

Factors Affecting the Academic Performance of Students

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Abstract

Evaluation of the student's academic experience is important to meet the goal of any educational institution in the world. It refers to the factors that affect the academic performance of students. The purpose of this study was to examine students' experiences regarding faculty members, faculty facility, and relationships to identify factors that affect student satisfaction. 355 students at a university in Rwanda and a university in Ghana (aged 22.83 years; SD = 2.52 years, range 18-42 Years) were examined with regard to the academic experiences, by the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) instrument. The sample consisted of 180 (50.70 %) females and 173 (48.73 %) males, enrolled in the bachelor's classification programme of the two different universities of both countries: Rwanda and Ghana. The results of this research study showed a moderate level of student's experiences by the two groups regarding faculty members and faculty facility. Furthermore, the subjects did not show high level of the relationship with the university in general. The results also showed a positive relationship between "being interested in university" and "feeling to attend the same institution if starting again". Both groups of students evaluated their experiences with faculty members, faculty facility, and relationship with the university regarding faculty, administrative staff, and students at a moderate level. The positive evaluation and interest in the university are related to the positive feeling for the decision to enroll.

Keywords: faculty members, faculty facility, relationship, academic performance

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1. Introduction

Academic result of the students has been paid more attention by the parents of learners, faculty members, political decision-makers and organizers (MeenuDev 2016). Students' performance plays an important role in the development of a country, which needs the best expert and manager to provide the country with the social and economic development (Olufemi et al. 2018; Norhidayah et al. 2009). Education as a "profitable industry" is growing and has the prime goal to produce and present the high-quality level of education, which can deliver the well-educated and skillful students, who are seeking further education or decent jobs (AL-Muslimawi & Hamid 2019). In this context, universities are worthwhile institutions that can be considered as an important element for the advancement of a society and development of a country (Shirazi, 2017).

In terms of students' academic performance in the most research study, it refers to figuring out the factors that can affect students' performance at an educational institution. It was carried out on factors such as gender differences, teaching style, educational background of teachers, class situation and environment, socio-economic issues and educational situation of family. The finding of study can also vary from place to place with regard to its special rule issues from region to region and cities (Mushtaq & Khan 2012). The home environment plays an important role in academic performance. It has influences on the "psychological", "emotional", "social" and "economic" situation of students in their daily life (Mushtaq & Khan 2012; Ajila & Olutola 2000). Family structure as the first socializing member in an individual's life can affect the individual (Ajila & Olutola 2000). The environment, which students are involved in, can greatly influence individual's performance (Ichado 1998). The main objective of research question on academic performance in a research study is to find out internal and external factors that affect educational institutions' goal as academic performance. This can help institutions, students and environment to work on the topics that can contribute to students' satisfaction to achieve the academic goal. Academic performance is also affected by several factors, such as sex, age, study habits, discipline, class attendance, contribution of a faculty in academic goal, time management, socialization, personality, socio-economic status, parents' level in education (Arora & Singh 2017). They also concluded that teaching effectiveness as the most significant factor among all five factors (teaching effectiveness, study habits, distraction factors, personality traits and family environment). AL-Muslimawi & Hamid (2019) reported that the academic performance of students is one of the primary aims of university and it refers to socio-economic, psychological and environmental factors. They conducted a study based on research questions, which examined outside influences and influences within the class that can impact the academic performance of students. They found that external factors (extracurricular activities, family problems, work and financial issues, social and other problems) and internal factors (competence and aptitude, class schedule, class size, environment, textbooks and exam systems, learning facilities and technology) can influence positively and negatively the academic performance of students. Moreover,

Olufemi et al. (2018) mentioned that academic performance is affected by several factors as students' personal factor, study habits factor, home-related factor, school factor and lecturer factor.

Evaluation of the students' educational experiences and private life experiences play an important role for students and universities to know the students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, which related to the students' academic performance (Alleyne et al. 2010). The research on the question whether the students studying at an educational institute are satisfied or dissatisfied is important for the progress of academic programmes and for the willingness and motivation of students. Students are as a kind of university product, who receive the university service facilities. Because of that, they can represent the university in the effectiveness and usefulness programmes of education in the society. Therefore, any educational institute should develop an educational programme for creating a reliable and supportive environment to realize academic satisfaction. This issue is not only effective in the academic performance of students, but also it is important for the survival of educational institute in a competitive environment (Shirazi 2017).

It is the way to achieve success in education to examine the factors that contribute to student satisfaction. According to the research study by Dhaqane & Afrah (2016), they examined the role of satisfaction in students' academic performance. They found a strong relationship between satisfaction and academic performance. They also found that the satisfaction of students in their education promotes both academic achievement and retention. Furthermore, they reported that the level of lecturer's performance, student-lecturer interaction, learning environment as well as communication skills situation are main factors that promote academic performance as the related internal factors in education.

Academic achievement is one of the major factors in hiring employees by employers. It says especially for the fresh graduates. Thus, students put the greatest effort in their education to obtain good grades for their future career opportunities and fulfil the employer's demand. Hence, it is a need process to examine the root causes for poor and good academic performance of the students (Olufemi et al. 2018). Education is one of the commanding aspects that leads to inclusive growth and improvement of the individuals, community and nation as a whole (Gonfa 2020). Thus, good education and academic performance are an interested goal that is considered not only by educational institutions, but also by individuals, society and political decision-makers as it refers to the development of a country.

The present research study focused on two different universities in two countries: Rwanda and Ghana. The main goal of this research was to compare these universities, with regard to the student experiences, identify factors affecting students' performance. To achieve this goal, a versatile tool (College Student Experiences Questionnaire) was conducted among students from these universities.

2. Methods

Sample

Three hundred and fifty –five students randomly participated in this study, 250 (70.42 %) of a university in Ghana and 105 (29.58 %) of a university in Rwanda. The sample¹ consisted of 180 (50.70 %) females and 173 (48.73 %) males, in the age range of 18-42 years (average age, 22.83 years; SD = 2.52 years). Of the participants, 12 (3.38 %) were reported to be in a committed relationship, and 343 (96.62 %) were single. The participants were enrolled in bachelor's classification programme. The majority of the students 260 (73.24 %) reported having financial support from parents rating "all or nearby all", followed by 40 (11.40 %) from scholarship grants rating "more than half", and also 40 (11.40 %) from loan rating "all or nearby all".

¹Missing cases may have been excluded, so missing or missing cases were not considered. This applies to all subsequent evaluations.

Procedure

Data collection took place by means of an anonymous survey tool, College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). The instrument was distributed to students at the above-mentioned universities. Subjects were briefly explained the content and process of examination, referred to the voluntary nature of participation. In the case the respondents were willing to participate in the study, a date has been agreed for the processing of questionnaires. All statistical procedures were performed using the SPSS data analysis system for Windows. In the process, a two-sided significance test was performed. The level of significance was set at $P < 0.05$. Furthermore, the correlations based on Pearson were conducted and tested for significance.

Research instrument

College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)

The CSEQ (Pace & Kuh 1998) is one of the largest surveys, which makes asking many behavior-based questions about how students spend their time at college with faculty and friends. It focuses on social and cultural activities, extracurricular activities, employment and campus facilities. The CSEQ asks some special sections "background information", "sociodemographic characters", "interaction with faculty and other students", such as "experiences

with faculty members” (rating: very often = 1, often = 2, occasionally = 3, never = 4), “experiences with campus facility” (rating: very often = 1, often = 2, occasionally = 3, never = 4), “opinions about the college or university” (rating: I am enthusiastic = 1, I like it = 2, I am more or less neutral about it = 3, I don’t like it = 4), “attending again the same institution if starting again” (rating: yes, definitely = 1, probably yes = 2, probably no = 3, no, definitely = 4), “the college environment” (rating: strong emphasis 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 weak emphasis) and “relations with people at the institution” with regard to the relationships with other students (rating: supportive, sense of belonging 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 competitive, uninvolved, sense of alienation), with regard to the relationships with administrative personnel and offices (rating: helpful, considerate, flexible 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 rigid, impersonal, bound by regulations) and with regard to the relationships with faculty members (rating: approachable, helpful, understanding, encouraging 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 remote, discouraging, unsympathetic). It also evaluates the academic grade of students, as A = 1, A -, B+ = 2, B = 3, B -, C+ = 4, C, C -, or lower = 5). The information of this questionnaire can help the members of educational institutions such as administration office, students Centre, faculty members and others to improve the actual condition that can contribute to the quality of institution. In the context of the research interest in the present study, special items of this questionnaire were selected, which were arranged with evaluation scales for statistical analysis.

3. Results

In the present research study, the two groups of students at the two universities in Rwanda (RW) and Ghana (GH) were examined regarding interaction with faculty and other students, and academic satisfaction. Student experiences with faculty members and student experiences with faculty facility of the CSEQ were analyzed. There was no significant difference between the two groups of students regarding experiences with faculty members ($p = .454$) and regarding experiences with faculty facility ($p = .128$). The evaluations announced at a moderate level of experiences by the two groups. Furthermore, the subjects' relationship in general with regard to the relationship with other students, relationship with administrative personnel and offices and relationship with faculty members were asked. When calculating the mean values, it was noticeable that there was a significant difference between the two groups of participants in this study ($p = .000$). The subjects did not show a high level of relationship with the university in general (table 1).

Table 1. The Mean score of college student experiences and relationship based on RW and GH

N = 355	CSEQ		
	M (SD)	T	p
College student experiences with faculty members:			
GH	2.59 (.40)	.75	.454
RW	2.56 (.34)		
College student experiences with faculty facility:			
GH	2.77 (.54)	1.53	.128
RW	2.69 (.40)		
Relationship in general			
GH	3.12 (.80)	-6.97	.000
RW	3.93 (1.06)		

Regarding evaluation of the question “how do you like your college?” there was no significant difference between the two examined groups ($p = .671$). By the way, the sample of groups has shown a similarly “likely” rating (Figure 1). Furthermore, the subjects were asked “if you could start again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?” The result showed a rating between “probably yes” and “probably no” (Figure 2).

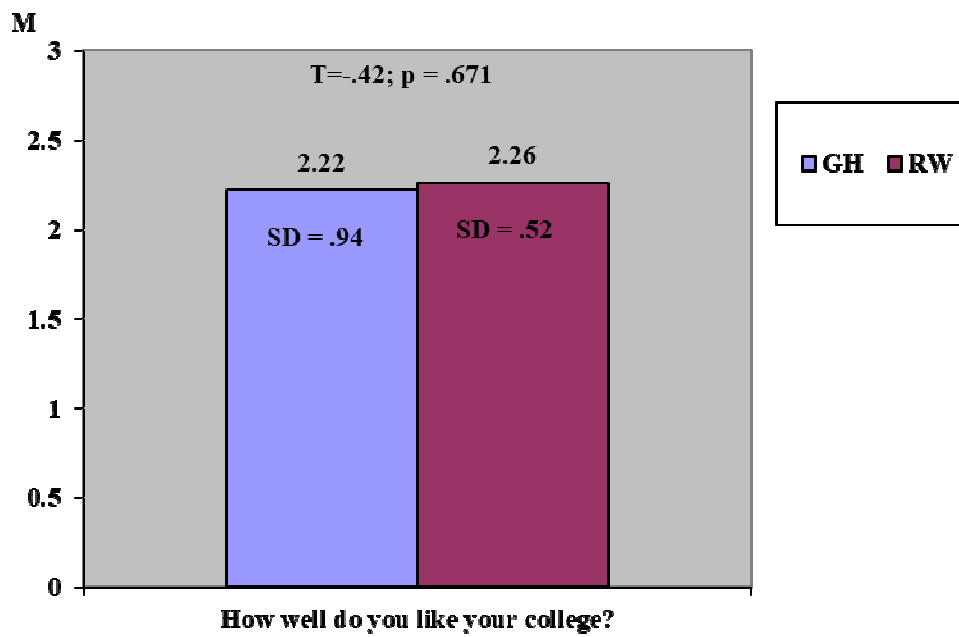


Figure 1. Interest in college

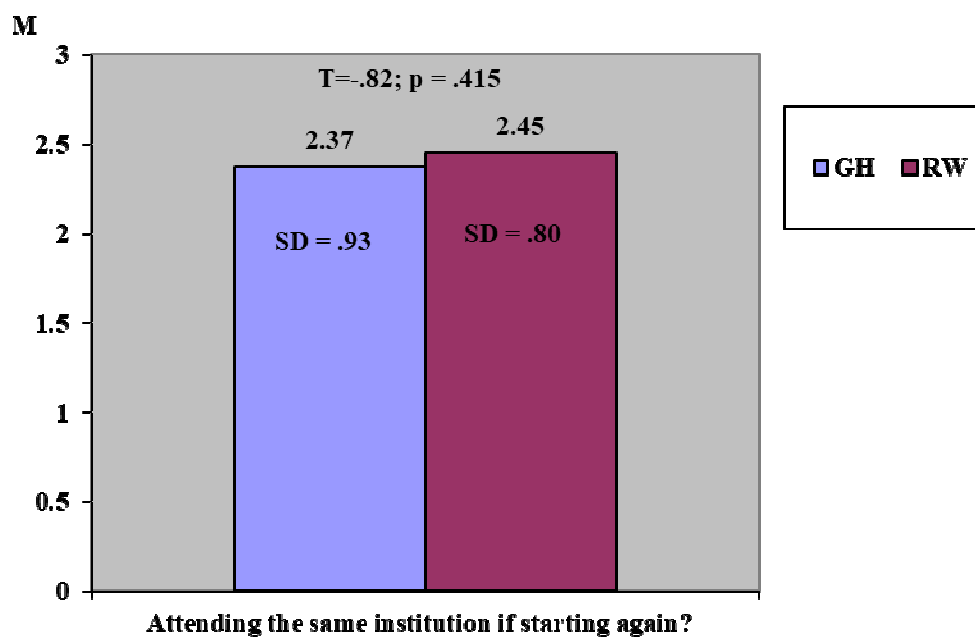


Figure 2. Interest in enrolment

The correlative relationships between the items “how do you like your college” and “if you could start again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending” was analyzed in this study. The correlation analysis showed a significant correlation between the two items ($r = .62$, $P = .000$) for the students of GH and ($r = .51$, $P = .000$) for the students of RW. The higher was the interest in and satisfaction with their college, the greater was the feeling of interest in enrollment in the same institution.

The role of faculty members can be important to evaluate the satisfaction of students at the university. However, significant tendentially negative correlative relationship was found between the items “experiences with faculty members” and “how do you like your college” ($r = -.11$, $P = .073$) for the students of GH and significant positive correlative relationship ($r = .26$, $P = .009$) for the students of RW. It means that the situation and the process of interaction may make the outcome different.

Furthermore, the correlative relationships between the items “experiences with faculty members” and “if

you could start again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending” was analyzed. The result showed a significant negative correlative relationship between the experiences with faculty members and the feeling of interest in choosing the same institution when the subjects start studying again ($r = -.26, P = .000$) for the students of GH and significant tendentially positive correlative relationship ($r = .18, P = .082$) for the students of RW.

In the evaluation of correlation between the items “relationship in general” with regard to the relationship with other students, relationship with administrative personnel and offices and relationship with faculty members and “if you could start again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending”, it was pointed out a significant negative correlation ($r = -.36; p = .000$) for the student of RW only. The better relationship at the university correlates with the recognition of the effectiveness of the institution.

In the present study, the students of GH rated their academic grade with a mean value of $M = 2.58$; $SD = .82$ and the students of RW also rated their academic grade with a mean value of $M = 2.85$; $SD = 1.12$. There was also a significant difference between the two groups ($p = .031$) (Figure 3). The evaluation of the academic grade refers to A = 1, A - , B+ = 2, B = 3, B - , C+ = 4, C, C - , or lower = 5.

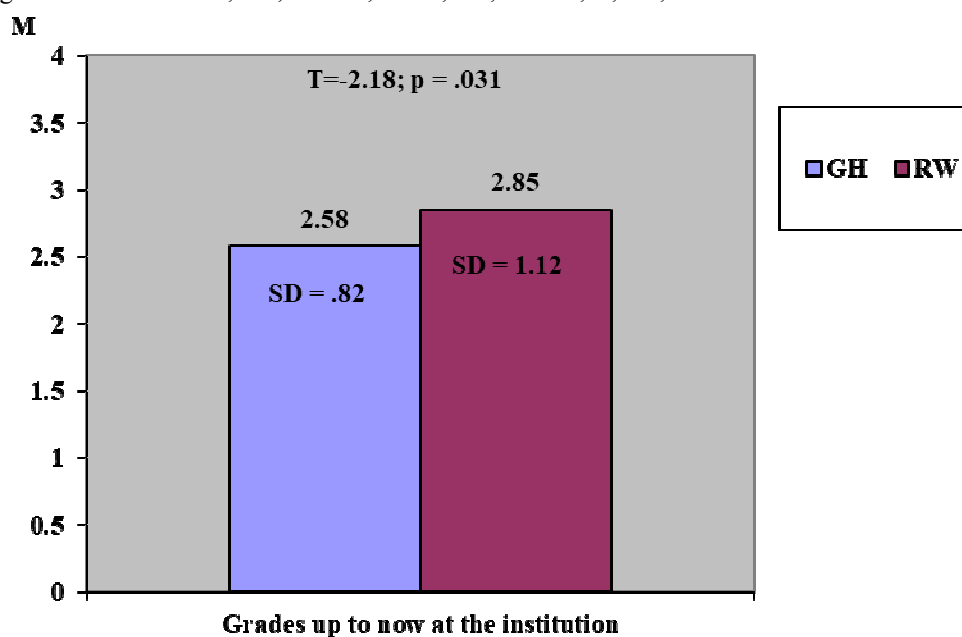


Figure 3: Students' academic grade

4. Discussion

In the present study, the students at a university in Rwanda and a university in Ghana were examined regarding interaction with faculty and other students, and academic satisfaction by the survey tool College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to compare these two universities, with regard to the student experiences, identifying factors affecting students' satisfaction. Three hundred and fifty –five students randomly participated in this study. The participants were enrolled in the bachelor's classification programme of different Departments.

The study showed that both two groups evaluated the experiences with faculty members (course, academic program, class project, career plans, feedback, communication outside of class, comments and criticisms about academic performance, work on instructor's expectations and standards, research project), experiences with faculty facility (campus lounge, cultural or social event, lecture or panel discussion, campus learning lab or center, campus recreational facilities, club, intercollegiate, sport facility) and relationship with university with regard to the faculty and administration staff, and students at a moderate level. These factors among other factors as study of AL-Muslimawi & Hamid, 2019; Olufemi, et al. (2018); Dhaqane & Afrah (2016) showed, can influence the academic performance of students. The level of interest in the university was evaluated tendentially to “likely” in this study. The satisfaction of students in communication, learning facilities, and proper guidance plays an important role to achieve academic goal as Mushtaq & Khan (2012) reported in their study, based on different studies. In this context, it should be noted that higher student satisfaction may be associated with higher university quality in various areas, such as teaching quality, service quality, administration process and relationship opportunity (Alleyne et al. 2010). As the study by (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012) showed, the present study also indicated that the evaluation of experiences with the faculty and their relationship to the degree of interest in studying or the feeling of studying again in the same place

can be evaluated differently from institute to institute. As Schertzer & Schertzer (2004); Shirazi, (2017); Dhaqane & Afrah (2016) reported that student satisfaction plays an important role in influencing the enrollment of new students, retaining current students, and surviving universities in a competitive environment in higher education that attracts students, the result of the present study showed a positive correlation between the degree of interest in the institute and the feeling of attending the same institute in the case of starting again to study. It means that satisfaction and dissatisfaction with service quality in related cases can have an impact on any educational institution's reputation for student enrollment and retention.

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