

Determinants of Student Satisfaction in Namibia: A Viewpoint of Public Higher Education

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to explain determinants of student satisfaction levels in public universities in Namibia. Applying a descriptive survey design, a semi-structured questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of currently registered students from two state universities, and it presents results of data analysed using descriptive statistics. Evidence to support underlying dimensions of students' satisfaction in public universities have been found to be; Affordability and accessibility of education, Technological innovation and sophistication, Technical and functional support given to students, access to information and learning materials through the library and other means, Campus and residential security and the quality of the academic and support staff is significant with student satisfaction levels. The study resolved that, proper communication between University management and students in these key areas increase students' satisfaction and trust between the two parties and has a corresponding effect in increasing students' satisfaction. The study recommends that, public universities in Namibia should invest more in students' orientation efforts to ensure that there is better communication between university management and students in matters regarding the cost and accessibility of education, the technical and functional support that is available to students. There should be a collective approach when dealing with campus and residential security matters. These efforts can be through the establishment of customer contact centers, automation of processes and the adoption of best practices.*

Keywords: Namibia, student satisfaction, Higher Learning Institutions

1. Introduction

Afro barometer, a non-partisan pan African research network found widespread public dissatisfaction with the level of service delivery by governments and their agencies in 1999 and 2013 surveys, across the sub-Saharan Africa (Michael, Jeremy, & Daniel, 2019). A study conducted by Armah-Attoh (2015) found that public service in the provision of medical care, reliable clean and safe water and sanitation, reliable electricity, road network infrastructure, communication systems and education were either bad or difficult to access in a number of African countries. The provision of public goods and services is typically characterised by poor service delivery, especially in developing countries, such as Namibia (The World Bank, 2005). Pathak, Singh, Naz and Belwal (2008), argue that service quality in the public sector is pitiable, particularly in institutions where government retains full control such as universities, and those that are monopolies in their respective industries without competition from the private sector. Namibia's public universities have not been immune to service quality and student satisfaction shortfalls and public complaints are rampant (Shinovene, 2018).

The level of customer satisfaction in the public sector is often found wanting, owing to a deficit in customer service standards, relative to the private sector (Iyikal & Celebi, 2016). This disparity is salient in most African countries, including Namibia, where the provision of public services is traditionally controlled by the government. Public universities face huge challenges when it comes to meeting the expectations of students due to scarce resources and management challenges necessitated by rapid student population growth, development and urbanisation (Armah-Attoh, 2015).

According to Armah-Attoh (2015), the provision of goods and services in the public sector is deterred by the lack of resources and poor management practices occasioned by leadership appointments by political parties, leading to an incompetent labour force as some appointments are made for social and economic reasons rather than on merit. Curristine, Lonti and Joumard (2007) assert that countries are under pressure to improve public sector performance and contain expenditure growth at the same time. Governments have a responsibility to ensure that quality education is delivered to the public and should be held accountable for the way they spend taxpayers' money. Namibian public universities, similar to other universities in the region, have adopted radical changes to improve efficiency in the education sector and become competitive in the region (Makanyeza, 2013). Conversely, Ikobe (2013) notes that there is no agreed upon blueprint for enhancing service efficiency in the public sector. According to Makanyeza (2013) governments in Sub-Saharan Africa have adopted devolution and decentralisation, customer orientation, workforce transformation and result orientated approaches to improve the quality of service delivery.

The past decade has seen an increase in the number of university strikes and riots by students, who are the key stakeholders of these institutions. Easy access to information through different media platforms has increased awareness of social and economic issues amongst students. These students often compare their social as well as academic life with those of other institutions within the country, region and beyond. Disparities in these key areas of social and academic life has often been cited as the root cause of these often violent and destructive riots and strikes. Such organised activism and protests in state-funded universities in Namibia is a pointer to displeasure towards the public university system. This delineates a problem with

satisfaction levels among students in public universities in Namibia.

The aggression coming from the section of the dissatisfied students has seen many of these institutions in Southern Africa becoming student centered, a practice that has been lacking in most of them for many years. This drive has forced Namibian public universities to create and implement a Customer Service Charter and Integrated Client Service Facility (ICSF) to address the concerns of students before these students turn to chaotic and disruptive means of voicing their concerns. This has created pressure and urgency for universities to transform into student-centered institutions by constantly taking an introspection as to how best they can meet the expectations of these ever-demanding students. The main objective of the customer service charter as per adopted by public universities is to improve students' satisfaction with the services provided by the universities through defined quality service standards. The effectiveness of public university students' satisfaction drive has not been evaluated and this paper intended to test whether the efforts and different programs put in place have contributed to students' satisfaction and identify the key areas that contribute to student satisfaction.

It is against this background that this study aimed at investigating the determinants of students' satisfaction in public Universities in Namibia. The study was based on two public universities: University of Namibia (UNAM) and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). These are state owned institutions defined in the Public Enterprise Governance Act, 2006 (Act No. 8 of 25), and are established by an Act of parliament as a juristic person responsible for provision of educational services in Namibia. Synonymous with other state-owned and controlled entities, are thus susceptible to the challenges in the public sector.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Institutional image

Institutional image like brand equity, is an important element that helps to attract and retain customers. Kotler (2000) state that the image and reputation of an institution is very crucial as potential customers often make their choices based on perceived image. Universities, public and private alike, have to create and preserve their images, by developing an identity of their own upon which the institution should be known for and use that in their marketing communication with the various stakeholders. Schlesinger, Cervera and Pérez-Cabañero (2017) state that opinions and perceptions held on the institution can become factors that trigger customers to make choices about which institution, they should associate themselves with. The overall impression is usually generated from the physical and behavioural attributes of the organisation, and as such university managers should nurture university image rigorously to enhance student satisfaction (Osman & Saputra, 2019).

Institutional image is built around the organisation's ability to meet or exceed the expectations of its key customers, hence customer engagement in order to establish their

expectations is the starting point of building a strong organisation. For instance, in a study conducted by Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair and Ragavan (2016), in Malaysian public universities to determine influence of service quality on international student satisfaction, institutional image and loyalty, results revealed that student satisfaction has also an influence on institutional image, and together, they influence student loyalty. Similarly, a more recent study by Chandra, Hafni, Chandra, Purwati and Chandra (2019) established that university image has a positive and significant influence on both student satisfaction and student loyalty. Like brand equity, when properly managed, positive image of the university can be an important factor in increasing customers' (students) buying intentions and maintaining loyalty because of its both direct and indirect effects (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018).

2.2 Brand equity, institutional image and higher educational institutions

Branding plays a crucial role to service providing institutions such as universities. As such, university branding and reputation management has been of great concern recently (Frandsen, Gotsi, Johnston, Whittle, Frenkel, & Spicer 2018). The aforementioned authors state that as opposed to corporate for-profit sectors, branding of university presents a set of unique challenges. As the number of public and private universities increase, so has the competition for students (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Thus, branding has been used as a differentiation strategy for universities since significant relationships exist among brand equity dimensions that influence learning experiences resulting in robust university brand equity (Pinar, Girard & Basfirinci, 2020). As some of preceding authors (Kotler, 2000) pointed out branding is important for educational institutions as it can add value to an education institution's offer and provide more satisfaction for students. While some universities are complaining of declining numbers of students, a trend that threatens their future others are struggling to cope with the swelling numbers of applicants. At the core of the survival of any higher learning institution is the understanding of what students want from the institution and how best the institution can deliver that.

2.3 Characteristics of Public Services

According to Kotler and Keller (2011), a service is an act or performance offered by one party to another. In higher education sector, it is apparent that technological innovations, pressures to improve productivity, the service quality movement and changing patterns of government regulations are key forces that drive services marketing (Mudie & Pirrie, 2006). Given that services and goods are often tied together, scholars have identified four distinguished characteristics of services: intangibility, inseparability, perishability and variability (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). Universities are service providers hence understanding the unique characteristics of services would assist management when putting together a service package that should be offered to their students in order to meet their expectations.

Intangibility implies that a service can only be experienced through their performance (Hoffman & Bateson, 2012). According to the American Marketers Association (2012) public services come in the form of maintenance, reparation, compliance, information and registration services. Sometimes services may be judged based on their accompanying products, but in most cases, a service is evaluated based on its intangible aspects. Education and knowledge cannot be touched as it does not come in a physical form hence university management need to find a way as to how students should find an appreciation of this intangible asset. By having credible and highly experienced staff members delivering various modules on different programs would increase the confidence of student in the university system.

Inseparability of services occurs because for production of many services to occur the customer must be physically present thus simultaneous production and consumption (Moeller, 2010). It is therefore common in the provision of public services, that the client is exposed to the entire service production process as they interface with the personnel involved in the production process, because there is no separation. This is more so in the university set up, where knowledge is produced and consumed concurrently through the interaction of students and their facilitators (Lehtinen & Jarvinen, 2015).

As services are performances, they cannot be stored thus highly *perishable*. According to Shaw, Deleray and Gupta (2002), public services are time bound hence they cannot be stored and carried forward to a future time period. For example, a client seeking information services or registration services from a public university can only experience the service performance during the service encounter and the process thereto (Lehtinen & Jarvinen, 2015). This maximises the opportunity for speedy service recovery should challenges be experienced in the service delivery process (Kotler, 2004). With the global shutdown due to the COVID-19, universities around the world, more so in Namibia need to come up with a plan as how best they will recover the lost time and deliver their promised services to the students.

Services are *heterogeneous* despite the fact that standard systems may be used for example, to handle a hotel reservation, each 'unit' of a service may differ from other 'units' (Chand, nd.). Roland and Richard (2012) assert that public services unlike goods have a potential for inconsistency. It is difficult to ensure the same level of output in terms of quality because the quality of the service depends on the respective personnel offering the service. Services in public universities are rendered by different individuals and their quality of performance varies on different occasions. This creates inconsistencies in the level of service performance, owing to numerous reasons such as their stress levels, attitude, competency and all other personal factors. Variability is therefore inevitable (Shaw, Deleray and Gupta, 2002), and this has a huge bearing on the satisfaction levels of students in these higher learning institutions.

2.4 Factors affecting customer satisfaction in the public sectors

Customer satisfaction in the public sector remains a nightmare (Kazmi, 2015). Public service organisations find it difficult to meet and satisfy the needs of their clients because of the obsolete business systems adopted, the lack of standard operating procedures or the lack of commitment to service standards (Pokalsky, 2016). Public universities are no exception to this. Salo (2017) highlights the challenges of customer satisfaction from the personnel perspective: poor team morale, lack of skills, knowledge and ability; lack of training and development programs and a poor service culture in government and quasi-governmental organisations are some of the factors that affect the level of customer satisfaction. The aforementioned problems in public services offering are impediments for customer satisfaction (Amanfi, 2012). The constructs of customer satisfaction have been viewed in numerous ways in various studies, however the commonly considered factors of influence include customer perceived value, quality of service delivery (Morgan & Govender, 2017; Rong-Da and Jun-Shu, 2011) and post purchase evaluation (Mang'unyi, Khabala & Govender, 2017).

2.4.1 Customer perceived value

This is the consumers' overall assessment of the utility of a product, based on their perceptions of the price they paid against the worth received in return (Aulia, Crawford-Marks, Camilleri, Detollenaere & Blythe, 2016). Due to technological advancements and the easy access to information, public university students have become more aware of the responsibilities of public universities, such that they have preconceived ideas of the value and the benefits they should be enjoying from the consumption of public products and services.

2.4.2 Quality of service

The qualities of services include reliability, responsiveness, professionalism, courtesy, credibility, assurance, accessibility, communication, and empathy with the customer (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018). Several studies have been carried out to determine the quality of service in the public sector (Khurshid, 2012; Porumbescu, 2017; Urvikis, 2016; Weraas, 2015). Their results indicate that customer satisfaction derives from the efficiency of the service quality dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, employee competence, accessibility, courtesy, credibility, security, empathy and the physical infrastructure within the organisation.

2.4.3 Post-purchase evaluation

Wen-Bao (2008) defines post-purchase as the judgment made by the consumer about the superiority or excellence of a product after its use. It is a subjective comparison of the perceived value and the actual received (Wen-Bao, 2008). Universities need to constantly evaluate the value of the education that they are providing to the public. Kazmi (2015) suggests that, the need for satisfaction arises from the gap between the current state and the desired state. Consumers undergo a buying decision making process and they use their analytical thinking to compare the consequences of each alternative, in term of higher benefits,

lowest costs and durability (Wen-Bao, 2008). Customer satisfaction in the public sector is a product of the post purchase evaluation of services rendered by public institutions based on individual perceptions and expectations.

2.5 Customer satisfaction measurement models in industry applied to higher education

According to Salo (2017) sourcing for information on the level of customer satisfaction has become a vital strategic imperative for most businesses. In universities this information is usually obtained from the students themselves through students' satisfaction surveys and can be considered reliable enough to provide the university management with direct feedback on how students feel about the different aspects of the university and what expectations they have (Grigoroudis, 2010). It is only through the voice of the customer that an organisation becomes aware of its areas of improvement and areas of service excellence.

Several industry-based models of customer satisfaction applied in higher education include a 6-stage customer satisfaction measurement process (Pokalsky, 2016), SERVQUAL (Khan, Ahmed and Nawaz, 2011), Technical and Functional Quality Model (Gronroos, 1984) and Haywood Farmer Service Quality Model (Haywood-Farmer (1988)) Owing to their practical limitations in the higher education settings their applications received criticisms from numerous scholars (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018). State-sponsored universities fall within the aegis of non-profit service entities, hence it is problematic to apply industry-based models to evaluate student satisfaction levels, since multiple factors play a critical role in determination of satisfaction levels of students. On the whole, all models have received criticism, and all have strengths, weaknesses and limitations in their applications due to existing national and circumstantial differences. Khurshid (2012) argues that customer service as measured by service quality aspects such as reliability, responsiveness and courtesy, is at the epicentre of customer satisfaction.

3. Research Design

Research design is a framework or a blueprint for conducting research (Malhotra, 2010). In order to have an in-depth understanding of the key determinants of student satisfaction in the public universities in Namibia, the study adopted a mixed research approach. According to Bell, Bryman, and Harle (2019), a mixed method approach adds value to the understanding of a concept compared to purely qualitative or quantitative approaches.

According to Creswell and Clark (2011) a mixed method approach implements quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritising the methods equally and keeping the strands independent during analysis and then combining the results during the overall interpretation.

Target Population

The population for this study was all students at the two public universities in Namibia namely; University of

Namibia (Unam) and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).

Sample Size and Sample Size Determination

The simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The sample size for this study was 300 students equally divided between the two universities, comprising 200 current students and 100 were alumni.

Research Instrument

Service quality is positively related to customer satisfaction, and in order to fully capture the determinants of students' satisfaction two data collection instruments were developed. A modified structured questionnaire comprising of dimensions that represent service quality such as reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness was developed to collect quantitative data. A structured questionnaire was appropriate for quantitative data collection because it inquired about provision of computable opinions and information about students' satisfaction with these service quality dimensions.

An interview guide comprising of questions that captured details of students' feelings was used to collect qualitative data. Semi structured interviews were used for qualitative data collection because of its ability to expose hidden feelings, behaviours and attitudes in the respondents. Interviews and panel discussions were held with students at the two universities. These allowed students to express their views on key satisfaction determinants such as affordability and accessibility of education, technological innovation and sophistication, technical and functional support given to students, access to information and learning materials through the library and other means, campus and residential security and the quality of the academic and support staff.

Data collection instrument preparation

For the quantitative data collection instrument, the original 7 degrees Likert scale was examined and modified to 5 degrees scale, of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly agree. The adjustment from the 7 to 5 degrees Likert scale was done in line with Butt (1996) who argues that the 7 degrees Likert scale in the SERVQUAL discourages respondents from answering the questions attentively and precisely as it is perceived to be too long. Prior to the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data a pilot study was conducted in order to check on the clarity, biasness, and any other area of the instrument that needed adjustment so as to increase its suitability to the intended respondents. Consent was obtained from the two universities prior to the collection of data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS, while the qualitative data was analysed using thematic data analysis. Key themes emerging from the panel discussion and interviews were grouped and analysed, to extract the key elements that contribute to student satisfaction in the public universities.

Validity and reliability

The reliability of the SERVQUAL dimensions was evaluated by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficients

across various partitions of the sample. Thereafter, adjustments were made to the instrument which ensured that the instrument measured precisely the expectations, perceptions and satisfaction levels of students with service providers. This increased the validity and reliability of the instrument. For both the quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments validity was checked externally by the adequate sample as well as internally, content validity was checked by exploring participant’s knowledge and understanding of the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL. Finally, the reliability of the modified instrument was again tested via Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. This model has been used in original calibration of SERVQUAL instrument. Validity of the instrument is defined as the capability of the instrument to measure exactly what is created for to measure (Bell, Bryman, & Harle, 2019). A summary of the results from the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient are presented in the table 2 below.

Table 1: Overview of the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient reliability of the servqual dimensions

Dimension	Cronbachα	Description
Tangibility	0.347	Unacceptable
Reliability	0.655	Questionable
Responsiveness	0.300	Unacceptable
Assurance	0.655	Questionable
Empathy	0.496	Unacceptable

These results show that Servqual instrument which was used in this study has excellent reliability, $\alpha = 0.908$, hence the study can safely conclude that the Servqual dimensions instrument that was used in this study precisely measured the students’ perception, expectations, and satisfaction levels regarding the quality of services provided by the public universities in Namibia. Hence the instrument which was modified from the original Servqual according to the set procedure was reliable and valid analysis. This modified Servqual instrument was valid and was proven by choosing appropriate sample from the two public universities. Face validity of the instrument was obtained by collecting the data from the carefully selected sample from the two universities while as content validity was attained by using appropriate set of questions which were revised after the pilot study and this formed a construct appropriate for the planned analysis. Together face and content validity fulfilled the theoretical validity.

4. Results

4.1 Key determinants of student satisfaction

The study sought to determine the key factors that contribute the satisfaction of students in public universities in Namibia. Factors such as affordability and accessibility of education, technological innovation and sophistication, technical and functional support given to students, access to information and learning materials through the library and other platforms, campus and residential security and the quality of the academic staff and support staff were highlighted by students.

4.1.1 Affordability and accessibility of education

Data reveal that students consider affordability and accessibility to quality education as a top priority. These students expressed the feeling that even though they are already at the university sometimes they feel excluded as they cannot access some of the materials and resources that will make their campus life easier and more enjoyable. When asked whether they feel that university education in Namibia is accessible and affordable, the results were as follows: 20% of the participants strongly agreed that in Namibia education in public universities is affordable and accessible, 21% agreed that education in public universities is affordable and accessible, 26% of the participants disagreed with the fact that education is affordable and accessible while as 7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the assertion, 26% remained neutral on this topic. Figure 1 presents the results from the affordability and accessibility of education in public universities in Namibia.

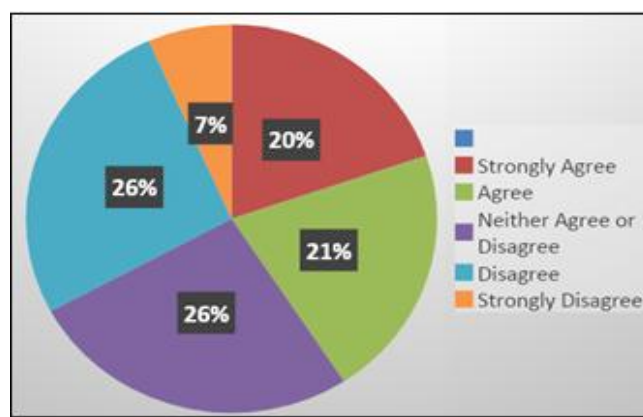


Figure 1: Accessibility and affordability of education in public universities

4.1.2 Quality and Professionalism of academic staff

Students indicated that a key determinant to their satisfaction and happiness is when they have highly qualified and competent lecturers and facilitators who are well versed and comfortable in their fields of specialisation. The study established that, generally the academic staff in public universities in Namibia are well informed and display an acceptable degree of professionalism when dealing with students. when asked to rate the professionalism and the quality of the academic staff; 51.3% of the respondents agreed that the academic staff in these two public universities in Namibia are knowledgeable, professional and competent, while 3.9% strongly agreed, 25% of the respondents were neutral, 13.2% disagreed and 6.6% strongly disagreed with the assertion. Table 2 below presents the feelings and perceptions of students regarding the competency and professionalism of staff. These results show that the level of satisfaction of students due to this construct is good and acceptable.

Table 2: Quality and Professionalism of academic staff

Response	Percent
Strongly agree	3.9%
Agree	51.3%
Nuetral	25%
Disagree	13.2%
strongly disagree	6.6%

4.1.3 Technical and functional support

The findings from the study reveal that students' satisfaction is enhanced when they receive technical and functional support from both the academic and support staff. The study therefore sought to determine whether public universities in Namibia consider and offers personalised assistance to new students and those students with physical disabilities. The results as depicted in Figure 2 show that 25% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that public

universities in Namibia provide personalised services to new students and those students with disabilities, 19.7% of the respondents disagreed with the fact that they do receive sufficient technical and functional support, 23.7% strongly disagreed that they have received support. 18.4% of the participants were in agreement, 13.2% were in strong agreement that they are happy with the technical and functional support that they get from the public universities.

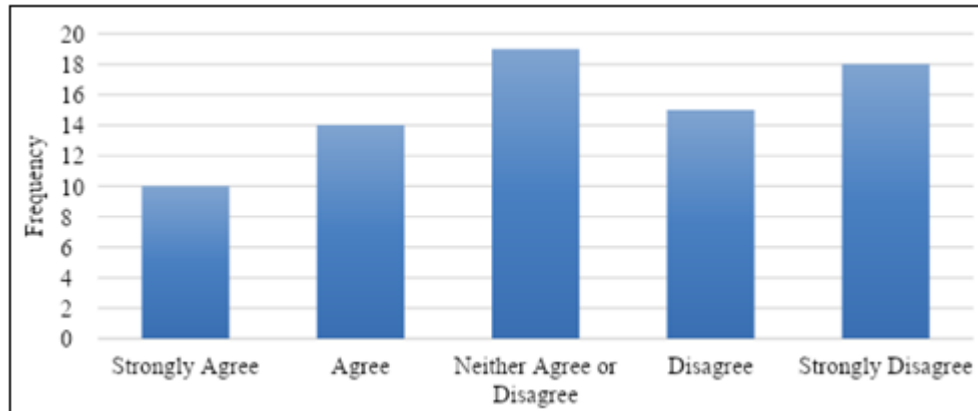


Figure 2: Technical and functional support

It was also highlighted that some of the buildings, more especially the lecture halls, do not have access for those using wheelchairs and with difficulties in walking. Overall students rated this vital component as poor as in this case is not contributing to their satisfaction.

4.1.4 Student safety: campus and residential security

Students highlighted that their safety is a priority and that they are satisfied and happy when they are assured of their campus and residential security. The study then sought to establish the extent to which public universities in Namibia meet the expectations of students, synonymous with student satisfaction in the area of safety and security both on campus and in the residents. As shown in Figure 3, 52.6% of the participants indicated that they were not satisfied with the level of security and safety provided to them by the two public universities in Namibia. The remaining 47.4% admitted that they were satisfied with the level of safety and security measures provided to them. The high rate of student dissatisfaction is of major concern. This construct was, overall rated poor and not contributing to student satisfaction.

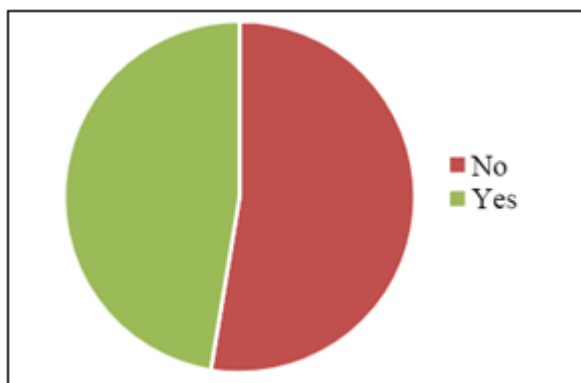


Figure 3: Campus and residential security student security satisfaction

4.1.5 Access to information and learning

Students also highlighted that another key determinant to their satisfaction with campus management is access to information and learning. Given the importance of this area, students were then asked to rate on a scale of one to five the effectiveness and efficiency of the two public universities in providing platforms for students to access information and learning materials; whereby 1= very poor, 2= poor, 3=neutral, 4= good, 5= excellent: 26% of the participants indicated that the level of effectiveness and efficiency in this area is very poor while as 28% indicated it as poor, 19% of the respondents rated 3, which places them in the neutral category and the same percentage of respondents rated 4, to indicate that the level of responsiveness is good, 8% of the participants rated 5, to indicate that the level of level of effectiveness and efficiency in this area is excellent and these universities are doing an excellent job.

5. Discussion of the Results

The study found that education affordability and accessibility is one of the key determinants of student satisfaction in public universities in Namibia. However, in terms of how this construct is being met in these universities it was pointed out clearly that education in public universities in Namibia is too expensive in terms of tuition fees, accommodation, upkeep and study materials. Brännback (1999) argues that, building capacity is critical for public services provision and it requires building production volumes by upgrading technology, capacity and other related infrastructures amongst other things, to provide public goods at lower production costs and lower prices for a large market and only then can public institutions satisfy the demands of the public.

The study found that another key contributor to students' satisfaction is the technological innovation and

sophistication of the systems found in place and within the university systems. Modern students are technological savvy and information is right on their fingertips hence these students appreciate systems that challenge their mind, both academically and socially to keep abreast with the technological advancement taking place in the rest of the world. They do not want to be left out with outdated systems as this will make them less competitive in the market upon graduating. Proper planning and strategy of where and when to apply new technology is essential in this process. Universities face an urgent need for the new technology to replace existing ones. Universities need to utilise experience and expertise outside their own domain in order to improve their products and services in order to meet the expectations of students.

The study also found that students' satisfaction is determined by access to information and learning materials through the library and other platforms. Students value effective communication from the university's management informing them about developments taking place within the university especially concerning those areas that have a direct impact on their lives. These sentiments are also supported by Latyshov, Syaglova and Oyner (2015) who argue that creating a customer-centric organisation that fully satisfies customers requires a total transformation of internal business processes so that the activities of the entire organisation are subject to the objectives of understating.

Student satisfaction is determined by the quality of the academic and support staff that facilitate lectures and offer other learning related services. Kotler (2000) argues that consumers favour products that offer the best quality, best performance, or innovative features. In the case of universities this assurance can only be attained by providing competent and experienced personnel to the students which will ensure and guarantee them of the quality of services that they will receive. Solomon (2012), argues that, the key to achieving organisational goals and satisfying customers rests upon the ability of an organisation to be more effective than its competitors in creating, communicating and delivering customer value to its chosen target markets. Public universities need to embrace this customer centric approach in order to meet or exceed the expectations of students. This assertion is supported by Carpenter, Gebhard and Sherry (2014) who argue that the success of an organisation depends on its ability to coax consumers into buying its products and this is only achieved by being customer-centric whereby all the dimensions of service quality are attended to. The universities need to be proactive in persuading its potential students locally and abroad by being more caring and creating an enabling environment that is focused on service quality.

6. Conclusion, Limitations and Recommendations

The introduction of a customer service charter is critical for enhancing student orientation within the university which eventually will lead to student satisfaction. Charters provide a good framework to bring about a cultural change towards better customer orientation and satisfaction. All organisations, including public entities require culture, process and procedural changes in their way of doing

business, if they intend to become customer oriented. This study has provided a snapshot of some of the key determinants of the overall student satisfaction. Thus, the findings from this study provide a framework that can be used by university administrators and managers when reviewing the current systems, developing and innovating university priorities, and planning and allocation of future resources to better achieve higher levels of student satisfaction in Namibia's public education.

A notable challenge of the study was the lack of adequate literature on the subject matter in the Namibian context, to generously inform the researchers and make a comprehensive reflection and comparison. Initially, the study had included management staff however, some issues were being treated as being too sensitive and not for public consumption, therefore it was very hard to gather information that would have generously informed the study and make a comprehensive reflection. As such, the aforesaid group was removed from the study. On the other hand, students wanted to politicise each and every challenge that the universities are facing. Despite these limitations, the study generated useful information towards the problem under investigation – the key determinants of students' satisfaction in the public universities in Namibia.

The practical and management implications of the study is that public universities in Namibia should invest more in students' orientation efforts to ensure that there is better communication between university management and students in matters regarding the cost and accessibility of education, the technical and functional support that is available to students and there should be a collective approach when dealing with campus and residential security matters. These efforts can be through the establishment of customer contact centers, automation of processes and the adoption of best practices. Future research areas may consider a longitudinal study which would provide a basis for more informed interpretations. Future studies should include perspectives from the management, faculty and students to get a comprehensive insight.

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