly agree that the learning environment

Table 1. Influence of Personal Attitude on Academic Performance of Self- Sponsored Education students

Statements on personal attitude	Strongly Disagree N (%)	Disagree N (%)	Neutral N (%)	Agree N (%)	Strongly Agree N (%)
The learning environment in this university motivates me to do well in my studies	1(4%)	0 (0%)	1(4%)	8(32%)	15(60%)
The commitment to teaching by lecturers in this university inspires me to excel in my academic work.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4(16%)	7(28%)	14(56%)
The social life in this university encourages me to dedicate my time to learning	2(8%)	5(20%)	7(28%)	10(40%)	1(4%)
I perform well in my academic work in this university because I enjoy the learning experience.	2(8%)	3(12%)	2(8%)	9(36%)	8(32%)

plays a significant role in influencing academic performance of self-sponsored education students. This was further strengthened by those who agree at 32%. From the results, 4% strongly disagreed and 4% were neutral. None of the respondents disagreed. This, therefore, implies that learning environment significantly inspire self-sponsored education students to do well in their studies at Africa International University.

Regarding commitment to teaching by lecturers, the findings indicate that 56% of the respondents strongly agreed that commitment to teaching by lecturers influence their academic performance. In addition, 28% of the respondents agreed while 16% were neutral. None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Based on the findings, it is evident that commitment to teaching by lecturers has a strong relationship with self-sponsored education student's motivation excel in their academic performance at Africa International University.

Concerning item three, 4% of the respondents strongly agreed that the social life in the university encourages them to dedicate their time to learning. Furthermore, 40% of the respondents agreed, 28% were neutral, while 20% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings affirm that social life in the university plays an important role in encouraging self-sponsored education students to dedicate themselves to their academic work at Africa International University.

In conclusion, 32% of the respondents strongly agreed that learning experience in the university motivates them to perform well whereas 36% of the respondent agreed with the statement. In addition, 8%, 12% and 8% of the respondents were neutral, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the statement. These findings show that learning experience in the university plays a significant role in enhancing self-sponsored education students' interest in academic performance at Africa International University.

Karimi (2015) in a similar study corroborate the findings of this study. In his study on the influence of personal attitude on academic performance of education students the author notes the critical role that attitude plays in academic achievement. The finding confirms that students with positive attitudes perform exceptionally well. Such positive attitudes include high levels of self-efficacy and internal locus of control which also tend to employ high levels of intrinsic goal orientation that result in the adoption of good self-regulatory learning strategies. Good self-regulatory learning strategies in turn significantly enhance academic performance.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have affirmed the critical role that student's personal attitude has on academic performance. More specifically, the study has shown that student's attitude towards the learning environment, teachers' commitment to teaching, the social life in an institution of higher learning, and student's interest in learning have a relationship with academic performance and achievement. Universities should invest in wining students' positive attitude by creating a

conducive learning in general and by ensuring the academic staff are committed to their vocation.

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