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Relationship between economic status of students and inter-university transfers among private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper aims to establish the relationship between students' economic status and mobility in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed to accomplish this objective by targeting 26 registered private universities (including private university constituents where mobility rate records are too high) in Nairobi County, Kenya. A sample of 180 private university students and nine registrars was obtained using a multi-stage sampling technique at three different stages. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used in analysing the collected data, from which descriptive statistics such as mean scores, percentages, standard deviation, and linear regression were computed. This study found that economic status does not influence student mobility in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. This study recommends the involvement of government agencies, including the Ministry of Education (MOE), Kenya Universities and Colleges Placement Service (KUCCPS), Commission for University Education (CUE), and Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), to figure out the origin of this mobility and effectively control the alarming student mobility cases.

Key terms: Student mobility, economic status, income, financial ability, expenditure.

INTRODUCTION

Student transfer from one academic institution to another or from one academic program to another is referred to as student mobility (Raghuram, 2013). According to Anderson and Bhati (2012), student mobility is the frequency with which students switch between communities of schools. However, this essay uses the idea that student mobility is a phenomenon that occurs when they transfer to another academic institution to pursue higher education. According to a study by Mogambi (2013), students with poor socio-economic levels are more likely to choose less expensive higher education institutions over ones of greater calibre. According to Mogambi (2013), the relationship between poverty and mobility is complex, and rather than just affecting it, poverty also appears to cohabit with it. In a different study, Marmot (2014) discovered that a sizable proportion of mid-school year pupils whose households were below the poverty line transferred to other institutions. This was confirmed by the 2008–2009 U.S. Census results. Similarly, Ihrke et al. (2011) demonstrate that just 10.7percent of those who live 1.6 times above the poverty line migrated, while 26.5 per cent of those who are the poorest of the poor moved. These conclusions are instructive for this study because they give a foundation for understanding how the idea of financial status impacts choice and mobility. However, the studies mentioned above do not look at mobility in terms of regional private universities, which is what this study will investigate. Moved above the poverty level. These findings are useful for this study because they give a basis for comprehending how the idea of financial status influences choice and mobility.

Nevertheless, the economic status of an individual does affect their making of decisions. In the present study's background, an individual's economic status refers to their own or their family's [an individual's or family's] financial ability resulting from income and occupation (Choudaha & DeWit, 2015). This financial position is thought to perpetuate an individual's social class and will generally contribute to transmitting cultural elements such as perceptive functioning that contribute to commercial success. In addition, offspring may inherit social group memberships that enhance their income and ownership of property. This situation ensures that children of high-status families enjoy a superior education compared to children of a lower status (Chiswick & Miller, 2011). Various studies have been conducted, including; Chiswick & Miller, 2011) on factors influencing students' choice of public universities; Njuguna (2013) on cross-border higher education; Woldegiorgis (2015) on current trends and prospects for student mobility have shown that cross-border students' mobility may be informed by factors such as institutional, social-economic and personal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lareau (2013) opines that socio-economic status is categorised into three groups thus: high, middle, and low. Three variables are considered when classifying families or individuals into these categories. They include income, education, and occupation. Moreover, there appears to be a nexus between low income and little education and a variety of physical and mental health problems among the low-income group. According to Lareau (2013), middle-class parents can use concerted cultivation, where they become active participants in their children's education, to develop a sense of power through active engagement. Further, Laureau (2013) suggests that low-income groups rarely actively engage in children's education, resulting in the sense of constraint.

Income has been universally used as a measure of the economic status of an individual in society. The Gini Coefficient has been used widely worldwide to measure income inequality, where a score of 0 suggests perfect equality and 1 means perfect inequality (Choudaha & DeWit, 2015). According to Choudaha and DeWit (2015), low-income earners concentrate on meeting immediate needs and rarely strive not to accrue wealth that their offspring could inherit. This situation perpetuates inequality. Conversely, higher-income families can build up resources and concentrate on meeting immediate needs while enjoying luxuries. According to Bjorklund and Jantti (2014), education is a neutraliser of this disparity since it provides an opportunity for persons from both income levels to acquire the skills necessary for employment.

Family income may be the total wages, salaries, profits, and rents received by family members (Simiyu, 2001). Other family income sources can also include monetary benefits from self-employment, social security schemes, retirement benefits, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, or familial financial assistance. In addition, family income may be described as relative or absolute. When income is absolute, the rate of consumption increases as the income level increases. However, this increase in consumption is not always the same as the increase in income (Keynes, 1936). Relative income may be the total of people or family's savings and expenditures about their total income. According to Marmot (2014), inadequate resources contribute significantly to a student's decision-making concerning enrolment into university. Students in such circumstances are hesitant to be mobile because they fear losing financial support from beneficiaries or part-time employment. When such students receive financial support from funding institutions, the financial burden is somewhat alleviated, and they are more able to settle down in their studies (Marmot, 2014).

A study by Schafft and Prins (2009), through a review of past studies, examined various empirical studies to determine residential mobility and student transiency in non-urban settings. The study dwelt on the community setting in which transience happens. This assumed that many studies on this issue are analytically restricted by specific outcomes or the confines of the classroom or school. The research explored issues regarding the movement of people in rural areas, where they moved to, and what directed their decision to move. Based on empirical data on student transience in roughly three hundred upstate New York rural districts, Schafft and Prins (2009) found that the poorer the local area, the high the mobility. They refer to "rural mobility sheds" to create an analogy with how several environmental forces and local topographical features influence the amount and movement of water in the territory adjacent to a water body.

According to Choudaha and DeWit (2015), good students' economic status was found to cause international mobility from institutions of low profile to high profile and expensive, especially those in developed countries such as Europe and the U.S.A. For instance, a study by Choudaha and DeWit (2015) shows that there was an increase in contributions made by international students from $ 24 billion in 2013 to $ 27 billion in 2014, $27 billion to the U.S.A economy. This growth in student population has been attributed to the entry of students from upper-middle-income economies and countries that provide their citizens with substantial scholarships in a national program. Pull factors associated with incoming students include the higher value of education, improved living surroundings, and robust labour market demand, which have acted as motivations for the expanded student mobility into the USA (Schafft & Prins, 2009).

According to Schafft & Prins (2009), countries with a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) report having families with above-average incomes. Conversely, students from poor countries have fewer families that earn above-average incomes. This reality informs the reports given by students regarding parents having higher than average income levels, which is also noticeable in high GDP countries. In distinction, fewer reports were made by students indicating that their parents possessed high-income levels. This was associated with different incentives that influence short-term mobility in different universities.

Many studies have shown that students are becoming more aware of the cost of the money they invest when choosing to become internationally mobile (Anderson & Bhati, 2012; Clavel, 2015; Paton, 2014). According to Anderson and Bhati (2012), for instance, students consider price-related matters more serious than other factors impelling intercontinental students' university selection. Moreover, in India, more students chose Singaporean institutions as a replacement for Australian ones since they found the fees to be lower in Singapore than in Australia. For this same reason, the number of international students choosing the UK decreased (Paton, 2014). Choudaha and DeWit (2015) investigated the determinants of cross-country mobility of students between one hundred and three developing countries. The study established that surplus demand for post-secondary education was the dominant factor. This surplus demand for places in tertiary institutions was measured by the proportion of secondary students desiring to enrol in higher

institutions and the number of institutions available. The study further identified English-language skills, colonial links, and per capita income as significant factors determining students' movement. A similar finding was also made by Cummins (1984), who established that the proportion of the number of secondary institutions' learners to the secondary population age group showed a positive correlation with student mobility. Moreover, studies have demonstrated that children from little-income families were less likely to enter a high-status college, spreading this phenomenon across countries.

Kishun (2011) analysed developments in student mobility within the African continent. This baseline survey captured trends in Egypt, Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Mauritius, Tanzania, Nigeria, Mozambique, South Africa, and Senegal. The study found that economic and systemic issues hamper the growth of the tertiary education sector in African countries. The consequence is that limited funding results in a compromised quality of education in these countries. As a result of these compromised education standards, many students have opted to move from one country to another, seeking quality education. Locally, university students' mobility has thrived in the face of exponential growth in the demand for higher education, particularly in East Africa. Despite political challenges and civil wars in some countries bordering Kenya, there have been momentous advancements in higher education infrastructure. Njuguna and Itegi (2013) detected that Kenya hosts a reasonable number of students from neighbouring countries. The researchers recommend establishing a structured and coordinated system to augment the advantages of cross-border higher education prospects for the country and the region. However, there is a need to reconsider the pull factors that influence students' mobility across countries in the region. Njuguna and Itegi (2013) further establish several pull factors, including flexible admission policies, inexpensive tuition fees, parental/sponsor preference, nearness to home, and simple immigration processes that motivate foreign students to study in Kenya.

According to Handel (2013), many community colleges enrol many students from low-income families who choose to transfer from institutions that charge a higher tuition fee. Other categories of students who also do most transfers into low-cost community colleges include African American, Latino, and single-parent students (Handel, 2013). This mobility trend is mainly attributed to the affordability of community colleges. According to Handel (2013), tuition and fees in community colleges are approximately 36.2 per cent less than in the average four-year college. However, because of a lack of proper planning, most parents have inadequate investments in their children's education. Sallie-Mae (2014) stated that only 38 per cent of families agreed they had a plan to pay for all four years of college expenses. Additionally, families that planned to pay for college spent 30 per cent more than non-planners. Students and parents today are confronted with high tuition costs, a lagging economy, and competition for jobs. These are why students are more likely to attend a community college and transfer from other costly institutions.

To compensate for the wanting economic status among students, institutions sometimes offer (either on themselves or through third parties) scholarships for students' higher education. Scholarships enhance students' success in higher education through persistence (i.e., continued enrolment in the institution), progression (i.e., successful accrual of credit hours), and timely graduation. Financial aid administration to students has been shown to facilitate such student success in many countries (Ganem & Manasse, 2011). Monetary support for higher education consists of both need-based and merit-based aid, such as grants, loans, tuition remission, and private or institutional scholarships.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study examined the relationship between students' economic status and students' choice of mobility from one university to another in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. The results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Student's Economic Status

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA	Total	Mean	Std.

								Dev.
My University has greater availability of financial aid (bursaries, scholarships, work-study programmes)	13 (7.9)	24 (14.5)	24 (14.5)	65 (39.4)	39 (23.6)	165 (100)	3.56	1.22
My current university fees is affordable	13 (7.9)	13 (7.9)	12 (7.3)	110 (66.7)	17 (10.3)	165 (100)	3.64	1.04
There is flexibility of tuition fees payment arrangements in the university	12 (7.3)	26 (15.8)	20 (12.1)	82 (49.7)	25 (15.2)	165 (100)	3.50	1.15
The cost of living around the university is affordable	25 (15.2)	29 (17.6)	16 (9.7)	65 (39.4)	30 (18.2)	165 (100)	3.28	1.36
There is greater availability of scholarship opportunities in the university	38 (23)	41 (24.8)	33 (20)	37 (22.4)	16 (9.7)	165 (100)	2.71	1.31
Overall							3.34	0.85

Most of the student respondents agreed with the statement that their university has greater availability of financial aid (bursaries, scholarships, work-study programs). Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 63 per cent, with 39.4 per cent agreeing and 23.6 per cent strongly agreeing. Of the respondents, the proportion who disagreed with the statement was 22.4 per cent. About 14.5 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that their university has greater availability of financial aid (bursaries, scholarships, work-study programs) was 3.56, with a standard deviation of 1.22.

Most students also agreed with the statement that their university fees are affordable. Those who agreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 77 per cent, with 66.7 per cent agreeing and an additional 10.3 per cent strongly agreeing. Of respondents, the proportion who disagreed with the statement was 15.8 per cent. About 7.3 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, an average student rating of the statement that their university fees were affordable was 3.64, with a standard deviation of 1.04. Most of the student respondents agreed with the statement that there is flexibility in tuition fee payment arrangements at their university. Those who agreed with the statement comprised 64.9 per cent, with 49.7 per cent agreeing and 15.2 per cent strongly agreeing. The proportion of respondents who disagreed with the statement was cumulative at 23.1 per cent. About 12.1 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that there is flexibility in tuition fee payment arrangements in their university was 3.5, with a standard deviation of 1.15.

Most of the student respondents agreed with the statement that the cost of living around their university is affordable. Those who agreed with the statement comprised 57.6 per cent, with 39.4 per cent agreeing and 18.2 per cent strongly agreeing. The proportion of respondents who disagreed with the

statement was 32.8 per cent. About 9.7 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, an average student rating of the statement that the cost of living around their university is affordable was 3.28, with a standard deviation of 1.36. Most of the student respondents disagreed with the statement that there is greater availability of scholarship opportunities in their university. Those who disagreed with the statement comprised a cumulative of 47.8 per cent, with 24.8 per cent and 23 per cent strongly disagreeing. Of respondents, the proportion who agreed with the statement was 32.1 per cent. About 20 per cent were undecided. On a scale of 1 - 5, the average student rating of the statement that there is greater availability of scholarship opportunities in their university was 2.71, with a standard deviation of 1.31. Most of the students' ratings on the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status ranged 3 – 4 (49.7%) and 4 -5 (27.9%), as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' Rating on the Attractiveness of their Universities to their Economic Status

Scores	Frequency	Percentage
1-1.99	17	10.3%
2-2.99	20	12.1%
3-3.99	82	49.7%
4-5	46	27.9%
Total	165	100.0%

The overall students' rating on the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status (on a scale of 1 – 5) was a mean of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.85. To figure out if there was a significant difference in the student's rating of their university's attractiveness to their economic status, analysis was done using an independent samples t-test. The results are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. T-test Results for the Comparison of Students' Rating on the Attractiveness of their Universities to their Economic Status between those willing and those not willing to Transfer

Group	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
No (not willing)	131	3.362	0.072	0.825	3.219	3.504
Yes (willing)	34	3.241	0.163	0.948	2.910	3.572
Combined	165	3.337	0.066	0.850	3.206	3.468

Note: Mean difference = 0.121; Standard error = 0.164; P-value = 0.463; t = 0.737; df = 163

The mean difference in the scores on students' rating of the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status (between those willing to transfer and those not willing) was computed as 0.121. The mean difference is depicted in Figure 1.

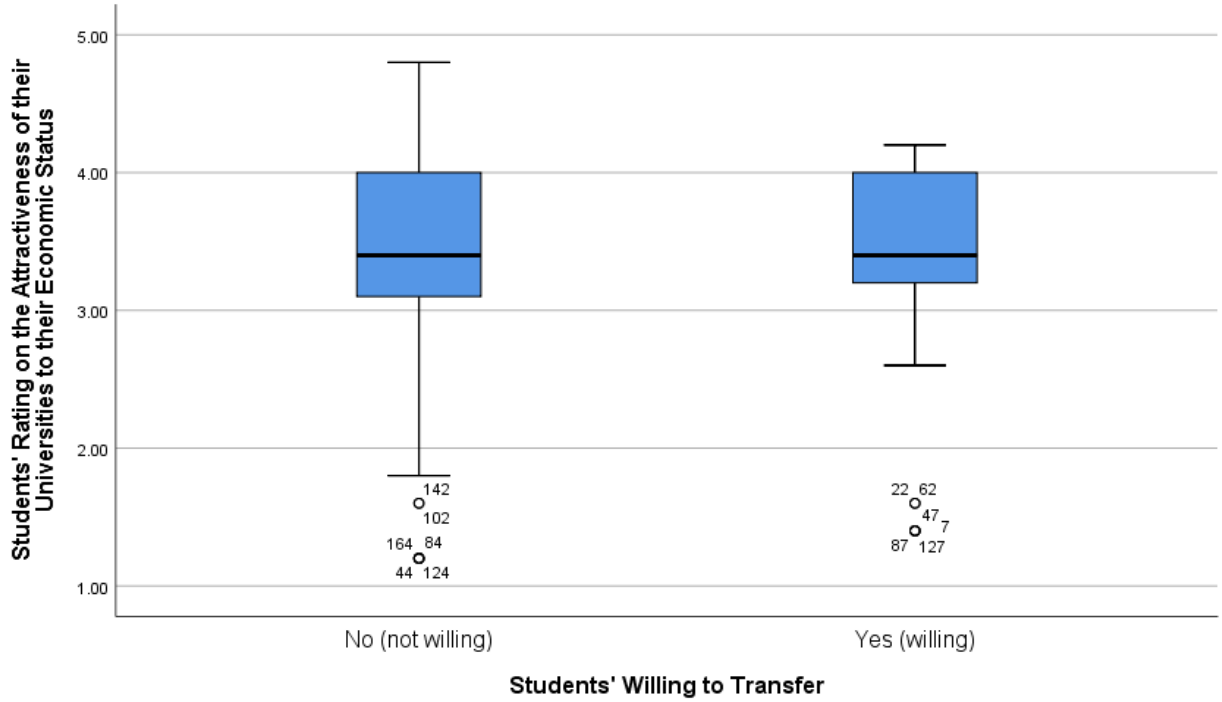

Figure 1. Comparison of Students' Rating on the Attractiveness of their Universities to their Economic Status between those willing and those not willing to Transfer

The calculated t-value of 0.737 at 163 degrees of freedom indicates that the mean difference at the 5 per cent level (p=0.463) was not statistically significant. This implies that economic status does not influence student mobility in private universities in Nairobi, Kenya.

Test of Hypothesis (H_o) on the Influence of Economic Status on Student Mobility

A null hypothesis, "H_o: Economic status does not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," was formulated and tested using binary logistic regression. The choice of binary logistic regression was justified because the dependent variable (willingness and non-willingness to transfer from one institution to another) was binary. Table 4 shows the test results.

Table 4. Influence of Economic Status on Student Mobility in Private Universities

Willingness to transfer	Coef.	Std. Err.	Z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Economic status	-0.163	0.221	-0.740	0.460	-0.595	0.269
_cons	-0.811	0.746	-1.090	0.277	-2.274	0.651

Log likelihood = -83.67; LR $chi^2(1)$ = 0.54; Prob > chi^2 = 0.464; Pseudo R2 = 0.0032

The log-likelihood for the fitted model of -83.67 and the likelihood ratio chi-square value of 0.54 (Prob> chi2 = 0.464) indicate that the model parameters (the independent variable and the constant) are not jointly significant at 5 per cent. The Pseudo R^2 of 0.0032 implies that only 0.3 per cent of the student's willingness to transfer from one private university to another could be attributed to economic status (the independent variable). Therefore, Pseudo R^2 of 0.0032 does not meet the statistical threshold confirming that the willingness to transfer from one private university to another among the sampled students was not well attributed to their rating on the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status. The coefficient of economic status (-0.163) was not statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. This implies that the

null hypothesis, "economic status does not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," should not be rejected.

One registrar in a faith-based private university in Nairobi explained:
A mismatch between the university fee structure (as well as the cost of living) and the economic status of students is one of the major reasons students seek to transfer from one private institution to another. Students from low socio-economic status backgrounds sometimes feel that the fee requirement is too high for them to afford. In response, some students make as much effort as possible to seek a transfer into an affordable institution.

A registrar in a church-sponsored private university in Nairobi explained:
It is very common to find students who face economic challenges due to the mistake of considering only the tuition fees when budgeting for their degrees. When students (or even their parents/guardians) consider how much money they would need for their educational experience, it's easy to go and search for the cheapest tuition fee, thinking this is the way to go and save money, but that's not always the case. Some institutions are in environs with very high living costs that could affect the affordability of the education that they offer. Even if you save some money on the tuition fee, you may be spending too much on other necessities such as food. And it's not only food that you should consider; keep in mind the accommodation, travelling costs, supplies, clothes, transportation, and so on. You should consider if you want to check out some balanced places where cheap living costs blend with cheap tuition fees.

This study's results disagree with those of Choudaha and DeWit (2015). Instead, they revealed that an individual's (or their family's) financial position influences their judgment, particularly in educational matters like which institution to engage in the studies. As an outcome, financial knowledge tends to affect the mobility of students in private universities. These study results also don't align with the assertions made by Chiswick and Miller (2011). They asserted that people's social-economic standing helps perpetuate their social class and generally contributes to transmitting cultural traits like perception functioning, which are important for commercial success. As a result, one's financial situation may affect decisions like picking academic institutions. Children who inherit social group memberships may be more likely to make specific decisions, such as where to explore their intellectual interests, earn more money, and control more property.

Inconsistencies in this study relate to Simiyu (2001), who found that some of the decisions in life (for instance, the choice of study institution) are influenced by family income as described by the total wages, salaries, profits, and rents received by members of a family. Other family income sources can also include monetary benefits from self-employment, social security schemes, retirement benefits, interests or dividends, royalties, trusts, or familial financial assistance. Choudaha and DeWit (2015) argued that low-income earners concentrate on meeting immediate needs and rarely accrue wealth that their offspring could inherit. Such earners and their offspring always result in institutions (including for academic studies) where they can afford or have access to support, such as scholarships. On the other hand, higher-income families can build up resources and concentrate on meeting immediate needs while also enjoying luxuries.

Other studies with which these findings disagree include Lareau (2013), who opined that there is a nexus between low income and little education and a variety of physical and mental health problems among the low-income group. In their study, middle-class parents can use concerted cultivation to become active participants in their children's education to develop a sense of power through active engagement. At the same time, low-income groups rarely actively engage in their children's education, resulting in the sense of constraint. Marmot (2014) also established that inadequate resources contribute significantly to a student's decision-making about enrolment into a university where students are hesitant to be mobile because they fear losing financial support from beneficiaries or part-time employment. When such students receive financial support from funding institutions, the financial burden is somewhat

alleviated, and they are more able to settle down in their studies.

Many studies have shown that students are becoming more aware of the cost of the money they invest when choosing to become international students (Anderson & Bhati, 2012; Clavel, 2015; Paton, 2014). According to Anderson and Bhati (2012), for instance, students consider price-related matters more serious than other factors impelling intercontinental students' selection of the university. Moreover, in India, more students chose Singaporean institutions as a replacement for Australian ones since they found the fees to be lower in Singapore than in Australia. For this same reason, the number of international students choosing the UK decreased (Paton, 2014).

The study's findings disagree with the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2009), which observed that economic factors influence students' choice of an academic institution and their mobility. The report noted that in Africa, most students and their families could not manage to pay for the fees and the costs of living charged by foreign universities. Therefore, if students go overseas, rising numbers are going to bordering countries rather than North America or Europe. All factors remain constant; the cost issue influences students' home study choices. Other studies with which this research is inconsistent include Paton (2014), the study demonstrated that children from families earning low income were less likely to enter a high-status college and that this phenomenon is spread across countries, while Kishun (2011) found that both economic and systemic issues hamper the growth of the tertiary education sector in African countries. As a result, many students have opted to move from one country to another, seeking quality education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: Most of the students' ratings on the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status ranged 3 – 4 (49.7%) and 4 -5 (27.9%). The overall students' rating on the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status (on a scale of 1 – 5) was a mean of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.85. The mean difference in the scores on students' rating of the attractiveness of their universities to their economic status (between those willing to transfer and those not willing) was computed as 0.121. The calculated t-value of 0.737 at 163 degrees of freedom indicates that the mean difference was not statistically significant at the 5 per cent level (p=0.463). Similarly, the binary logistic regression results confirmed that the coefficient of economic status (-0.163) was not statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. This implies that the null hypothesis, "economic status does not significantly influence student's mobility in private universities in Nairobi County in Kenya," could not be rejected. The study, therefore, concludes that; Economic status does not influence student mobility in private universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. Most students enrolled in private universities are usually not financially constrained.

Recommendation: Since student mobility in private universities is unrelated to the economic situation, it is prudent to try and prevent lowering program costs so significantly that it becomes difficult to keep the resources needed for the implementation of student engagement frameworks, customer care services, measures of timely completion, and quality learning services.

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