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Effects of Off Campus Students’ Activities on Well-Being of Community Neighbouring Egerton University, Nakuru County, Kenya

Naomi Fedha

Masters Student, Department of Peace, Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Nakuru County, Kenya

Dr. Hadija Murenga

Senior Lecturer, Department of Peace, Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Nakuru County, Kenya

Dr. Erick Bor

Senior Lecturer, Department of Peace, Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Nakuru County, Kenya

Abstract:

Unplanned increase in off campus students and their activities has often led to unknown effects on local communities. The study sought to investigate the social effect of off campus students’ activities on wellbeing of the community neighbouring Egerton University, Njoro Campus. The study established that the social effects were perceived as negative and undesired by the community thus negatively affecting the community’s social capital. It is based on this major finding that the study recommended that off campus students activities be monitored by the University and measures put in place to curb the negative effects on the community.

Keywords: *Housing, Off Campus, Students, Studentification*

1. Introduction

University education is a critical component of human development worldwide linked to both national development and human wellbeing. Sharma (2012) established that higher education is currently one of the fastest growing sectors globally, with a growth rate of 160% since 1990. This results in a phenomenon termed ‘studentification’ that describes the growth of high concentrations of students within the localities of higher education institutions, often accommodated within houses of multiple occupancy (Allison, 2006). Thus, increasing concentration of students in residential areas in many towns and cities has been linked to social, cultural, economic and physical transformations (Kenyon, 1997).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, enrollment in tertiary education soared to over 4.5 million in 2008 a more than 20-fold increase and 6.3 million in 2011. Despite the increase in enrolments, tertiary education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa are not equipped to absorb the growing demand for higher education (UNESCO, 2010). Ghana for instance, a university built for 3,000 students had to cope with 24,000 students without corresponding expansion in academic and physical facilities (Obanya, 2004). In South African universities, only 20% of students are accepted into university accommodation each year and by 2013, a shortage of 207,800 beds was recorded (Goko, 2013). A similar situation is emerging in Kenya where public and private universities have most of their students living off campus.

While the influx of students can be beneficial to local communities, social issues that come with young people have been interpreted largely as detrimental. According to Waruru (2013), many of the students young and vulnerable get into illicit activities, a common feature in poor settlements across Kenya. Some of the illicit activities include students peddling drugs, making illegal brews for their own consumption or even running makeshift kiosks where they sell cheap liquor (Ogeto, 2015). Students living among villagers have often faced the wrath of the villagers who feel that the entry of university students has made life in the village very expensive for them. A typical example was reported at the main campus of Moi University, where a female student was found raped and murdered due to inadequate accommodation of students within the campus. Sadly, this situation is replicated at universities across the country (Ogeto, 2015).

While a number of studies have been done on the subject of studentification globally (Xiao, 2013), the phenomenon is relatively recent in Kenya. Most research findings into the effects of studentification show that there is significant variation in the scale and pace of studentification and that it occurs in different ways in different places. Experiences of the issues and challenges also vary requiring local attention and local solutions. Egerton University like other HEIs in Kenya recorded an increase in student’s population from 9,600 in 2010 to 24, 436 by 2013 (Egerton University Performance Contract Reports ,2010/11 and 2013/14). The University can only accommodate a third of the students on campus leading to a growing number of students living off-campus in rented houses. There is no systematic study of this emerging phenomenon at Egerton University and no proper information for future planning for off campus

student's management and communities neighbouring Universities. According to Sage, Smith and Hubbard (2012), studentification can threaten the sustainability of a neighbourhood and its institutions. Thus, Hubbard 2008 in Yuxian, He and Junxi (2010) emphasizes that the costs and benefits of studentification needs to be assessed on a context-specific basis.

1.1. Objective of the Study

The main objective was to establish the social effect of off campus students' activities on wellbeing of the community neighbouring Egerton University, Njoro Campus.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emergence of Near Campus Neighbourhoods

The effect of students' concentration in local communities is seen as the primary influence of HEIs on university's suburb. According to Donaldson, Benn, Campbell and de Jager (2014), most communities that are home to a university or residentially-oriented college report incidents of what has been defined as "studentification" of near-campus neighbourhoods. This situation was defined by Smith (2005) as 'studentification', usually characterized by high density accommodation of HE students within the existing neighbourhoods of the university. Kenyon (1997), Macintyre (2003) and Fox (2008) in Xiao (2013) found out that, taken individually, many problems associated with students may seem trivial, however, put together, they create a significant impact on the local communities.

According to Macintyre (2003), the inclusion of a student population in a community has capacity to enhance the vibrancy and dynamism of any community. The range of benefits that result from this link include better dissemination of information, pressure for the provision of improved public services, an enhanced commercial activity that add directly and indirect economic value to the local community. This view implies that the integration of universities and their students into local communities will lead to richer cultural expressions as well as increased levels of civic and economic activities. These findings appear true in North America where integration of students led to improved communities. However, Kenyon (1997) suggests that a university in the community is a negative and even a destructive force. Similar conclusions have been reported in other areas such as South Africa by Donaldson et.al (2014), in China by Shejing He (2014), in Malaysia by Omar et.al (2011).

In South Africa for instance, three-quarters of residents living with off campus students are reported to be in conflict with the students. The four main reasons for conflict creation were noise, public drunkenness, house parties and parking infringements. Contrary to the South African context, findings in Malaysia indicate that majority of local residents were happy staying with off campus students in their neighbourhoods (Omar, Abdullah, Yusof, Hamdan and Nasrudin, 2011).

Clearly, the experiences of the residents interviewed by Kenyon (1997), and the evidence from other studies cannot be dismissed. Donaldson, Benn, Campbell and de Jager (2014), argue that numerous studies have focused on the impacts of studentification on neighbourhoods in the UK and the US. However, research on student neighbourhoods in the African context is limited. This study thus sought to identify similarities and variations from the research outcomes in the US and the U.K. More so find out the relationship between a studentification and improved or decline in wellbeing of a community. More important to determine whether the community around Egerton University has been victim of unfavorable social activities by off campus students as experienced in South Africa or whether the community is happy staying with off campus students as is the case in Malaysia. Besides the contextual effects, a central debate is whether increased off campus student occupation trigger local area renewal or, on the contrary, sets motion for neighbourhood blight (Hubbard, 2008).

2.2. Social Effects of Off Campus Students Activities on Community Wellbeing

According to Kenyon (1997), images of the home and neighbourhood are often filled with expectations of privacy, personal choice, control, and security within a defensible space. Events that threaten these social expectations, especially those that are perceived to be beyond the control of the individual, undermine such images. Satisfaction with one's neighbourhood and levels of neighbourhoodness have been found to be significant predictive measures of community well-being. Thus, the absence of sense of community has been found to engender feelings of alienation, isolation and loneliness. On the contrary, a strong sense of community is linked to a range of positive outcomes including improved wellbeing, empowerment happiness and life satisfaction. However, according to Xiao (2013), students' presence in a community leads to an erosion of feelings of stability, cohesiveness and confidence within the community. Students as a sub-group of the community are thus perceived to less likely contribute to a positive neighbourhood due to the perception that they are less neighbourly and are an isolated group that fail to interact with the wider community (Kenyon, 1997). Except for student's presence in the community, other factors like culture, ethnic ties and social-economic levels in the community can affect the communities' stability and cohesiveness. It creates, as its by products, noise, disturbance, keeping of late hours and the buzz of student life. These cultural needs and interests of students thus create friction between students and lifestyles of families, young children, older people and those on the job. This research sought to establish whether off campus students around Egerton University present the aforementioned characteristics and to determine their effect on the community social status.

According to Xiao (2013), Studentified areas often attracts criminals in the area. This is because students are perceived to possess a higher than average number of electrical consumer items including computers and household appliances. According Allison (2006), insecurity contributes to low neighbourhood satisfaction and further damages the neighbourhood reputation. Despite the negative findings by most of the researches on studentification, students' concentration and emergence of off campus students housing can lead to improved security in an area. The introduction of street lighting and establishment of a police post in a community are part of the

benefits which can improve security for a community. The current study sought to establish whether there were improvements in security in the area under study and if this had any effect on the level of crime.

One major social impact of studentification is the displacement and marginalization of an existing community by students. Usually, all the settings of built environment and services revolve around the needs of students. According to He (2014), studentified neighbourhoods can be considered as a special form of cultural space catering to students' unique cultural preferences and expressive lifestyle. The degeneration of the neighbourhood and the nuisance caused by students also significantly disturb local resident's daily lives. Students are often described as noisy, deviant and rude, who do not pay attention to housing maintenance. As a result, large number of families with young children and the elderly leave the area. Studentification is therefore widely accused of causing unbalanced community and residential segregation. These attributes can either lead to social segregation or attract investment within a community where community members stand to benefit economically and culturally as explored by this research. According to Kenyon (1997), the mere presence of students in the community is thought to have a number of impacts on the social and physical fabric of the neighbourhood. There are three categories of concern in relation to students living within communities, these are, physical, social and economic concerns. Similarly, Xiao identified the social, economic, cultural and physical impacts of off campus students on communities (2013). This study borrows intensely from these research findings to provide structure for the identification of social issues and to discuss the role of cumulative impacts of student housing on the community well-being around Egerton University. It is acknowledged that the three categories are interlinked (Kenyon 1997) and impacts are cumulative.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) by Kollmair and Juli (2002) and the Systems Theory by A. G. Feldt (1986). According to Kollmair and Juli (2002), the SLA depicts the community as operating in a context of vulnerability, within which they have access to certain assets. Off campus students' activities form both demographic and social vulnerability context and decisively shape the livelihood strategies that are open to people in pursuit of their self-defined beneficial livelihood outcomes. Secondly, the livelihoods approach is based on a belief that society has a number of available resources or assets that are necessary to maintain human well-being over time. Assets are combined to enable a community improve livelihood strategies and hence the effect on wellbeing is evaluated cumulatively. To some, off campus students' activities are beneficial and enables creation of assets while on the other hand, the activities are detrimental leading to loss of livelihood assets. In the current study off campus students' activities generate the means to household survival. These include new job opportunities from construction sites, establishment of businesses, change in land use and farming activities which are motivated by the presence of off campus students' activities. The study focused on vulnerability context and how it transforms assets and livelihood outcomes.

Using the livelihoods approach as an organizing framework, we examine evidence on the multiple pathways linking livelihoods outcomes and off campus students' activities. Particular emphasis is put on off campus students because they constitute a large population of the University neighbourhood and therefore the need to determine their contribution to community livelihoods outcome. The SLA approach has been criticized to be broad and questionable as to how far and in how much detail one should go when applying it. Particularly because it requires time to research the wellbeing of people now and in the future. To address this limitation, the systems theory by Feldt (1986) was used. According to Feldt (1986), a system is defined as a dynamic network of interconnecting elements where a change in only one of the elements must produce change in all the others. A system is comprised of sub-systems which are in constant interaction. When subsystems are arranged in a series, the output of one is the input for another, therefore, process alterations in one requires alterations in other subsystems. The community neighbouring Egerton University represents a system with interacting elements including the local community and off campus students. The qualities and activities of off campus students i.e. age, lifestyle, behaviours influence their activities which have the capability of altering the community's way of life. The output by off campus students' activities is an input for the local community hence leading to variations in the way of life. As such, it is possible to conclude that off campus students' activities have the potential to directly affect the community's way of life and therefore the livelihood outcomes either positively or negatively. The two theories are interlinked, whereby we can view SLA as a process and a system. While the SLA provides a process to analyze and understand subsystem interactions, the System theory helps in making conclusions as to the outcome of the interactions.

2.4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. According to Gall and Borg (1996), this involves describing characteristics of a particular sample of individuals at one point in time. This involved collection of self-reported opinions, characteristics of past and present status of the community under study. The study involved a sample of 167 non-student heads of households living around Egerton University, Njoro Campus. Purposive sampling was employed to select the 167 respondents proportionately from six communities. According to Gall and Borg (1996), the goal of purposive sampling is to select cases that are likely to have information rich with respect to the purposes of the study. Using snow ball sampling twenty (20) key informants were selected from the six communities in order to collect in-depth data about the community wellbeing around Egerton University. They included six (6) community leaders, six (6) Faith based organization leaders, six (6) Business association leaders, one from each of the community and the head of security in Njoro Division and Egerton University. The key informants were selected on the basis that they represent the community, they are in positions of authority and influence and therefore have important information with regard to the current study. The research also comprised of four (4) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) comprising of six (6) off campus students each. Off campus students residing in the community were purposively sampled. Hostels from each of the off-campus students were obtained from the

University Students Welfare office. Through visits by the researcher, the students residing in these hostels were approached and requested to participate in the survey.

Relevant data was also obtained from the non-student headed households through interview sessions. This allowed for cross examination and probing to collect supplementary information that was deemed important for the research. The wellbeing status was determined using four Point Likert-Type questions.

Collected data was thereafter coded, keyed in and analyzed using excel sheet. The results were interpreted based on excel sheet summaries and presented in the form of bar graphs and frequency tables. These include data on respondent's profile and the activities that off campus students undertake within community neighbouring Egerton University. Using measures of central tendency, that is mode, the most common activities undertaken by the students were determined. The effects of off campus student's activities in the community were presented in qualitative narratives and where applicable percentages were used to compare the results. In addition, content analysis was used to analyze data from FGDs and key informants where qualitative narratives are provided upon which conclusions were drawn.

2.5. Results and Discussion

2.5.1. Respondents' Profile

Data was collected from 167 respondents whereby 58.1% of the respondents were male and 35.9% were female. Analysis showed that (73%) of the respondents were married, 24% single while 3% are widowed. Majority of the respondents interviewed indicated low levels of education where by 62% had secondary education, 23% attained primary education, and 14% college education. It is clear that the respondents were mainly self-employed constituting 82% of which 55% run small businesses. Those in the formal employment were 18% implying that off campus students' activities create informal employment that the community benefited from. Further, over 65% of the respondents indicated to have stayed in their respective areas for over ten years. Since majority of the respondents were longtime residents, the information collected about Egerton University neighbourhood was a reflection of opinions from longtime residents.

2.5.2. Off Campus Students Activities near Egerton University

This study revealed both positive and negative off campus students' activities as was perceived by the respondents. Drug and alcohol use was perceived by majority 92% (153) of the respondents as a negative activity undertaken by off campus students. Table 1. Presents a summary of activities undertaken by the off-campus students.

Activity	Frequency	Percent (%)
Drug and alcohol use	153	92
Sexual activities in public	135	81
Poor disposal of used and unused condoms	126	76
Abortion	106	64
'Pirating'	98	59
Late night parties	87	52
Petty theft	76	46

Table 1: Activities Undertaken by Off Campus Students in the Neighborhood of Egerton University, Njoro Campus

The findings presented in table 1 above were supported by all the key informants who identified drug use especially bhang, alcohol and 'Kuber' as a negative social activity undertaken by off campus students. 'Kuber' is a brown toxic substance packaged in small clear polythene bags and sold cheaply at KES. 30.00 in kiosks around the University. According to a retired male lawyer and resident in Ng' Ondu village for over 10 years, the government was aware about drug peddling around the University but little had been done to arrest the situation. According to the University Chief Security Officer (UCSO), use of drugs was rampant outside campus than on campus. He attributed this to lack of monitoring of off campus students while outside the Campus. This reaffirmed the extent of drug use among off campus students around the University.

Secondly, sexual activities in public was found to be a common concern to all the key respondents. According to a 56-year-old male elder of Njokerio village;

- "Sexual activities in public was unacceptable and against the community's culture. These included hugging and kissing in public and the fact that used condoms were found along the walk ways was an indication that students indulge in sex beside the roads".

This statement supports the revelation that off campus students' social activities contribute to decline in moral standards of the community. It is worth noting that 54% of the key respondents cited cases of abortion, disposal of fetuses and poor disposal of used and unused condoms as an indication of careless sexual activities by students. This finding was supported by the UCSO who cited cohabiting as rampant and a source of conflicts among off campus students. To the extent that there were more reported cases of assault among off campus students than on campus students. Further, abortion cases were perceived rampant by 60% of off campus students interviewed because there was lack of supervision of their activities. The University Students Welfare Officer pointed out that abortion cases had reduced on campus and increased around the community. This he claimed was attributed to availability of pit

latrines where the fetuses were disposed unnoticed. These results clearly indicate the reasons for dissatisfaction among the community members with off campus students' social activities.

Theft cases associated with off campus students was also cited as a negative activity by Key informants. According to the Chief of Ngo'ndu area,

- "Two students were found in possession of two stolen and slaughtered chicken from a non-student neighbor. Beside such cases of petty theft, petty thieves target money, smart phones, Tablets, laptops and electronics that students possess."

The report by the Chief Ng'ondu and the UCSO confirm that students' activities contribute to increased crime in the area.

Generally, 95% of the respondents were happy with off campus students' activities while 5% were dissatisfied. According to the respondents, students are the reason for the regeneration of Egerton University neighbourhood. Despite the high level of satisfaction, only 25% were satisfied with off campus students social activities.

2.5.3. Social Effects of Off Campus Students Activities on Community Wellbeing

Clearly, the experiences of the residents interviewed indicate that the presence of off campus students in the community had brought about both positive and negative social effects. The study established that 83% of the respondents felt secure when off campus students were in session. This was despite an increase in criminal activities as was reported by (70%) of the respondents. Table 2. presents a summary of the effects of off campus students activities on the social status of the community

Activity	Frequency	Percent (%)
Declining moral status	153	95
Increased drug consumption	135	87
Improved security	161	83
Increased crime	155	70
Belongingness	143	60

Table 2: Social Effects of Off Campus Students Activities

The summary presented in table 2 shows that improved security was perceived as a positive social effect. According to the respondents, students' activities took place until midnight and by 4.00 am. This kind of routine was perceived to deter would be criminals. Secondly, the large number of students in the community provided tyranny of numbers and was perceived as a reason for improved security. On the contrary, (80%) of the key informants believed that students walking late at night was contributing to insecurity. According to one male key informant in-charge of water distribution in Njokerio area, one is not sure whether those who were walking at night were students or criminals thus creating fear among residents. As noted earlier, off campus students living around the University and their demand for housing lead to displacement of community members. Three factors were associated with displacement of community members. First, the demand for housing by off campus students near the university created a high demand for proximity to University. Consequently, the cost of rent increased by two to three times as confirmed by the University Students Welfare Officer (USWO). Secondly, because of the nature of off campus students' activities that they are commonly involved in and their adopted lifestyles that include drug, alcohol use and undesired sexual activities young families preferred to leave.

The study further revealed that although members of the community felt secure going about their businesses at night, for the UCSO and the Area Chief, crime rates were high when off campus students were in session. This was attributed to the nature of household items possessed by off campus students that were perceived to attract criminals. According to a male elder in Njokerio and In-charge of Njokerio Water Resource and Environmental Management, most hostels housing off campus students were managed by care takers who were absent most of time making it an easy target for criminals. Secondly, according to the USWO, landlords did not vet tenants and therefore criminals easily lived among the students. It was easy for the criminals to identify targets by staying among students and community members. Lucrative items such as Television sets, radios, household goods like mattresses and gas cylinders, laptops and smart phones were most targeted by the criminals. Interestingly, gas cylinders were highly targeted by the criminals as well. This finding was supported by 80% of off campus students interviewed in Ng'ondu area. It was established that students had been victims of petty theft, burglary and break ins.

Students' values and lifestyles were also identified as affecting the moral standing of the community. Analysis showed that drug and alcohol abuse was a major contribution to declining morality as recorded by 90% of the respondents. Other activities leading to decline in morality are sexual activities in public as perceived by 81% of the respondents, while poor dressing was supported by 76% of the respondents. Further, 56% of the respondents felt that off campus students were rude and a concern because young members of the community would emulate such behavior. These factors leading to decline in morality were supported by a Key informant a female who has runs a grocery around the University gate for over 5 years;

- "Students behave in a manner that does not befit a university student. The students dress inappropriately; girls wear short skirts or long dresses with long cuts, their cleavage is visible yet they go to school like that. Do you think they are going to learn? How would such students dress when they get employed. Look at the male students, they have pierced their ears, their trousers almost falling down, they have plaited hair. The behaviour and dressing is against our culture. It is a show of disrespect and therefore we have no regard for them. In future, we are going to have an immoral society where our own children will be behaving the same way and it worries us the most. They should stay in the University and not here in the community because our children are influenced too'. Here in the community they are neither under the care of the community, the university or the parents. They lack counselling and so they behave as they please. We need 'cells' where

rules are given, counselling as a community-university initiative. This is lacking. The counselling should be done preferably within the University to give it more seriousness’.

2.5.4. Wellbeing Status of the Community Neighbouring Egerton University

Majority of the respondents (78%) perceived that the community wellbeing had improved while (22%) indicated that it was most improved. The results were attributed to improved livelihood assets created by students that include; improved income, ease of access to jobs, physical appeal of the community and improved security. It was therefore noted that off campus students had a direct influence on the status of livelihood strategies of the community neighbouring Egerton University. Other reasons for improved wellbeing were rated as shown in Figure I

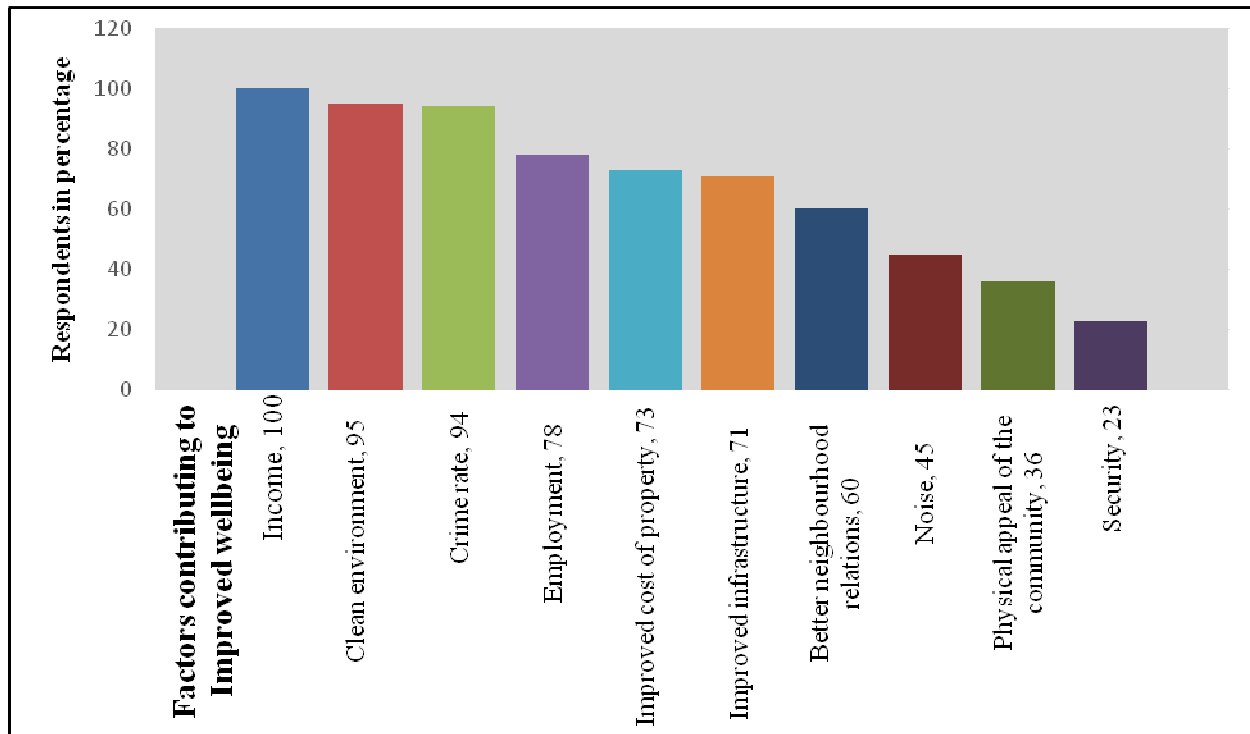


Figure 2: Reasons for improved wellbeing in the neighbourhood of Egerton University

Findings presented in the figure 2 above were supported by findings from off campus students as follows: According to 70% of off campus students interviewed, the neighbourhood of Egerton University had improved as a result of off campus students' activities. According to them, more shops and rental houses had come up, as a result, there was improved services and access to goods. Transport services were widely mentioned as improved because of the introduction of taxis. There was the presence of boutiques, fast food shops, butcheries, hardware shops and fuel stations. However, 80% of the students interviewed in Njokerio neighbourhood were dissatisfied with the poor disposal of litter and affluent along the roads, overcrowding especially along the walk ways and bad roads. The situation was worse during the rainy season when the research was undertaken in Njokerio neighbourhood as most of the roads were impassable. Further, a significant 90% of off campus students interviewed perceived that they had positively contributed to the improved livelihood strategies of the surrounding community of Egerton University.

Off campus students constitute a large population of Egerton University neighbourhood as was established in two villages, and their contribution to community livelihoods outcome cannot be overlooked. Evidence from the current study show that there is a direct effect of off campus students activities on financial and human capital. This was determined by improved income, ease of access to employment, improved security, improved physical outlook of the community and cleanliness of yards and compounds as was noted under level of satisfaction. Although the financial capital had improved, off campus students' activities had little positive impact on human capital. Besides improved security, the results show that some families had or were considering to relocate because of the negative off campus students' social activities. In addition, those who migrate into the community do so mainly to undertake business activities and were perceived to be less involved in community development activities.

2.6. Conclusion

Evidence from the study clearly indicates that off campus students' activities and effects are expected in future with minimal or varying magnitude. The social effects should not be overlooked by the University and the government because research has shown that the negative social effects associated with studentification have often led to major conflicts between communities and off campus students. It is therefore recommended that the social effects be addressed both by the University and the government if off campus students have to be integrated into the community. As Kenyon (1997) proposed, student housing developments should be undertaken

with regard for the consequences upon the local community, to reduce the numerous local level problems as was noted in the results of this study.

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