

**FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' CHOICE OF PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITIES IN WESTERN KENYA REGION. A CASE OF  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI AND KIBABII UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

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NAIROBI.**

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**DECLARATION**

This research project is my own original work and has not been presented for any other award of degree in any other University.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University of Nairobi supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late Son Comfort Mackenzie, my dear wife Violet Asiko, my parents Mr. John Issa Sabwa and Mrs. Martha Nyanga Issa, my siblings Berlin Shamala, Hetene Undisa and Viola Kedogo and Grandmother Timinah Undisa who encouraged and gave me support through prayers. May the almighty God bless them.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	ii
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	iv
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	x
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	x
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	xii
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	1
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	5
1.3 Purpose of the Study .....	6
1.4 Objectives of the study .....	6
1.5 Research Questions .....	6
1.6 Significance of the study .....	6
1.7 Delimitations of the study .....	7
1.8 Limitations of the study.....	7
1.9 Assumptions of the study .....	7
1.10 Definition of significant terms as used in the study .....	8
1.11 Organization of the study .....	8
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	9
<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b> .....	9
2.1 Introduction .....	9
2.2 Concept on choice of Public Universities .....	9
2.3 Institutional factors and student choice of Public Universities .....	10
2.4 Source of information and student choice of Public Universities .....	14
2.5 Decision makers and student choice of Public Universities .....	20
2.6 Students qualification and choice of Public Universities.....	24
2.7 Theoretical Framework .....	29
2.8 Conceptual framework .....	30

Figure 1: Conceptual framework.....	31
2.9 Summary of Literature .....	31
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>32</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	32
3.2 Research design.....	32
3.3 Target Population .....	32
3.4 Sample Size and Sampling procedure .....	33
3.4.1 Sample size selection.....	33
3.4.2 Sampling Procedures .....	33
Table 3.4 Population size .....	33
3.5 Data Collection Instruments.....	34
Questionnaires for students .....	34
3.5.1 Pilot Study .....	34
3.5.2 Validity of Research Instruments .....	34
3.5.3 Reliability of the Instruments .....	35
3.6 Data Collection Procedure .....	35
3.7 Data Analysis Techniques.....	35
3.8 Ethical Issues.....	36
3.9 Operational definition of variables.....	36
Table 3.9: Operation definition of variables .....	37
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>38</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	38
4.2 Questionnaire Return Rate .....	38
Table 4.1: Questionnaire Return Rate .....	38
4.3 Demographic Information of Respondents .....	39
4.3.1 Gender of respondents .....	39
Table 4.2: Gender characteristics of respondents.....	39
4.3.2 Age of respondents .....	39
Table 4.3: Age of respondents.....	40

4.3.3 Level of study of respondents.....	40
Table 4.4: Level of study of respondents .....	40
4.4 To examine how institution characteristics influences students’ choice of Public Universities.....	41
4.4.1 Financial aid and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	41
Table 4.5: Financial aid.....	41
4.4.2 University offered financial aid to students.....	42
Table 4.6: University offered financial aid and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	42
4.4.3 Cost of Programmes and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	43
Table 4.7: Cost of Programmes and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	43
4.4.4 The Cost of attending University was affordable.....	44
4.4.5 Availability of Programmes and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	44
Table 4.9: Programmes available .....	45
4.4.6 The University had variety of Major and Minor Programmes I wanted .....	45
Table 4.10: Variety of Programmes and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	46
4.5 How the source of information influences students’ choice of Public Universities. ....	46
4.5.1 Advertisement and students’ choice of Public Universities. ....	47
Table 4.11: Advertisement and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	47
4.5.2 University literature like brochures was the source of information .....	48
Table 4.12: University literature (brochures) and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	48
4.5.3 Internet and website source and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	48
Table 4.13: Internet and website source and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	49
4.5.4 Visiting the University website was the Major source of information.....	49
Table 4.14: University website and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	50
4.5.5 Campus visit and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	50
Table 4.15: Campus visit and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	51
4.5.6 Campus visit influenced my college choice .....	52
Table 4.16: Campus visit and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	52
4.6 To determine the extent to which decision makers influences students’ choice of Public Universities.....	53
4.6.1 Parental influence and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	53

Table 4.17: Parental influence and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	53
4.6.2 My Parent had an influence in the University Choice.....	54
Table 4.18: Parents influence in University Choice and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	54
4.6.3 Teachers influence and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	54
Table 4.19: Teachers influence and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	55
4.6.4 Teachers had an impact on my University Choice .....	56
Table 4.20 Teachers Impact and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	56
4.6.5 Peer influence and student choice of Public Universities.....	57
Table 4.21: Peer influence and student choice of Public Universities .....	57
4.6.6 Friends influenced my College choice .....	58
Table 4.22: Friends influence and students’ choice of Public Universities. ....	58
4.7 To examine how students qualification influences students’ choice of Public Universities. ....	59
4.7.1 Entry requirement and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	59
Table 4.23: Entry requirement .....	59
4.7.2 I met the minimum entry requirement for admission .....	60
Table 4.24: Meeting the minimum entry requirement for admission and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	60
4.7.3 Socio economic status and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	61
Table 4.25: Socio economic status and students’ choice of Public Universities .....	61
4.7.4 My Socio economic status or financial ability was stable.....	62
Table 4.26 Good Socio economic status and students’ choice of Public Universities.....	62
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>63</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	63
5.2 Summary of the findings.....	63
5.2.2 Influence of Institutional factors and student choice of Public Universities .....	63
5.2.3 Influence of Source of information and student choice of Public Universities.....	63
5.2.4 Influence of Decision makers and student choice of Public Universities .....	64
5.2.5 Influence of Students qualification and choice of Public Universities.....	64
5.3 Conclusion.....	65



5.4 Recommendation of the study.....	66
5.5 Suggestions for further study .....	66
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>APPENDIX I:.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>APPENDIX II.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>APPENDIX III .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>APPENDIX IV:.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>DETERMINING SAMPLE SIZE FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>82</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Return Rate.....	38
Table 4.2: Gender characteristics of respondents.....	39
Table 4.3: Age of respondents.....	40
Table 4.4: Level of study of respondents .....	40
Table 4.5: Financial aid.....	41
Table 4.6: University offered financial aid and students' choice of Public Universities.....	42
Table 4.7: Cost of Programmes and students' choice of Public Universities .....	43
Table 4.9: Programmes available .....	45
Table 4.10: Variety of Programmes and students' choice of Public Universities.....	46
Table 4.11: Advertisement and students' choice of Public Universities.....	47
Table 4.12: University literature (brochures) and students' choice of Public Universities .....	48
Table 4.13: Internet and website source and students' choice of Public Universities .....	49
Table 4.14: University website and students' choice of Public Universities .....	50
Table 4.15: Campus visit and students' choice of Public Universities .....	51
Table 4.16: Campus visit and students' choice of Public Universities .....	52
Table 4.17: Parental influence and students' choice of Public Universities .....	53
Table 4.18: Parents influence in University Choice and students' choice of Public Universities .....	54
Table 4.19: Teachers influence and students' choice of Public Universities.....	55
Table 4.20 Teachers Impact and students' choice of Public Universities.....	56
Table 4.21: Peer influence and student choice of Public Universities .....	57
Table 4.22: Friends influence and students' choice of Public Universities. ....	58
Table 4.23: Entry requirement .....	59
Table 4.24: Meeting the minimum entry requirement for admission and students' choice of Public Universities .....	60
Table 4.25: Socio economic status and students' choice of Public Universities .....	61
Table 4.26 Good Socio economic status and students' choice of Public Universities.....	62

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Conceptual framework .....	25
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>BPS</b>	-	Beginning Postsecondary Students
<b>GAP</b>	-	Grad Points Average
<b>HE</b>	-	Higher Education
<b>HEIs</b>	-	Higher Education Institutions
<b>ICT</b>	-	Information Communication Technology
<b>JAB</b>	-	Joint Admissions Board
<b>KEMC</b>	-	Kakamega Extra Mural Centre
<b>KUCCPS</b>	-	Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service
<b>NCES</b>	-	National Center for Education Statistics
<b>NCR</b>	-	National Council of Research
<b>NCST</b>	-	National Council of Science and Technology
<b>NELS</b>	-	National Educational Longitudinal Study
<b>NPSEC</b>	-	National Post Secondary Educational Cooperative
<b>PEI</b>	-	Parents Education Level
<b>SCDE</b>	-	School of Education and External Studies
<b>SES</b>	-	Socio Economic Status
<b>SOE</b>	-	School of Education
<b>UON</b>	-	University of Nairobi

## ABSTRACT

University choice is a complicated process and involves a wide range of individuals including high school students, family members, university administrators and public policy makers. Understanding why and how potential candidates seek University education and determining which factors affect their choices is an important area of study. The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors influencing student's choice of Public Universities in western Kenya region. A case of University of Nairobi and Kibabii University. The following objective guided the study; to examine how institution characteristics influences students' choice of Public Universities; to determine how the source of information influence students' choice of Public Universities; to determine the extent to which decision makers influence student's choice of the Public Universities and to examine how students qualification influences students' choice of Public Universities in western Kenya region. The study adapted a descriptive survey research design. The study target population was 90,200 respondents representing the total number of students and University administrators from University of Nairobi and Kibabii University. A sample size of 348 respondents from University of Nairobi and Kibabii University was used in the study. Census sampling was used to select the 10 University administrators in charge of enrollment. The study adapted a systematic random sampling technique to select the sample population of students by picking the tenth student from their respective learning programmes using the admission lists for students. Questionnaires and interview schedule was used to collect data. A pilot study was done in the neighboring Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, test-retest method was employed. Frequency tables and percentages were used to analyse the collected data and the information in tables were explained to enhance interpretation of the data. Results were interpreted and required recommendations made at the end of the study. It was found that financial aid from family members or guardian, Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development fund was important to many students since some students were able to finance themselves, advertisement played an important role in ensuring information about the Institution is widely spread to prospective students Parents were found to be the most influencers, most students met the minimum entry requirements for the programmes they were pursuing. Recommendations for the study were first, the Government should put up measure in ensuring more financial aid from the Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development fund is being allocated to the needy students and secondly, the University advertisement department should come up with more marketing strategies that could be ideal to all stakeholders since most of the prospective students were not familiar with the Internet and website.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

University education is more than the next level in the learning process; it is a critical component of human development and provides high-level skills necessary for every labor market. Knowledge accumulation and application have become major factors in economic development. Hence, students' choice and decision making in higher education has gained greater importance because higher education has become competitive and market-oriented. Higher education enables individuals to expand their knowledge and skills, express their thoughts clearly, grasp abstract concepts and theories, and increase their understanding of the world and their community. University education helps economic development of the country, which has the potential of enhancing the productivity of the nation. Universities are the pivotal centers of engendering and disseminating of knowledge and the vital resources of social improvements (Tian et al., 2009). The importance of higher education can judge from the manner it benefit a person financially, emotionally, socially, and intellectually.

The decision to enroll on the courses of a certain higher education institution is extremely important in the individual's life because during these university years one's future career is being built. Therefore, when making a decision regarding the future university, individuals evaluate several alternatives offered by the market. The purpose of the present article is to identify the primary factors that influence the process of choosing a university and it is constituted by two main parts: in the first part are identified the main factors which influence the process of choosing a higher education institution, and in the second part are presented the conclusions.

The factors influencing this process differ from one individual to another, but there are also several factors common for many individuals. According to Domino, S., Libraire, T., Lutwiller, D., Superczynski, S. & Tian, R. (2006) and Yamamoto, G. T. (2006) parents have a great influence on their sons' enrollment at university. The author Ming Joseph Sia Kee (2010) has referred to the factors of institutional nature that influence the student's decision making process and has identified various independent variables such as: the location of the university,

the study programs, the reputation of the higher education institution, the existence of different educational facilities, the level of the tuition fees, the employment opportunities, the employed promotion, the promotion by university representatives, the possibility to visit the campus, the possibility to obtain scholarships

In the United States every year, thousands of high school seniors graduate and enter colleges and universities in the fall. This is a complicated and difficult choice because there are over 4,000 institutions from which to choose. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2000), higher education enrollment increased 16% between 1985 and 1995, including a 23% increase in enrollment by females. Choosing a college or university to attend is one of the most important decisions people make (Doyle & Gaeth, 1990). Admissions personnel have attempted to determine how to attract students to their colleges and what factors impact students' decisions to remain at one college for their entire degree matriculation (Martin & Dixon, 1991).

In Spain factors influencing secondary school students' choice of higher education options was analysed by Sanchez (2012) and explored the implications and benefits of establishing provider-client relationships between universities and students. A quantitative approach helped to demonstrate the hypothesis and achieve objectives. A questionnaire via telemetric Lime Survey application was prepared consisting of twenty-four closed questions. Results depicted that the leading criteria for Spanish students interested in pursuing studies in communication sciences were the university reputation, and excellence and quality of its educational programs. In terms of sources of information related to universities and their degree programs, Spanish Communication Sciences students placed the highest value on direct and experiential sources. Spanish students interested in pursuing degrees in communication sciences, preferred public universities to private universities.

In Malaysia Higher education has experienced an increasing competition among universities and higher education institutes to attract students both locally and internationally (Mazzarol, 1998). Competitive pressure has forced the higher educational institutions to look for more competitive marketing strategies in order to compete for students in their respective markets. Therefore, to study the important attributes especially institutional factors that affect



students' college choice decision in higher education institutions become pertinent on the part of marketing strategy planning for students' recruitment of higher educational institutions. Joseph & Joseph (2000) concluded that course and career information, and physical aspects and facilities are critical issues that must be kept in mind when educational institutions are trying to create sustainable competitive advantages in marketing strategies. LeBlance and Nguyen (1999) identified perceptions of price in the form of the price or quality relationship as most important factors, while Ford et al. (1999) recognized academic reputation, cost/time issues and program issues as the determinants of universities choice.

In Nigeria the factors affecting students' enrolment include socio-economic parent, teacher, gender, environmental and employment opportunities. Demi, Coleman-Jensen & Synder (2010) identify the interacting influences among tuition, financial aid policies and students' socioeconomic status. Students who are more economically advantaged possess "tuition elasticity close to unity" meaning that, "a one percent increase in tuition will lead to about a one percent decrease in enrollment yield. Socio-economic background of students have positive effects on students' choice of career as students tend to take into cognizance the cost of education before embarking on a particular programme of study. Higher levels of parental income are strongly associated with young adult post-secondary school attainment, and higher levels of parental education are also related to youth college attendance (Demi, et al 2010).

In Ghana the earlier higher educational institutions were established by the government and for that matter are largely Not-for-Profit Organisations aiming at providing access to education for all Ghanaians. As a result, marketing has not found its feet educational sector. However, the introduction of private universities has brought some changes in the Ghanaian higher education sector. There have been massive changes in educational policies. Governance and structure of higher education have also emerged all over the world (Nicolescu, 2009). Again, the democratization campaign of education in Africa has also contributed to the restructuring of higher education in Ghana. Some of the changes include accrediting private universities, tax exemptions on imported books, decline in the funding of higher education by the government and decreased in enrolment by public universities in order to pave way for the private ones (Manuh, et al., 2007). Higher education in Ghana has therefore been characterized with

privatization and competition. These changes have affected the operations of higher education nowadays and they are seen as the driving forces for the marketing of higher education (Maringe, 2006). As a result, the motivating factors for students in their choice of a university have become a vital issue and the role of marketing in enrolment has also been given greater attention recently. As competition in the higher education increases, universities are now faced with the problem of competing for students to improve enrolment. Attempt to increase enrolment in this case calls for the application of the marketing concept. The marketing concept states that, in order to be successful, a company must identify the needs and wants of specific target markets and deliver the desired satisfactions better than competitors (Schiffman & Kanuk 2010). By application, both the private and public universities must identify the needs and wants of students in respect to the motivation factors that influence students' choice of a University in Ghana.

In Kenya, students who qualify for university education choose universities of their choices but are selected to join public universities whose fee is subsidized by the government. The selection is done through Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) formerly JAB, whose mandate was granted in 2012. The placements are done depending on their choices. Where vacancies for particular course depending on academic qualification are inadequate, students do revise their choices. Students who do not meet the specified qualifications seek vacancies in universities of their choices. This study aims at identifying the governance factors that students consider important while making decision for a suitable public university for higher education in Kenya. A comparative study of University of Nairobi and Kibabii University was done to highlight the factors graduates of secondary school consider when making choices on universities to attend. The study will compare the named universities to represent the other 20 public universities. University of Nairobi has been chosen to represent universities fully developed and located in urban areas while Kibabii University represents the recently established universities.

University of Nairobi has recently experienced tremendous growth into seven colleges located in the capital city and two campuses located in Mombasa and Kisumu. This has facilitated easy access to the university making it a centre of excellence in academic activities. The university admits both government-sponsored (module I) and privately- sponsored (module

II) students who enroll in either regular or evening and weekend programmes with classes being conducted at the University's Extra Mural Centres located at the country's county headquarters. The university's academics range from certificate courses to post-graduate programmes.

Kibabii University came into being as a constituent college of Masinde Muliro University but is now a fully-pledged university which was awarded a Charter in 2016. The University is located in Bungoma County in a serene environment hence conducive for learning (www.kibabii university.ac.ke ,2016). The university is steadily growing and currently offers various certificate, diploma, undergraduate and post graduate programmes. Similarly, it admits both Government and privately - sponsored students.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Understanding how students choose a College is critical for Colleges and Universities. Students are the lifeblood of Colleges and Universities, and student characteristics often define the distinctiveness of individual campuses. Competition for students is continually increasing, with prospective students applying to five or more Colleges, the problem of this study is to establish the transitional challenges experienced by the first year students in Public Universities as Students have a difficult in choice when it comes to choosing a College or University. There are many reasons to choose or not to choose to attend a particular College or University such as Aspiration, Aptitude and Career, External factors such as Courses, Cost, Location, Reputation, Promotion, facilities and Social factors such as parents, peers and teachers as influence of student's choice of Public Universities. There is the stress of making a good adjustment because students believe their future depends upon their doing well. Thus they want to know if they made the right choice and how can they be sure they made the right choice? Should they change their courses and colleges? Thus putting choices into a longer-term perspective is useful. There are many people on campus that can assist them in making decisions: Professors, Peers and College staffs because without proper guidance students may end up in institutions affected by Programmes acceleration stalemate in that several students have been sent home until the institution comply with the set regulatory bodies standards ending up with students and parents whose children undertook the courses in those Institutions be frustrated, and this may compromise the quality of education by institution of higher education. The Commission of University Education in Kenya has recently closed eight institutions of higher learning as a result

of them not having adequate physical resource, human resource, library resource and financial resources viable for academic programmes and sound structure of governance. This study seeks to address these factors that make students to choose a given University over the others for their study.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The Purpose of the study is to investigate factors influencing students' choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya region.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine how institution factors influences students' choice of Public Universities.
2. To determine how the source of information influence students' choice of Public Universities.
3. To determine the extent to which decision makers influence student's choice of the Public Universities.
4. To examine how students qualification influences students' choice of Public Universities.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do institution factors influence students' choice of Public Universities?
2. To what extent does the source of information influence students' choice of Public Universities?
3. How do decision maker's influences students' choice of Public Universities?
4. How student's qualification does influence the students' choice of Public Universities?

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

The findings of the study are hoped to provide insight into the phenomena of student's university choice in a Kenyan context and suggest if possible ways and means for those involved for the improvement of their policies and practices. The Government, particularly the Ministry of education can use the insight gained from the study to understand the decision making process of the high school students concerning their education plan, develop policy and better inform academic counseling systems. The information obtained will also provide a better understanding

of the economics involved. Parents and students can learn more about the range of choices, and ascertain whether their educational and financial investment is worthwhile. In addition, higher education institution could also plan their recruitment and admission policies and systems to better address the needs of their potential clients. With regards to the social aspect of the study, the public in general will be provided with a better understanding of the phenomena which will provide a clear picture about the educational systems for future generation.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the study**

The study was confined on the institutional and social factors that influenced student choice of Public Universities and this included institution factors and source of information while decision makers and student's qualification for social factors. The respondents included first year students who have joined the institutions.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

The study was faced with various challenges such as limited funds to carry out the study in good time, to mitigate these, the researcher sought assistance from friends for their contribution to help in financing the study. Information Act hindered easy access to information and thus only restricted the researcher to access information from the public domain and to mitigate this I sought a transmittal letter from the University showing the purpose of my study.

### **1.9 Assumptions of the study**

The study was based on the following assumptions

1. It was assumed that the selected sample represented the population in all the variables of interest.
2. It was assumed all the respondents would honestly give information required freely without fear.
3. It was assumed the questionnaire would be returned on time.
4. It was assumed the researcher would have adequate time to complete the study.

### **1.10 Definition of significant terms as used in the study**

**Student's choice:** refers to the decision based on the preferred institution one wants to further his or her education from.

**Public Universities:** refers to the institutions that are governed and owned by the Government in provision of higher Education to its citizens.

**Institutional factors:** refers to determinants of a student decision to make a preference out of the many option like availability of programmes, cost and financial aid.

**Decision makers:** refers to influential persons that help in choice or decision making of where to study.

**Source of information:** refers to the way Universities seek to offer the Public with the right information about their programmes.

**Student's qualification:** refers to the basic requirements a student should have in ensuring the learning process is smooth.

### **1.11 Organization of the study**

This project is divided into in to five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Data presentation, analysis and interpretation and Discussion, conclusion and recommendation. Chapter one (Introduction) which was divided into the following sections: Background information, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, basic assumptions of the study, limitation and delimitations of the study and definition of significance terms. Chapter two (Literature Review) included; Institution factors, Source of information, Decision Makers, Students qualification, theoretical framework, Summary of Literature and conceptual framework. Chapter three (Research Methodology) which included; research design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, data collection instrument, data collection procedure, validity of instruments, reliability of the instruments, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations and operational definition of variables. Chapter four contains analysis of the data analysis, presentation, interpretation and discussion. Chapter five presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. This project will end with references and appendices including questionnaires.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed the related literature on factors influencing student's choice of Public Universities, it focused on institutional factors, Source of information, Decision makers and Students qualification. This chapter also looked at the theoretical, conceptual framework and Summary of Literature.

#### 2.2 Concept on choice of Public Universities

University choice is a complicated process and involves a wide range of individuals including high school students, family members, University administrators and public policy makers. Understanding why and how potential candidates seek University education and determining which factors affect their choices is an important area of study. Exploring what students regard as important to them or what influences when they choose institutions is information given by Colleges and University administrators. Attributes and characteristics of particular colleges and Universities provide some insight into which dimensions of higher education institutions affect student choice. Attributes disclose that factors such as cost, quality, location and image are deemed important, but they do not reveal how specific characteristics such as expensive, small or rural for example might affect the attractiveness of an institution. Educational choice involves critical decision making for the future because it may reflect a student's expected outcomes and could have long term implications. The institution or programme attended may have effect on ones future profession, companionship, choice of life partner, location and future residence, and life fulfillment. Moreover, it may involve major personal or economic sacrifices (Kotler & Fox, 1995). When making choice for their higher studies, students decide for their future lives and profession and also make an immense impact on the university planning and direction (James, Baldwin, & McInnis, 1999).

The decision to enroll at a certain university is the result of a long evaluation process which bases on considering rigorous information regarding the reputation and image of the institution, the future professional opportunities and the facilities offered. This decision has long-

term consequences and has an impact on the quality of the individual's life involved in this process.

### **2.3 Institutional factors and student choice of Public Universities**

A study conducted by Yusof (2008) found that financial assistance offered by university as one of the four very important attributes expected from a particular higher education institution of choice. Thus, students who receive financial aid awards are more likely to enter college (Jackson, 1988; Litten, 1982; Manski & Wise, 1983). Ismail (2009) studied on mediating effect of information on college choice indicated that students are satisfied with college choice based on their information satisfaction with respect financial factors (external influences) which include financial aids and affordable fees. Based on the findings mentioned above, it is hypothesized that availability of financial aid has a significant influenced on college choice decision.

Government and private loans are available to students and are the largest form of finance. Private loans usually supplement the federal and state financial aid (Olivkez & Tiemey, 2005). Many students are concerned about obtaining loans because they will have to repay the money with interest. The idea of going into debt can be a great deterrent to attending college. Grants, which are typically are given based on financial need and academic success. Grants do not have to be paid back to the state or federal government (Olivkz & Tierney, 2005).

Scholarship to the best performing students to join the University will ensure more students work hard in the O'level so that they can be given scholarship. A study conducted by Yusuf (2008) found that financial assistance offered by University as one of the four very important attributes expected from a particular higher education institution of choice. Thus, students who receive financial aid awards are more likely to enter College. Another technique that an institution could use would be to separate or include the total cost of the package. In other words, some Universities set the cost to be without any hidden extra payments or 'indirect associated cost' (Foskett, 1998), such as transportation or sports facilities fees, and here the customer can select. Other strategies used are discount and scholarship offers. Universities attract potentially good students to enroll by offering financial benefits. This affects the students' choices as they may then put more consideration into institutions with the most generous offer.



Xiaoping (2002) raised a concern regarding the rise of tuition fees charged by most colleges and universities within and around Beijing. Obviously, the views from parents and academicians oppose one another. Parents fear that the rising education costs will deter higher education opportunities for their children, whereas the academicians support the increase in tuition fees because they often benefit from these increases indirectly through higher salaries. Yusof et al. (2008) emphasized that parents of prospective students consider financial assistance to students to be an important factor that influences them towards a particular institution. Similar to Xiaoping (2002), Yusof et al. (2008) also found that cost of tuition is a moderately important factor considered by parents in selecting a particular institution for their child. Supporting these findings, Joseph and Joseph (1998, 2000) and Wagner and Fard (2009) noted that the cost of education, value of education and content and structure or degrees offered are the three most important factors that influence the choice of the students.

Tuition cost of programmes in a learning institution is an important factor people put into consideration when selecting an institution, the tuition fees should be affordable and justified depending with the programme. Scholarship to the best performing students to join the University will ensure more students work hard in the O'level so that they can be given scholarship. A study conducted by Yusuf (2008) found that financial assistance offered by University as one of the four very important attributes expected from a particular higher education institution of choice. Thus, students who receive financial aid awards are more likely to enter College.

Tuition levels are another institutional factor with a significant effect on College enrollment. Reyes (1994) finds that increases in financial aid positively affect both 2-year and 4-year college enrollment rates, based on information from the NLSY and HSB. According to Long (2008) financial aid was critical to improving college access and success but without sufficient financial aid students would resort to loans or work to pay for their studies. This in turn would impact academic performance and reduce the chances that a student will persist to graduation.

Parents and students are also familiar that the actual cost of attending University varies from the posted tuition fees (i.e. true costs versus “sticker price”). With such customer awareness and sensitivity towards tuition fees, the question now is whether or not a University should set a policy that offers courses at the lowest cost possible. In fact, this is a major issue that could affect the overall image of a University as there is substantial impact on the perception of quality when being matched to price; for example, some people perceive more expensive offers to be of greater value and vice versa (Foskett & Hemsley-Brown, 2001). On the other hand, an institution considers customer perception of the relation between the offer itself and the price set. In other words, a customer would question if the service offered is value for money or not. That is to say, when a University wants to set a higher cost than its competitors, it needs to be justified and this, in turn, should be explained to the public.

Among the strategies used in pricing, Kotler (1999) believes that people pay more for skilled and well-regarded doctors or consultants. It is a pricing strategy in which whoever has a better offering and/or position can request a higher price. Hence, in the context of education, a student would pay a higher price for a more prestigious and well-known University. Another technique that an institution could use would be to separate or include the total cost of the package. In other words, some Universities set the cost to be without any hidden extra payments or ‘indirect associated cost’ (Foskett, 1998), such as transportation or sports facilities fees, and here the customer can select. Other strategies used are discount and scholarship offers. Universities attract potentially good students to enroll by offering financial benefits. This affects the students’ choices as they may then put more consideration into institutions with the most generous offer.

Universally, availability of a desired course is the most important for students when selecting a university (Price et al., 2003). However, the costs of going to university are the most influential when selecting between several universities that offer a similar course (Price et al., 2003). Interestingly, Maringe’s (2006) findings suggest that the three top reasons international students choose courses and subjects of study are no longer related to intrinsic motives of interest and love for the subjects of study. They are no longer passive consumers in that they have changed and place more focus on higher education (HE) as a career investment (Maringe, 2006). ‘Value for money’ is a critical issue for students when selecting higher education (HE) abroad

(Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010). Chen's (2007) analysis shows that students' motivation and characteristics are the most important factors that influence them to further HE abroad, especially to achieve personal satisfaction for future career. Binsardi and Ekwulugo (2003) point out those students are 'buying' the benefits that a degree can provide in terms of employment, status and lifestyle. In other words, career prospect is an important factor (Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Eder et al., 2010; Maringe, 2006; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Soutar & Turner, 2002).

The availability of in-demand courses and programs and the presence of a wide range of choices is the most important factor that can influence international students' decision-making process. However, this may be balanced by cost factors, especially when the student and his parents cannot afford very expensive tuition and school fees. Maringe's (2006) research suggests that when choosing programs or courses, including which schools or universities to attend, international students put much stress on value for money. Part of their decision-making process includes career prospects, better return on investment, and a brighter future.

Yusof et al. (2008) explicated that the availability of the required program is the top attribute in choosing a particular institution for higher education, which shows that the respondents were well-informed about their institution of choice and had previously decided on the programmes for which they wanted to apply or be admitted. The identical findings are also found in the literature from Baharun (2002) in which he concluded that students' selection of a university is mainly determined by types of academic programmes available, quality of education, administration standards, faculty qualification, and convenient and accessible location.

Researchers have found that prospective students utilize the internet to find out information about colleges with increasing frequency over the past several years (Poock, 2006). Other research has shown university web sites to be the primary source of information for students who are choosing a college (Martin, 2006). A university web site is often the first communication experience the majority of students have with a college or university (Martin, 2006).

## **2.4 Source of information and student choice of Public Universities**

According to Ivy (2008) the marketing in itself helps the universities in providing those qualifications, which satisfy the students' needs. The institutions can develop the right programs with the right price policies, communicating with the students and distributing their programs effectively. An effective marketing helps students create real expectations about what the universities offer and what commitment and involvement is needed, without having unreal expectations and promises about offers which cannot be kept (Kotler and Fox 1995). Shah (2010) claims that in such highly competitive environment, the universities are trying to identify what exactly differentiates different higher education institutions from one-another. He claims also that it is important to understand what attracts the prospect students in a university compared to another and to ensure that these expectations are met after they enroll.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2004) suggests that direct involvement in service production means that customers evaluate the quality of employees' appearance and social skills, as well as their technical skills; and consequently this is reflected on the way the offer is judged. Vander Schee (2010) described how college enrollment officers have a positive effect on admissions yield, first year retention, and employee satisfaction at two small colleges, four year institutions consisting of less than 1,500 students, where the model of relationship marketing and enrollment management theory were implemented. Prospective college students frequently read in promotional literature that the college experience is unique and personal to each individual. However, they often experience the opposite. Small colleges can overcome this issue by utilizing a college enrollment officer, who employs relationship marketing, seller expertise, and interaction frequency to meet enrollment goals. Vander Schee's (2010) research on enrollment officers provides detailed information on the challenges colleges and admissions counselors experience in recruiting new students. Vander Schee (2010) also described the positive impact enrollment officers have on admissions yield. Participants in the study at the Midwest Christian University will be asked whether they agree with the statement, "The recruitment material that the Midwest Christian University uses to attract students portrays the Midwest Christian University accurately". It should be noted that if a unique and personal college experience is an important College choice factor, as found in Vander Schee's study, then enrollment officers

should have a positive effect on the College choice decision of potential students and should be utilized at smaller Universities to attract potential students.

Branding institutions in higher education provide the community, and more importantly, prospective students of an institution, an easier way to identify and distinguish them from other schools. As students search for a school, many are drawn to those where they want to become a member of the community and alumni base that is affiliated with that institution. People are paying attention to physical elements, such as campus location or school colors, and or the prestige of the institution, which become intriguing and desirable benefits, ultimately attracting students toward a certain “type” of institution. For example, Moore (2004) explained “Across the continent, the Harvard brand has long communicated preeminence in higher education. The brand has a staying power and impact that are inarguable. Harvard has penetrated its brand for people across the world to recognize its academic excellence in higher education. Branding in higher education gives institutions an identity that locates them in the social world. Branding gives community members the ability to recognize an institution through a logo (trademark). Although branding goes beyond recognition, students like to see themselves in that institution and to associate themselves with a history of excellence. Although branding may appear beneficial to higher education, upward movement requires adept leadership with terrific cooperation from all other groups in the academic community, a willingness to restructure internally, strong working relations with outside business and governmental groups, and a capacity to rise above internal rivalries to gain a sense of the common good.

Promotional activities are more effective when they are sustained and targeted. In other words, promotion strategies are to target continuously, and mainly potentially, prospective customers. For example, students at their third secondary school could be targeted. Targeting potential students might save some of the promotion budget. Another strategy used, which is integrated into the whole institution mission, is the use of slogans and mission statements. Queensland University of Technology’s slogan, for instance, is ‘a university for the real world’ (Gibbs & Knapp, 2002). Such slogans are mentioned and repeated frequently, and this communicates to the public a summary of what the University is about.

Some recent studies have focused more on other aspects that may influence college choice. Hendricks' study (2006) looked at how the Internet was influencing the college choice process, but only from a quantitative perspective. His study began by looking at the study by Christiansen et al. (2003), which looked at the way the expanding influence of the Internet was changing the way college students searched for colleges. Overall, he found that faculty web pages had the most influence, virtual tours (but not those with streaming video) were important, and social networking sites did not influence their decisions (Hendricks, 2006).

LeFauve's (2001) study examined qualities of information and persuasion in traditional publications compared to traditional view books. Her study found web sites were most often used early as an information source in the college choice process to narrow the options, or late in the process once a decision has already been made (LeFauve, 2001). Viewbooks were more likely to be persuasive tools that narrow the choices (LeFauve, 2001). Smith (2006) explored how college and university websites compared to traditional college search resources in terms of usefulness. His findings indicated students found college/university websites most useful during the search stage, and found campus tours to be the most helpful resource during the choice stage.

Internet plays a very important role, including in the HE sector. It allows marketers to customize information that target different cultures, including both verbal and nonverbal content (Usunier & Lee, 2009). Nowadays, Australian institutions have matured in their educational promotion with incorporating technologies like the Internet into their international marketing strategies in attracting students from abroad. Information Communication Technology (ICT) becomes an option for education marketers because it is viewed as a lower cost strategy and risk to new markets. However, it may be as costly as other forms of delivery as well as the limitations of the range of global markets penetration (Mazzarol et al., 2003).

Website and email correspondence provides institutes opportunities to market themselves (Gomes & Murphy, 2003) and communicate with prospective students worldwide without meeting in person. On the other hand, prospective students use the same technologies in their decision making process (Gomes & Murphy, 2003). In order to achieve that, education marketers need to have a clear grasp about the needs of their student markets. Thus, relationship marketing

is important for universities to succeed (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003) in building relationships with prospective students in the competitive HE sector. Australia, the UK and Singapore consider websites to be an important tool to promote their HE globally (Cheung et al., 2011). Many education exporters have their own agencies to assist them in promoting their HE (Pimpa, 2003; Maringe & Carter, 2007). For instance, they have their own respective agencies, Australian Education International, the British Council and the Singapore Tourism Board (Cheung et al., 2011). They work in many ways to promote their countries' HE internationally, among them are establishing government relations on education issues with others governments, carrying out research on the markets, promotional activities via website, events and exhibitions and protecting international students' tuition fees (Cheung et al., 2011).

Recently, the invention of social media, for instance Facebook and Twitter, provides education marketers another channel to market and communicate with prospective students. Research (Aghae, 2010; Wankel, 2009) explored the use of social media to support educational learning in HE. Nowadays, students are referred to as digital natives, who are comfortable with computer-based collaborations because they have been involved with computers and online virtual worlds when they were young (Wankel, 2009). However, Aghae (2010) indicates that social media is less frequently used for academic purposes, though a majority of the students are frequent social media users. The use of social media provides education marketers the flexibility to have possible interaction without concern for time and venue, also with lower cost (Aghae, 2010). Interestingly, limitations and negative aspects of using social media in academia are highlighted which are the loss of non-verbal communication like body language, technical problems like power failure and internet connections which will postpone the interactions and the downside of relying on social media, like less creative thinkers (Aghae, 2010).

One of the main ways a student may interact with a college or university is by visiting the campus and experiencing the campus community and culture first-hand. Admission offices aim their marketing attempts, view books, and high school visits to attract students to visit campus. Research demonstrates that a student who visits a college campus is twice as likely to matriculate compared to a student who does not visit prior to applying (Brown, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the campus visit is defined as any visit, whether formal or informal, to a college

campus, which may include an information session, formal campus tour, sitting in on a class, overnight visit, or admitted student program. These visits can make or break a student's decision about whether or not to apply to the college, and ultimately whether or not to attend (Brown, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Yost & Tucker, 1995). The visit allows a student to decide if they can feel comfortable on campus. Over time, research has demonstrated that the campus visit has a significant effect on a student's decision for application and enrollment, yet it is not clear what factors or influences within the types of campus visits or experiences contribute to the student's final decision (Brown, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Greenough, 2003; Hesel, 2004; Hoover, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Kuh, 2009; Magolda, 2000; Swan, 1998; Yost & Tucker, 1995).

The campus visit allows prospective students and families to examine a four-year institution's quality and institutional characteristics (Yost & Tucker, 1995). Cohen (2009) studied 1,100 high school seniors and concluded that the campus visit was the most influential factor assisting students in deciding whether or not to apply to a particular school, assuming the students had visited prior to the application process (Cohen, 2009; Swan, 1998). Overall, the student's reaction to the campus and its appearance and, based on a series of interactions occurring during the visit to campus all contributed to influencing the decision-making process (Cohen, 2009). A three-year longitudinal study at a large state university with 23,187 students concluded that a student who visits a particular school before applying is nearly twice as likely to matriculate as a student who did not visit before applying (Brown, 2010).

Yost and Tucker's (1995) study with a sample size of 1,571 students also verified the campus visit as an influential factor in the decision-making process for prospective college students. Society has consistently placed a large emphasis on the physical appearance of an institution—for example the elite colleges are labeled the "Ivies" due to their physical appearance, not by their academic reputation. Throughout my research study, the importance of the aesthetic look of the campus, the amount of construction, and the weather during the day were repeatedly factors that impacted a prospective student's campus visit and overall impression of an institution. During a visit to a college campus, an unfriendly professor or a dirty hallway in a residence hall can quickly shape an impression and decision about applying to a specific institution (Yost & Tucker, 1995). Another research study examining college choice



decisions confirmed the importance of the campus visit in conjunction with the college website and contact with faculty and students (Hodges & Barbuto, 2002). Hesel (2004), described the importance of the campus tour data

The campus visit has a significant effect on a decision for a high school student for both application and enrollment; yet research is limited regarding the specifics of the campus visit experience (Brown, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Greenough, 2003; Hesel, 2004; Hoover, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Kuh, 2009; Magolda, 2000; Swan, 1998; Yost & Tucker, 1995). Although the research concludes the campus tour is influential, the literature is not clear on what components are most successful. The literature has yet to examine the influence of informal visits, as many families choose to visit college campuses without engaging in the formal information session and tour. Absent also is research and specifics about the additional campus visit opportunities available to students including attending a class, meeting with a professor, or participating in an overnight visit program. Finally, the effect of yield programming that includes a campus visit on decision-making is lacking in the data surrounding college choice. More research was necessary to evaluate the impact various types of campus visits have on student decision-making regarding college choice.

The campus visit is often a college or university's best recruiting tools. It is a major factor in the decision-making process (Sevier, 1992). Hossler et al. (1990) found that the campus visit was the most important factor influencing a student's enrollment decision. Thus, this study hypothesis that campus visit is a significant influence on college choice decisions. The research of Hossler et al. (1999) indicated that students, regardless of the type of institution they attended gave low rankings to college guides and college fairs. They found that students considered the visits to high schools and college admissions representatives to be more helpful than the fair itself. Kern (2000) stated that African- American high school students seek information on college from current college students, college admissions representatives and faculty. Sevier (1993) indicated that postsecondary institutions need to develop special communication strategies for this audience. Interviews with African-American students by Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) found a feeling of betrayal at receiving a false picture of inclusive campus activities during campus visits.

## **2.5 Decision makers and student choice of Public Universities**

Several scholars (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Tierney & Venegas, 2006) have found parental influence to be a significant predictor of student matriculation. In Levine and Nidiffer's (1996) study of matriculation behaviors of low income students, the researchers found that students who attended prestigious universities were more likely to receive motivational messages from parents than from counselors, peers and other educational role models. In addition, Cabrera and LaNasa (2000) found parental influence to have a direct and positive relationship with the formation and maintenance of college aspirations. Finally, according to a 2007 report by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPSEC) (MacAllum, Glover, Queen & Riggs, 2007), "Regardless of socioeconomic status (SES) or ethnic and racial category, parents play the strongest role in the college choice and decision-making processes for traditional-aged students"

Donovan and McKelfresh (2008) cited the importance of parents in helping their students choose a college. Parents expect to be involved in their student's experience. Their expectations result from a variety of factors, including "high cost of attendance, changing role of higher education in society, and their own regard for their students as children rather than adults" (Scott & Daniel, 2001, p. 84). A study of high-achieving high school students and their parents found financial factors were very important in their decision process, and found the parents were strongly involved in the process (Sztam, 2003).

Influences and recommendations from family members, relatives, friends and professors also play an important role in a student's decision-making process for higher education (HE). (Chen, 2007; Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Eder et al., 2010; Maringe & Carter, 2007). Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) suggested that personal recommendations or word-of-mouth referrals of former alumni are main influences. Even though the final decision to study abroad is mainly decided by students themselves, their family members, relatives and friends influence them significantly by providing information and suggestions (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Pimpa (2003) indicated that the influence of family on the Thai students differed depending on the level of education they planned to study. While the majority of the research investigated family influence from the two categories of 'recommendation' and 'financial support', Pimpa (2003) expanded this to five

categories which include finance, information, expectations, competition and persuasion. Financial and expectations influences were the strongest among Thai students. Further, Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) highlighted the strong parental influence on undergraduate students when deciding on a study destination, especially in Indonesian and Taiwanese students.

High school counselors and teachers also serve as influencers during the search process. Many college admission staff cultivates relationships with counselors as part of their recruitment efforts (Johnson & Stewart, 1991). However, Hutchinson and Bottorff (1986, as cited by Johnson & Stewart, 1991) found that, although "three quarters of high school students used their counselor as a source of information, only fifty-nine percent received the information they sought" (p. 84). In Litten's 1991 research, high school counselors and teachers ranked third on the list of influencers after parents and peers, yet Murphy (1981, as cited by Kealy & Rockel, 1987) and Hossler and Stage (1992) reported counselors and teachers had little influence in the process. This influence may vary based on the academic ability of the student. Bradshaw et al. (2001) found counselors and teachers tended to favor "prestigious, highly selective out of state public or Ivy league institutions" (p. 18) when counseling high achieving students. In addition, Kinzie et al. (2004) reported that counselors at private or affluent public high schools were significantly more influential with high ability students in seeking selective colleges. Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, and Colyar's (2004) work showed the importance of the influence of school counselors on the perception of a student's ability to attend college. Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) also described the importance of high school counselors and the overall high school environment in expanding both perceived and actual opportunities for college.

Despite the strong influence from parents, many students consider high school counselors to be an important source of information (Bradshaw, et al., 2001; Gonzalez, et al., 2003). The advice of high school counselors is more influential with students whose parents had little formal education and who came from lower SES backgrounds (MacAllum, et al., 2007). Lillard and Gerner (1999) explored the impact that a disrupted family has on the likelihood of students applying to and attending four-year colleges and selective four-year colleges and found that a disruption alone is not a significant indicator of the likelihood of students attending a particular type of institution. Rather, there was a relationship between the levels of resources available to

the family and type of college choice, regardless of whether or not the parental unit was intact in the family.

Rowe (2002) observed that research on the influence of school counselors on the college choice process is not extensive and its conclusions are not unanimous on the strength of this influence” (p. 48). Moreover, there is some evidence that points to the “declining influence of the high school counselor in the college choice process of seniors” (Rowe, 2002, pp. 50-51). Hossler and Foley (1995) noted that some evidence indicates that high school students depend heavily on “internal sources of information (parents and other family members) when they begin their college choice process 84 (freshman and sophomore years), but then they turn increasingly to outside sources of information in their junior and senior years (peers, teachers, and counselors)”

Besides academic achievement, peer influences have been shown to be important on several other educational outcomes, including enrollment in college (Fletcher 2008), choice of college major (Lyle 2007) , and whether to join a fraternity (Sacerdote 2001). Research examining the importance of peer influences has lagged behind other major educational decisions, including the choice of which college to attend. This omission is unfortunate due to the increasing importance of these choices for life outcome. For example, Hoxby (2004) forcibly argues that the most important college decision has progressed from *whether* to attend college to *which* college to attend among the many alternatives. Data limitations and empirical difficulties in estimating the importance of peer influences on individual choices are likely two principal reasons for the limited research in this area.

Lyle (2007) examines whether “role model effects” are important in predicting choice of college major at West Point. In particular, the author estimates whether a freshman’s eventual choice of major is associated with the proportion of upperclassmen in his/her randomly assigned peer group (i.e. company). He finds suggestive evidence of a relationship for freshman who major in engineering, social sciences, and natural sciences (although only engineering is statistically significant) but negative associations in other majors. In contrast, Sacerdote (2001) finds no evidence that randomly assigned roommates at Dartmouth College influence the choice of college major.

Although the evidence shows the clear influence of family, it would be expected that peers also influence institutional choice. However, research is somewhat inconsistent in this arena. Kealy and Rockel (1987) show that “the student’s peer group of high school students is highly influential across all dimensions of perceived college quality (p. 689). Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) indicate just the opposite and say that peers have no reported effects on influencing institutional choice. Perhaps the best way to interpret these two findings is to say that peers have influence on a student’s perception of college quality, but do not go as far as having a direct influence on institutional choice. In other words, peers serve as an influence to one of the many factors that comprise college choice.

Perhaps the most contrary finding to the influence of peers came from Kelpie Kern’s (2000) study on college choice influences. She notes that “participants indicated that going to college because of friends were going was not a motivating factor (77.6% responded *disagree* or *disagree strongly* to the statement, ‘I am attending college because my friends are going to college’)” (2000, p. 492).

Several researchers (Coleman, 1966; Fasler & Haynes, 1984; Russell, 1980; Tillery, 1973) have examined the relationships between student interaction with other college bound students and their college participation. According to Hayden (2000), opinions of friends and former students weigh heavily on the minds of African American college applicants when deciding between colleges. These studies and others expound upon the knowledge that the more a high school student interacts with other students with college plans, the more likely they are to consider going to college.

Hossler and Stage (1987, as cited in Hossler et al., 1985) showed a correlation between non-college bound students and their non college bound peers. These researchers stated that students with peers with no college plans influence the predisposition phase of students; college choice. Their research also found that students who were not planning to attend a PEI were more likely to consult their peers. While parental encouragement still is considered the greatest influence on college attainment, the effect of student’s peers does add an additional dynamic to the overall college choice process for high school students.

Friends are important sources of information consulted by students during the *search* and *choice* phases of the college choice process, as research has shown. McDonough's (1997) review of previous studies (Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith, 1989; Manski and Wise, 1983; Zemsky and Oedel, 1983) identified peers and friends among the factors "consistently influential" in the search and choice phases of students' college choice process (p. 4). Lewis and Morrison (1975) included "friends" among the information sources on which students frequently rely (Paulsen, 1990, p. 53). Rowe (2002), in her limited review of literature (Mathay, 1989; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1986), found friends and peers to be influential in the college choice process (pp. 46-48).

Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), which started with surveying a nationally representative sample of 1988 eighth graders, with follow-up surveys in 1990, 1992, and 1994, research by Choy, Horn, Nuñez and Chen (2000) suggest that "parents, peers, and school personnel can all contribute to increasing the college enrollment rates of students at risk of dropping out of high school and of students whose parents had no college experience" (pp. 46, 51). Their study found that peer group effects were especially strong. In fact, having friends with college plans was the strongest predictor of college enrollment. If most or all of their friends had college plans, the odds of moderate- to high-risk students enrolling in Colleges were four times higher than if none of their friends planned to go to college. (Choy et al., 2000, p. 53)

## **2.6 Students qualification and choice of Public Universities**

Student ability is a factor that influences the predisposition, search, and choice stages of the college choice process (Cabrera & Nasa, 2000, p. 6). Predisposition. Paulsen (1990), after reviewing previous research (Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Tuttle, 1981; Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Davies and Kandel, 1981), concluded that a person is more likely to desire to attend college "when student academic aptitude is greater" and "when student academic achievement is greater" (pp. 37-38). Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) research concurred along the same lines (p. 210). The degree of parental encouragement seems to be moderated by students' academic ability, as occupational attainment research suggests that parents give the most encouragement to their child with the highest academic ability (Cabrera & Nasa, 2000, p. 9)

Search. Paulsen's (1990) literature review yielded these five general relationships related to students' academic ability: When student academic aptitude and achievement are greater, he/she is more likely to apply to, or attend, a more highly selective institution, a high-cost institution, an institution located a greater distance from home, a private institution rather than a public institution, and a four-year institution (pp. 55-58). However, according to McDonough (1997), "African Americans, women, and low-SES students are especially likely to attend less-selective institutions, even if their ability and achievements are high" (pp. 4-5). Using the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88/92) and the Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study (BPS:90/92), Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, and Rhee (1997) found that, "as we might expect, measures of ability play a significant role in determining the number of college applications a student submits. Students with higher SAT scores are likely to submit more applications across most racial/ethnic groups" (p. 57).

Some research indicates that "students with higher aptitude begin thinking about college earlier, apply earlier, and consider a larger number of schools" (Paulsen, 1990, pp. 46-47). Studies also indicate that high ability students differ in their rankings of various college choice factors. According to Paulsen (1990), The higher the academic ability of a student, the greater the concern about academic standards, program offerings, and awareness of "net cost" rather than just "price," and the lesser the concern about career outcomes, campus appearance, and financial matters. There is also some evidence that high ability students tend to have much broader geographic limits regarding the search and application process. (p. 50)

Chapman's (1981) model examines students' aptitude or high school achievement as an external factor to college enrollment. Chapman also stated that students' aptitude is associated with their performance on college entrance exams. According to Manski and Wise (1983), a high school student's GPA and SAT scores are very strong indicators of their enrollment into higher education. Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) also stated that student's ability is an indicator of college attainment, but they also conclude that the "ability of the student seems to moderate the amount and quality of parental encouragement" (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000, p. 9). According to Hossler et al (1985) student ability and student achievement have a significant and direct impact upon the predisposition of high school students toward a postsecondary education. Whereas parental

income does not influence a high school student predisposition to attend a PEI, parents' educational level does (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Zemsky and Oedel (1983) found that student ability was directly related to the selectivity of the PEI that a student applied to as well as where the institution was located.

The high school performance of a student is most likely quantified as a grad point average (GPA) or class rank, which is often a factor in the acceptance or rejection of an applicant to a PEI. GPA and class rank are tangible values by which a PEI can base its admissions; however, they are not the best indicators of which PEI a student's selects to attend. Chapman (1981) indicated that high school performance "may trigger a whole set of other responses to the student that, in turn, help shape college choice." (p. 494). In Jackson's (1982) research, he found a strong correlate of high school students' aspiration (educational or occupational) to their academic achievement (p. 239). Therefore, the higher the performance of a student in high school, the higher the academic and occupational aspirations of the student. High achieving students are also "more likely to aspire to attend a PEI and they are more likely to follow through on their plans" (Hossler, et al, 1985, p. 253).

Other research has focused on disadvantaged students, often including low socioeconomic status, irrespective of specific ethnicity. Because student aid and family income have not kept up with rising postsecondary prices, college is becoming less affordable and accessible, especially for low- and middle-income families (Perna & Li, 2006). Low- and moderate-income students have been more sensitive to college costs than high-income students. Financial aid has had a significant positive impact on the enrollment and success rates of students from low-income families (Chen & DesJardins, 2008). College enrollments have increased over the past two decades for 18 to 24 year old students, but there is still a significant gap for students in the lowest quartile for family income than for those students whose family income is in the highest quartile (Mortenson, 2001). Studies regarding the support and resources students receive in high school, particularly in disadvantaged communities, point to the importance of the positive influence high school counselors can have on students in encouraging them to explore 26 collegiate opportunities (Farmer-Hinton, 2008). Moses (2001) explored oppressive societal structures and the way in which those oppressive structures may limit a



student's contexts of choice, which in turn limits the real choice. Plank and Jordan (2001) found that an increased amount of information, guidance, and preparatory actions students receive in high school positively impacts a student's enrollment in a four-year college or university. This finding also points to socioeconomic status as a major factor in impacting enrollment for students. Sokatch (2006) found that peer's plans were the single best predictor of 4-year college enrollment for urban students of low socioeconomic status. These findings apply specifically to this group, and are not predictors for the general population.

Reports since 1999 have discussed the increasing "economic stratification" of higher education, pointing to increasing numbers of students from upper-income families enrolling in private and public universities, and lower numbers of students from middle and upper-class families enrolling in public two-year institutions (Perna & Titus, 2004). State public policies have been suggested as at least a partial reason for the economic stratification that has occurred (Kipp, Price, & Wohlford, 2002). States with higher availability of need-based financial aid have tended to have higher levels of enrollment at private four-year colleges and universities in a state (Perna & Titus, 2004). Private four year institutions have appeared to be more likely to enroll students from the lowest quartile of socioeconomic status, primarily because there is more institutional financial aid available in the private sector.

Not all studies have focused in some way on disadvantaged students. Wilson's study (1997) followed 9 high school seniors from middle to high-socioeconomic backgrounds over a 14-month period to gain a better understanding of the process from their perspective. She found that each student experienced cognitive dissonance through this stressful time, primarily resulting from a lack of understanding of their own goals, not having enough information about their options, and not being able to choose one option that would satisfy all of their objectives. Consequently, some students procrastinated in the application process or the decision process, others made a quick decision specifically to avoid a drawn-out period of stressful indecision, and others avoided some anxiety by applying only to one school

Perna and Thomas (2009) also examined the impact of tests on the levels of college enrollment for high school students. They focused on state-mandated high school tests, and

found greater negative consequences for students at schools with lower socioeconomic status and academic achievement. According to Koyoma (2007) he stated that retention rates for underrepresented students were often due to financial concerns. Low-income students were less likely to attend college because of this financial constraint. "To increase college access we must move beyond traditional financial approaches that have focused narrowly on issues of college enrollment, without sufficient attention to the multiple factors required to be academically, socially and culturally prepared" .

Students often make decisions based on their social class and on the world in which they live. Differences in Socio economic status (SES) factors are prevalent when students begin discussing college (Kablenberg, 2004; McDonough, 1997). For example, middle-class students are often surrounded by information and gain knowledge about college from family members who have attended college and friends who may be preparing to attend (Bloom, 2007). Students learn that attending college is an expectation held by family, friends, educators, and society (McDonough, 1997).

Of particular importance are first-generation college bound students. Typically, students whose parents did not attend college find it more difficult to address the issues related to choice, finances, and application needs when it comes to college (McDonough, 1997). Typically, these students begin thinking about college much later than do students who have parents and family members who have attended higher education institutions (McDonough, 1997). Often, individuals who are first generation college students not only find it difficult to manage the cultural conflicts with attending college, but are also unprepared academically to pursue a degree in higher education (McDonough, 1997). Students also felt the need to, "shoulder the weight of their own, their families, and their community's hopes and fears about moving out of poverty and into the unfamiliar middle-class orbit; and far too often, they must make this journey alone and unaided" (Bloom, 2007 p. 356).

Gladieux (2004) analyzed the work of Lee and explained that, regardless of level of academic achievement, students of low SES attended college at considerably lower rates than did students of higher SES. Gladieux noted that students from the highest Socio economic status

(SES) quartile and the lowest test-score quartile were more likely to go to college than were students from the lowest SES quartile and the highest test-score quartile. Simply put, "the least bright rich kids have as much chance of going to college as the smartest poor kids" (Gladieu, 2004 p. 24). Not only does a student's SES affect the choices made, but high school experience is often a deciding factor. According to Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), the higher a student's Socio economic status (SES), the less susceptible the student was to risk factors such as dropping out, mobility rate, low grade-point average, and single-parent families. On average, low SES students had at least one risk factor influencing their high school career as opposed to middle and high SES students who had less than one risk factor influencing their high school experience (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study adapted the College choice theory developed by Randall G. Chapman (1986). The College choice process refers to the factors that influence applicants when deciding which Colleges to apply to and what factors to consider when deciding which of the Colleges or Universities they have been admitted and wish to attend (Ranero, 1999). The three main stages of these models are: Predisposition, Search and Choice.

The second stage of the College selection process has been identified as the Search stage where the prospective students begin to seek information about Colleges and Universities that they might be interested in attending. Students create a list of these Colleges and Universities they wish to attend from certain attributes and information obtained that will assist them in making their decision to apply to particular institutions. The Search stage ends when the students have decided on the Colleges or Universities they will apply to and have completed the applications for those respective institutions. This theoretical basis fits into the study as it highlights the objectives investigated by the study such as characteristics of institution, source of information, decision makers and the students qualification as some of the factors that influence applicants when deciding which Colleges to apply to and what factors to consider when deciding which of the Colleges or Universities they will be admitted and wish to attend.

The final stage of this College choice process is the Choice stage. This where students are notified of their acceptance into particular Colleges and Universities. They make a decision to attend one of those Colleges or Universities based upon the institutional characteristics that are

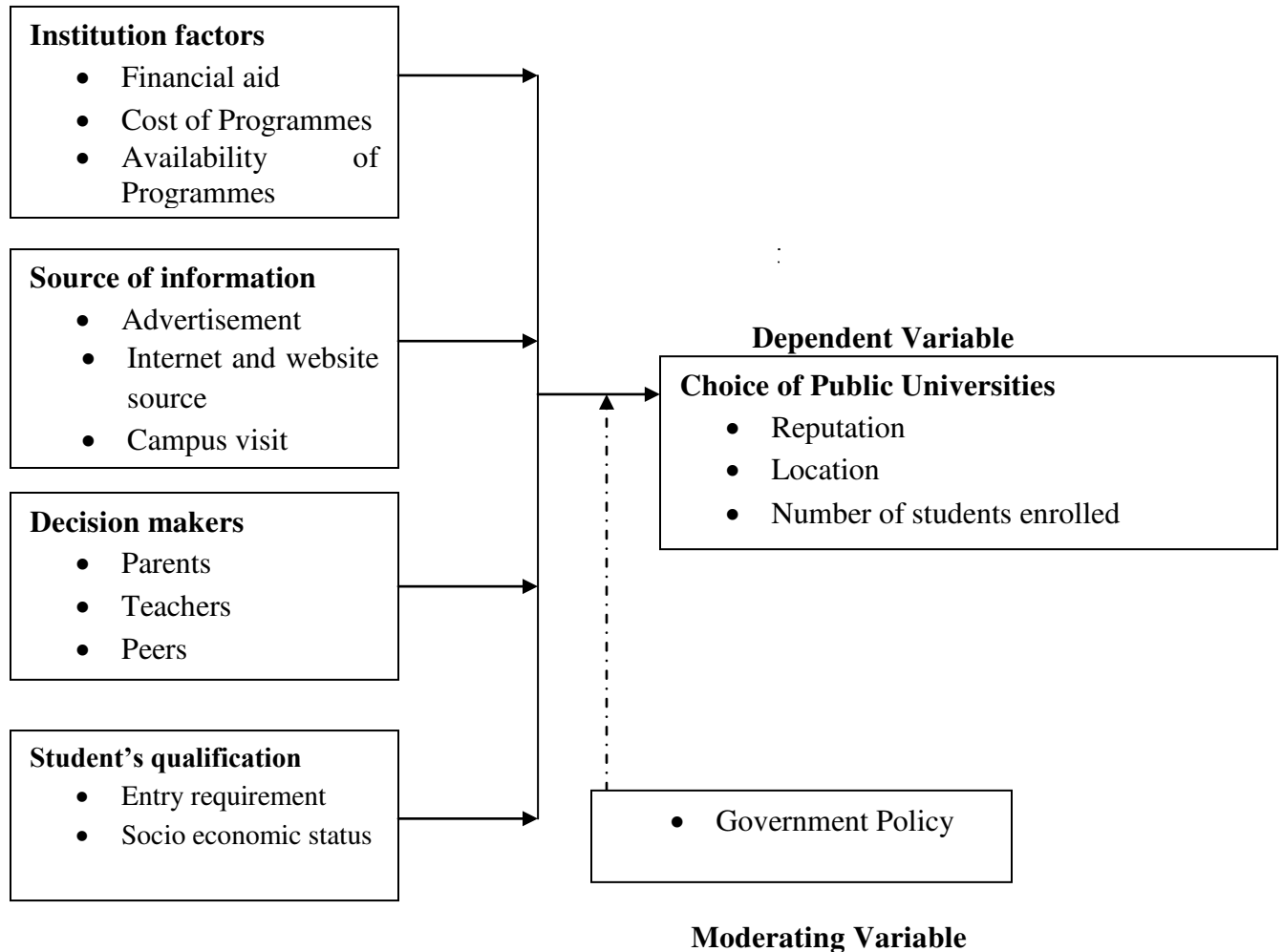
most important to them and their own personal qualification. Therefore, students will have different approaches to make their ultimate decision. This is when the students starts attending lectures in there institution of choice.

## **2.8 Conceptual framework**

The whole literature review was summarized in the above conceptual framework to determine student's choice of Public Universities. The figure showed the factors that influence students' choice of Public Universities as how Institution factors, significant persons, source of information, and student's needs influences student's choice of universities. It also showed the various indicators that provided a platform that assessed and provided solution was based on.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

**Factors influencing student choice**



**2.9 Summary of Literature**

The purpose of the review of the above literature was to avoid unnecessary and unintentional duplication of framework from which the research findings was to be interpreted and also demonstrate the researcher's familiarity with existing knowledge. The researcher reviewed literature on the institutional and social factors that influences student's choice of Public Universities and this included institutional factors, sources of information, Decision makers and student's qualification hence it will help the University to come up with ways of improving enrolment.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter comprised of the methodology that was used in this study which included the research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments, validity and reliability of the research instruments, data analysis techniques, ethical issues and operational definition of variables.

#### **3.2 Research design**

The study applied a descriptive research design; this is the systematic, empirical inquiry into which the researcher will not have a direct control of the independent variables as its manifestation has already occurred (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). Descriptive research is concerned with how, what is or what exists is related to some preceding event that will influence or affect the present condition or event (Best, 1970). This is in line with the purpose of the study as it sought to investigate factors influencing students' choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya region. The researcher preferred a descriptive research design because the variables under study have already occurred and they are beyond control. Also the design gave the study the advantage of collecting original data for the purpose of describing a population which is too large to observe directly hence it was good for the purpose of generalization (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Descriptive survey gathers data on a one shot basis and hence it is economical and efficient (Morrison, 1993). Descriptive survey is also compatible with questionnaire which the research employed in collecting data (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999).

#### **3.3 Target Population**

The study targeted students from University of Nairobi and Kibabii University in Western Kenya region. The population included 84,000 Students from University of Nairobi (UoN admissions office, 2016) and Kibabii University had 6,200 Students (Kibabii University admissions office, 2016). The target population will include 84,000 students from University of Nairobi, 6,200 students from Kibabii University and 10 University administrators who are in charge of enrollment therefore the total target population was 90,200.

**Table 3.3: University Population framework**

<b>University</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>University of Nairobi</b>	84,000
Uon (SCDE)	13,753
<b>Kibabii University</b>	6,200
Kibabii University (SOE)	2,015

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling procedure

In this section, the researcher discussed the sample size and sampling procedures that was used.

#### 3.4.1 Sample size selection

A sample size is a smaller group of subjects obtained from the accessible population (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999). The researcher used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to determine the sample size which was suitable for this study (see appendix iv). From a population of 90,200 the sample size is 382 according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table.

#### 3.4.2 Sampling Procedures

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals selected represent the large group from which they were selected (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999). Proportionate sampling procedure was used to select students as shown in the table below

**Table 3.4 Population size**

<b>University</b>	<b>Target Population</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
University of Nairobi	84,000	346
Kibabii University	6,200	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,200</b>	<b>372</b>

Census sampling was used to select the 10 University administrators in charge of enrollment. The study adapted a systematic random sampling technique to select the sample population of students by picking the tenth student from their respective learning programmes using the admission lists for students (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments.**

The research instruments that were employed in this study as a tool for data collection were Questionnaires and interview schedule which were used to supplement each other to give a deeper and wider exploration into research perspective which gave the researcher more quality. According to Bourke (2005) simply states that questionnaires are used to obtain different type of information. It has several advantages. Gay (1992) maintains that questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views or opinion and also to make suggestions. It is also anonymous, anonymity helps to produce more candid answers than is possible in an interview, low cost of collecting data, designing the questionnaire is easy and sending it to a respondent as well is being less expensive in analyzing and processing the data, It also presents an even stimulus potentially to large numbers of people simultaneously and provides the investigation with an easy accumulation of data.

#### **Questionnaires for students**

The questionnaire for students comprised of personal information, it also collected data based on the study objectives which are institutional factors, Source of information, Decision makers and Students qualification, it comprised of both close ended and matrix questions.

#### **Interview schedule**

Kombo and Tromp (2006) advocate for use of interview schedule for a case study research. The researcher will construct a set of questions on interview schedule for University administrators. The aim was to make the respondents open up and provide more information through in-depth probing in regard to the research questions (Appendix iii).

#### **3.5.1 Pilot Study**

The research instrument was piloted in order to standardize them before the actual study. The pilot study was done in the neighboring Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology to determine if the items in the research instruments yielded the required data for the final study.

#### **3.5.2 Validity of Research Instruments**

Validity refers to the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomena under study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). (Gay, 1987) states validity as the ability of an instrument to measure what it is intended to measure. Content



validity is a measure of the degree to which data collected using a particular instrument represents a specific domain of indicators of a particular concept (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In this study, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire items are constructed or formulated based on the objectives of the study. The item was written in a clear and simple language for easy comprehension by the respondents. To ensure content validity, the researcher used the University lectures including the supervisor to determine the validity of the questionnaires. This ensured that the items in the instruments captured the intended information accurately according to the objectives of the study.

### **3.5.3 Reliability of the Instruments**

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated tests when administered a number of times. In a research study, a reliability coefficient can be computed to indicate how reliable data are. A coefficient of 0.80 or more implies that there is a higher degree of reliability of the data (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In this study, the test-retest method was employed to assess the reliability of the research instruments in one University which was not part of the actual research.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

After the approval of the proposal, the researcher proceeds to obtain permit from the National Council of Research (NCR) and a letter of authority to conduct research from the University of Nairobi (UoN). The researcher then wrote a letter of introduction for the respondents. The letter indicated the purpose and significance of the study. The researcher undertook survey of the sample population and developed a rapport with the respondents before the actual study. The researchers carried out a pilot testing of the instrument to ensure reliability. The researcher then collected the data from the field, assisted by two research assistants whom were inducted on how to carry out the research. Once the information was collected it was analyzed using the instruments, write a report and submit it before a panel for consideration of the award of a Masters Degree in Project Planning and Management.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis refers to the process in which raw data is ordered and organized to make it useful information. The study used a descriptive statistical methods (Quantitative and

Qualitative); it started by editing questionnaires to minimize errors. Questionnaires were crosschecked to ensure the questions were answered well. Coding of the answered question and organisation of the whole information was done before analyzing the data. Frequency and percentages was used in the analysis of data. The information in tables was explained to enhance interpretation of the data.

### **3.8 Ethical Issues**

The researcher observed confidentiality by keeping information from the respondent confidential. The names and any form of identification that can be associated with the respondents were not being sought because such information was not included in the report. Moreover prior to volunteering information, the respondents were given enough information regarding the study which was for academic reasons and their participation was voluntary. The researcher sought permission from relevant authorities before embarking on research. This included seeking permission from the University of Nairobi, the Kenya National Council of Science and technology. This enabled them to provide the required information without any fear.

### **3.9 Operational definition of variables**

There are two variables Independent and dependent variables. The Independent variables were institution factors, source of information, decision makers and student's qualification. The dependent variable is Students' choice of Public Universities.

**Table 3.9: Operation definition of variables**

<b>Research objective</b>	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Measurement scale</b>	<b>Statistical test</b>
To examine how institution characteristics influences students' choice of Public Universities.	<b>Independent variable</b> Institutional factors <b>Dependent Variable</b> Choice of Public Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of funds</li> <li>• Programme cost</li> <li>• Programmes available</li> </ul>	Nominal  Ordinal	Descriptive analysis  Frequency table
To determine how the source of information influence students' choice of Public Universities.	<b>Independent variable</b> Source of information <b>Dependent Variable</b> Choice of Public Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisement</li> <li>• Internet and website</li> <li>• Campus visit</li> </ul>	Nominal  Ordinal	Descriptive analysis  Frequency table
To determine the extent to which decision makers influence student's choice of the Public Universities.	<b>Independent variable</b> Decision makers <b>Dependent Variable</b> Choice of Public Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Friends</li> </ul>	Nominal  Ordinal	Descriptive analysis  Frequency table
To examine how students qualification influences students' choice of Public Universities.	<b>Independent variable</b> Students qualification <b>Dependent Variable</b> Choice of Public Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry requirement</li> <li>• Socio-economic status</li> </ul>	Nominal  Ordinal	Descriptive analysis  Frequency table

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter gives data analysis, presentation of the findings, interpretation and discussion. It starts with the demographic information of the study and discusses the four objectives that guided the study. These are: influence of institutional factors, source of information, decision makers and student's qualification in choosing of public Universities. The data was presented in tables.

#### 4.2 Questionnaire Return Rate

The researcher was interested in knowing about the questionnaires return rate. This owes to the fact that the return rate determines whether bias exists or does not. Nevertheless it was of importance because declining survey participation rates threaten the source of information and its perceived utility and thereby allowing for biasness in the data collected, (National Research Council, 2013). The study targeted 3,700 students from University of Nairobi and Kibabii University in Western Kenya region. Table 4.1 contains the rate at which the questionnaires were returned after dispatch to the sampled respondents.

**Table 4.1: Questionnaire Return Rate**

<b>Questionnaire</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Number of respondent</b>	<b>Return rate</b>
<b>Questionnaires Dispatched</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Questionnaires Returned</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>99.12</b>
<b>Questionnaires missing</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.88</b>

Out of 348 questionnaires that were delivered to respondents 372 (99.12%) were returned dully filled while 7(1.88%) were not returned. The reason why some questionnaires were not returned was that some of the respondents were not able to attend their classes on the day of questionnaire collection by the researcher. The 372(99.12%) respondents were considered adequate for this analysis.

### 4.3 Demographic Information of Respondents

The study was interested in the assessing whether gender, age of respondents and level of study of respondents in order to establish how they are related to the understanding of student's choice of Public Universities. These are further discussed in the following subsequent themes.

#### 4.3.1 Gender of respondents

Gender differences are complementary; individuals, our collective humanity, and society as a whole, all benefit from masculine and feminine characteristics. We are better for having men with a clear understanding of their masculinity and women with a clear understanding of their femininity, the respondents were asked to indicate their gender from either being male or female choice as given on the questionnaire.

**Table 4.2: Gender characteristics of respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>50.96</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>49.04</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.2 showed that majority 186(50.96%) were male students against 179(49.04%) of female students among the 365 selected students. This implies that there was Male domination among the students above the female representation and this shows that more male than females joined the two Universities.

#### 4.3.2 Age of respondents

The study sought to know the age of respondents in order to establish how age was related to student's choice of Public Universities. This was important to determine the age categories of the students. Table 4.3 summarizes the results

**Table 4.3: Age of respondents**

<b>Age in years</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>18 – 20</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8.00</b>
<b>21 – 30</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>41.00</b>
<b>31 – 40</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>43.00</b>
<b>Above 41</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>8.00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In the table 4.3 above, it shows that out of 365 (100%) respondents, those who were aged between (18 – 20) years were 29 (8%), between (21 – 30) years were 157 (43%), and between (31 – 40) years were 150 (41%) and above 41 years of age were 29 (8%). The study showed that most respondents who joined the Universities were between the age of (21 -30) years that comprised of 147 and between age (31 – 40) years while age (18 – 20) years and above 40 years had low University entry as they comprised of 29 respondents each. The majority of students were between 21-31 years of age.

#### **4.3.3 Level of study of respondents**

The study sought to know the level of study of the respondents was related to student's choice of Public Universities. The results were obtained and revealed in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Level of study of respondents**

<b>Study level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Certificate</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>29.32</b>
<b>Diploma</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>23.56</b>
<b>Bachelor</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>37.26</b>
<b>Masters</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7.95</b>
<b>PhD</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.91</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In the table 4.4 above, it can be revealed that majority of the respondents showed that they are pursuing Bachelors degree 136 (37.26%), followed by Certificate 107 (29.32%), Diploma 86 (23.56%), Masters 29 (7.95%) and PhD 7 (1.91%). This means the Bachelors degree programmes had a larger enrollment.

#### **4.4 To examine how institution characteristics influences students' choice of Public Universities.**

This was the first objective that the study was out to achieve and areas of focus included financial aid, cost of programmes and availability of programmes respectively. The researcher asked the respondents questions pertaining institution characteristics and students choice of Public Universities

##### **4.4.1 Financial aid and students' choice of Public Universities**

The study was interested in establishing how financial aid influences students choice of Public Universities. Financial assistance offered by university is one of the four very important attributes expected from a particular higher education institution of choice. The students who receive financial aid awards are more likely to enter college. The respondents were asked if they were offered any financial aid before choosing which institution to attend. The responses are shown in table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Financial aid**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>90.14</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9.86</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.5 above shows 329(90.14%) agreed that they received financial aid from family members or guardian, Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development fund while 36(9.86%) of the respondents indicated they never received any financial aid for their education but rather they financed themselves. This means that most students were able to attend higher education as a result of the financial aid they received from various channels failure of which they would not be in a position to seek knowledge. The findings of this study agrees with a study conducted by Yusof (2008) who found out that students who receive financial aid awards are

more likely to enter college. Yusuf (2008) also found that financial assistance offered by University as one of the four very important attributes expected from a particular higher education institution of choice. Thus, students who receive financial aid awards are more likely to enter College.

#### 4.4.2 University offered financial aid to students

The study was interested in establishing if University offered financial aid to students in making their choices of Public Universities; the respondents gave the following responses as shown in table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: University offered financial aid and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>15.62</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>25.48</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13.70</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>19.72</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>25.48</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

93(25.48%) of the respondents agreed with the University offering financial aid to them through Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development funds. 93(25.48%) strongly disagreed, 72(19.72%) disagreed, 57(15.62%) strongly agreed while 50(13.70%) were undecided with the fact that the University provided financial aid to them. This implied that majority of the respondents relied on the financial aid being provided to the through the various agencies like the Higher Education Loans Board, County funds, Scholarships provided by Non Governmental Organisations and Constituency development funds in order to have higher education. Government and private loans are available to students and are the largest form of finance. Private loans usually supplement the federal and state financial aid (Olivkez & Tiemey, 2005). Many students are concerned about obtaining loans because they will have to repay the money with interest.



#### 4.4.3 Cost of Programmes and students' choice of Public Universities

The study was interested in establishing cost of programmes in relation of student's choice of Public Universities. Tuition cost of programmes in a learning institution is an important factor people put into consideration when selecting an institution, the tuition fees should be affordable and justified depending with the programme. The respondents were asked if the Cost of the Programme they are undertaking was affordable for them. The responses are shown in table 4.7

**Table 4.7: Cost of Programmes and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>78.36</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>21.64</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

286(78.36%) of the respondents agreed that the Cost of the Programmes they were pursuing was affordable to them since they were working, making installment payments and others seeked financial aid from Higher Education Loan Board, Constituency Development Fund and County Government funds while 79(21.64%) disagreed with the Cost of Programmes being affordable to them since they were unemployed thus it was hard to raise the required fees for the programme. The study concludes that financial aid provided by the Higher Education Loan Board, Constituency Development Fund or the County Government funds most of the students would not be in a position to raise the required amount for their respective programmes. The study findings supports Yusof et al. (2008) who emphasized that parent of prospective students consider financial assistance to students to be an important factor that influences them towards a particular institution. Similar to Xiaoping (2002), Yusof et al. (2008) also found that cost of tuition is a moderately important factor considered by parents in selecting a particular institution for their child. Supporting these findings, Joseph and Joseph (1998, 2000) and Wagner and Fard (2009) noted that the cost of education, value of education and content and structure or degrees offered are the three most important factors that influence the choice of the students.

#### 4.4.4 The Cost of attending University was affordable

The study was interested in establishing if the Cost of attending University was affordable to students. The respondents gave the following responses are shown in table 4.8.

**Table 4.8: Cost of attending University and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>29.32</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>43.28</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9.86</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>15.61</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.93</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the responses, 158(43.28%) agreed that the Cost of attending University was affordable to them, 107(29.32%) strongly agreed, 57(15.61%) disagreed, 36(9.86%) were undecided while 7(1.93%) strongly disagreed with the Cost of attending University being affordable. By looking at the percentages, one may easily tell that most of the students agreed to a larger extents that the cost of attending college was affordable since they sought financial assistance from Higher Education Loan Board, Constituency Development Fund, family members or the County Government funds. This is in agreement with a study conducted by Yusof (2008) found that financial assistance offered by university as one of the four very important attributes expected from a particular higher education institution of choice. Thus, students who receive financial aid awards are more likely to enter college (Jackson, 1988; Litten, 1982; Manski & Wise, 1983).

#### 4.4.5 Availability of Programmes and students' choice of Public Universities

The study was interested in establishing whether enough programmes available influenced students choice of Public Universities. Availability of a desired course is most important for students when selecting a University. The respondents were asked if the University offered the Programmes they intended to pursue. The responses are shown in table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Programmes available**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>88.22</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>11.78</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.9 above shows 322(88.22%) of the respondents indicated that they pursued the programmes they wished for because they were marketable to them while 43(11.78%) of the respondents indicated they did pursue a different course from what they intended at first since what they wanted to pursue was not offered at the time they joined the University. This implied that the institution had a variety of programmes that ensured the prospective students applied for the programmes they had wished to pursue. The study is supported by Maringe's (2006) who suggested that when choosing programs on which schools or Universities to attend, Part of the decision-making process includes career prospects, better return on investment, and a brighter future. Universally, availability of a desired course is the most important for students when selecting a university (Price et al., 2003). The availability of in-demand courses and programs and the presence of a wide range of choices is the most important factor that can influence international students' decision-making process. However, this may be balanced by cost factors, especially when the student and his parents cannot afford very expensive tuition and school fees. Maringe's (2006) research suggests that when choosing programs or courses, including which schools or universities to attend, international students put much stress on value for money. Part of their decision-making process includes career prospects, better return on investment, and a brighter future.

#### **4.4.6 The University had variety of Major and Minor Programmes I wanted**

The study was interested in establishing if the University offered the Major and Minor Programmes they intended to pursue. The responses were as follows in table 4.10.

**Table 4.10: Variety of Programmes and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>35.34</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>31.23</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7.95</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>17.53</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7.95</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Responses varied 129(35.34%) strongly agreed that the University offered the Major and Minor programmes they wanted, 114(31.23%) agreed, 64(17.53%) disagreed, 29(7.95%) were undecided while 29(7.95%) strongly disagreed with the University offering the Major and Minor programmes they wanted. Majority of the students strongly agreed while others agreed that the University offered the Major and Minor Programmes they intended to Pursue. This implies that most of the respondents agreed to a larger extent that they were pursuing the courses they wished to pursue at first since the institutions had a variety of courses to choose from. The results are in agreement with Yusof et al. (2008) who agrees with the findings as he explicated that the availability of the required program is the top attribute in choosing a particular institution for higher education, which shows that the respondents were well-informed about their institution of choice and had previously decided on the programmes for which they wanted to apply or be admitted. The identical findings are also found in the literature from Baharun (2002) in which he concluded that students' selection of a university is mainly determined by types of academic programmes available, quality of education, administration standards, faculty qualification, and convenient and accessible location.

#### **4.5 How the source of information influences students' choice of Public Universities.**

This was the second objective the study sought to achieve with a focus in source of information as an influence of students' choice of Public Universities and this included advertisement and internet and website. This section attempted to find out how the respondents were able to access information about the University before they joined.

#### 4.5.1 Advertisement and students' choice of Public Universities.

The study was interested in establishing how advertisements influenced student's choice of Public Universities. Promotional activities are more effective when they are sustained and targeted, it is important to understand what attracts the prospect students in a university compared to another and to ensure that these expectations are met after they enroll. The respondents were requested to state if advertisement was their major source of information they used to get the required information. They responded as follows:

**Table 4.11: Advertisement and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>86.30</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13.70</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From table 4.11, 315(86.30%) of the respondents agreed that they knew about the presence of the University through advertisement because it was effective and they got satisfied with the information given to them since they were free to ask questions about the Institution and the programmes offered as they got an immediate feedback while 50(13.70%) of the respondents disagreed with advertisement being their source of their information since they got information through friends, alumni students. This implied that most people relied on advertisement to get the required information before making their respective choices on which University to attend. Ivy (2008) agrees with the study findings by saying marketing helps the Universities in providing those qualifications, which satisfy the students' needs. The study was also supported by (Kotler and Fox 1995) who found out effective marketing helps students create real expectations about what the Universities offer and what commitment and involvement is needed hence institutions can develop the right programs with the right price policies, communicating with the students and distributing their programs effectively. Shah (2010) claims that in such highly competitive environment, the universities are trying to identify what exactly differentiates different higher education institutions from one-another. He claims also that it is important to understand what attracts the prospect students in a university compared to another and to ensure that these expectations are met after they enroll.

#### 4.5.2 University literature like brochures was the source of information

The study sought to find out if the University literature like brochures was the Major source of information to the respondents. The respondents had to say the following.

**Table 4.12: University literature (brochures) and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>25.48</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>39.18</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>19.73</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9.86</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5.75</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Responses varied, 143(39.18%) agreed that they accessed University information through University literature like brochures since it was easy to access them and it gave more time in decision making as they read several times before making up their mind as well as seeking more clarity from admission officers, 93(25.48%) strongly agreed, 72(19.73%) were undecided, 36(9.86%) disagreed while 21(5.75%) strongly disagreed. The implication signifies that most respondents agreed to a larger extent that brochures was a reliable source of information as it provided room for verification from the college enrollment officers. The findings of the study concurred with Vander Schee (2010) who described how college enrollment officers have a positive effect on admissions yield and are utilized to attract potential students.

#### 4.5.3 Internet and website source and students' choice of Public Universities

The study was interested in establishing how internet and website influenced student's choice of Public Universities. Website and email correspondence provides institutes opportunities to market themselves and communicate with prospective students worldwide without meeting in person. On the other hand, prospective students use the same technologies in their decision making process. This section presents the respondents views about internet and website source was a source of information for them before choosing where to attend. They gave the following response.

**Table 4.13: Internet and website source and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>72.60</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27.40</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From table 4.13 above, 265(72.60%) agreed that internet and website was the major source of information to them since they were well conversant with the trending issues in technology and that it offered sufficient information which is up to date for them, while 100(27.40%) of the respondent disagreed with website and internet being the major source of information as they opted for friends and brochures as their source of information since they were not conversant with technology. This implied that most of the respondents embrace technology as a source of information since its first and reliable. This was in line with many studies done earlier on. For instance, Researchers have found that prospective students utilize the internet to find out information about colleges with increasing frequency over the past several years (Poock, 2006). Other research has shown university web sites to be the primary source of information for students who are choosing a college (Martin, 2006). A University web site is often the first communication experience the majority of students have with a college or university (Martin, 2006). Some recent studies have focused more on other aspects that may influence college choice. Hendricks' study (2006) looked at how the Internet was influencing the college choice process, but only from a quantitative perspective. His study began by looking at the study by Christiansen et al. (2003), which looked at the way the expanding influence of the Internet was changing the way college students searched for colleges. Overall, he found that faculty web pages had the most influence, virtual tours (but not those with streaming video) were important, and social networking sites did not influence their decisions (Hendricks, 2006).

#### **4.5.4 Visiting the University website was the Major source of information**

The study sought to find out if the University website was the Major source of information for the respondents joining the University of their Choice. The respondents had to say the following.

**Table 4.14: University website and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>33.42</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>35.34</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13.70</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>15.62</b>
Strongly disagree	7	1.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.14 shows that, 129(35.34%) of the respondents agreed that the University website provided enough information to them, 122(33.42%) strongly agreed, 57(15.62%) disagreed. 50(13.70%) were undecided while 7(1.92%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with University website being the major source of information. The results indicated that most of the respondents agreed to a larger extent that they accessed the information about the University through website and this was because they were well conversant with technology as they also believed the current and reliable information was available for them. The study findings was supported by LeFauve's (2001) who found web sites were most often used early as an information source in the college choice process to narrow the options, or late in the process once a decision has already been made (LeFauve, 2001).

#### **4.5.5 Campus visit and students' choice of Public Universities**

The study was interested in establishing if campus visit influenced students choice of Public Universities. One of the main ways a student may interact with a college or university is by visiting the campus and experiencing the campus community and culture first-hand. Admission offices aim their marketing attempts, view books, and high school visits to attract students to visit campus. This section presents the respondents views about campus visit being a factor for their college choice. They gave the following response.



**Table 4.15: Campus visit and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>88.22</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>11.78</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In table 4.15 above, it can be revealed that majority of respondents 322(88.22%) agreed to have at least visited the campus before making a decision on where to join in order to seek more clarity from the administrators while 43(11.78%) of the respondents disagreed they never visited the campus as they relied more on advertisements from newspapers, internet and websites. This implied that most students found campus visit to be more important to them before making a decision. These results are in agreement with Cohen (2009) who studied 1,100 high school seniors and concluded that the campus visit was the most influential factor assisting students in deciding whether or not to apply to a particular school, assuming the students had visited prior to the application process (Cohen, 2009; Swan, 1998). Overall, the student's reaction to the campus and its appearance and, based on a series of interactions occurring during the visit to campus all contributed to influencing the decision-making process (Cohen, 2009). A three-year longitudinal study at a large state university with 23,187 students concluded that a student who visits a particular school before applying is nearly twice as likely to matriculate as a student who did not visit before applying (Brown, 2010). Yost and Tucker's (1995) studied a sample size of 1,571 students who verified the campus visit as an influential factor in the decision-making process for prospective college students. Society has consistently placed a large emphasis on the physical appearance of an institution for example the elite colleges are labeled the "Ivies" due to their physical appearance, not by their academic reputation.

#### 4.5.6 Campus visit influenced my college choice

The study sought to find out if Campus Visit was an influence in their University Choice. The respondents had to say the following.

**Table 4.16: Campus visit and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>38.36</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>32.88</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4.11</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>8.77</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>15.88</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

140(38.36%) of the respondents strongly agreed with campus visit was an important influence in their college choice, 120(32.88%) of the respondents agreed, 58(15.88%) strongly disagreed, 32(8.77%) disagreed while 15(4.11%) were undecided. This implied that most respondents to a larger extent agreed with campus visit being an important factor in their college choice while a few respondents disagreed to a lesser extent. This study is in line with researchers (Brown, 2010; Cohen, 2009; Greenough, 2003; Hesel, 2004; Hoover, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Kuh, 2009; Magolda, 2000; Swan, 1998; Yost & Tucker, 1995) Who found campus visit having a significant effect on a decision for a high school student for both application and enrollment; yet research is limited regarding the specifics of the campus visit experience. Although the research concludes the campus tour is influential, the literature is not clear on what components are most successful. The literature has yet to examine the influence of informal visits, as many families choose to visit college campuses without engaging in the formal information session and tour. Absent also is research and specifics about the additional campus visit opportunities available to students including attending a class, meeting with a professor, or participating in an overnight visit program. Finally, the effect of yield programming that includes a campus visit on decision-making is lacking in the data surrounding college choice. More research was necessary to evaluate the impact various types of campus visits have on student decision-making regarding college choice. (Sevier, 1992) stated campus visit is often a college or university's best recruiting

tool and that it is a major factor in the decision-making process while Hossler et al. (1990) found that the campus visit was the most important factor influencing a student's enrollment decision. Thus, this study hypothesis that campus visit is a significant influence on college choice decisions.

#### **4.6 To determine the extent to which decision makers influences students' choice of Public Universities.**

This was the third objective the study sought to achieve with a focus how decision makers influenced students' choice of Public Universities and this include parents and teachers. This section attempted to find out the extent to which decision makers influenced the respondents in joining University of their choice.

##### **4.6.1 Parental influence and students' choice of Public Universities**

The study was interested in establishing how parents influenced the choice of Public Universities. Parental influence has a direct and positive relationship with the formation and maintenance of college aspirations. This section looked at how Parents influenced their children in pursuing Higher Education in a University of their choice. The following was how the respondents answered the question:

**Table 4.17: Parental influence and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>54.79</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>45.21</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

In table 4.17 above, it can be revealed that majority of respondents 200(54.79%) agreed with the fact that parents had an influence in their University Choice, this was as a result of them being alumni from the University and that the Institution had a good reputation while 165(45.21%) disagreed with parents being their influencers for University Choice since they were influenced by friends and job opportunities. This implied that most respondents trusted their parents in making their choices about college choice. The study finding agrees with a study done by Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) that highlighted the strong parental influence on undergraduate students when deciding on a study destination, especially in Indonesian and

Taiwanese students. Several scholars (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Tierney & Venegas, 2006) found parental influence to be a significant predictor of student matriculation

#### 4.6.2 My Parent had an influence in the University Choice

The study sought to find out if Parents had any influence in the University Choice to the respondents. The respondents had to say the following.

**Table 4.18: Parents influence in University Choice and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27.39</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>19.72</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7.95</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>23.57</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>21.37</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.18 above, shows that 100(27.39%) of the respondents strongly agreed that parent had a hand in influencing their University Choice, 86(23.57%) disagreed, 78(21.37%) strongly disagreed, 72(19.72%) agreed, 29(7.95%) were undecided. From the percentages above one can easily tell that to a larger extent parents played a big role in college choice process. According to a 2007 report by the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPSEC) (Mac Allum, Glover, Queen & Riggs, 2007), Regardless of socioeconomic status (SES) or ethnic and racial category, parents play the strongest role in the college choice and decision-making processes for traditional-aged students.

#### 4.6.3 Teachers influence and students' choice of Public Universities

The study was interested in establishing how teachers influenced the choice of Public Universities. Teachers and high school counselors serve as influencers during the search process; the influence may vary based on the academic ability of the student. This section looked at how teachers had an influence to the students in pursuing their Higher Education in a University of their choice. The following was how the respondents answered the question:

**Table 4.19: Teachers influence and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>33.42</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>66.58</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From table 4.19, 243(66.58%) of the respondents disagreed with teachers being their main influencers in University Choice as they suggested they were influenced by institution good reputation while 122(33.42%) respondents agreed that teachers played a major role in their University choice as most of the teachers were alumni from the same University. This implied that most respondents agreed with parents being the main influencers of their college choice but it could not rule out the fact that teachers played an important role in influencing the choice process as some of the respondents agreed that they were influence by their teachers in making decision on college choice. The study findings is in agreement with a research done In Litten's 1991 where high school counselors and teachers were ranked third on the list of influencers after parents and peers, yet Murphy (1981, as cited by Kealy & Rockel, 1987) and Hossler and Stage (1992) reported counselors and teachers had little influence in the process. Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, and Colyar's (2004) work showed the importance of the influence of school counselors on the perception of a student's ability to attend college. Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) also described the importance of high school counselors and the overall high school environment in expanding both perceived and actual opportunities for college and despite the strong influence from parents, many students consider high school counselors to be an important source of information (Bradshaw, et al., 2001; Gonzalez, et al., 2003). The advice of high school counselors is more influential with students whose parents had little formal education and who came from lower SES backgrounds (MacAllum, et al., 2007).

#### 4.6.4 Teachers had an impact on my University Choice

The study sought to find out if teachers had an impact on University Choice. The respondents were asked if they measure in a scale of Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) with the statement of teachers playing a major role in their University Choice. The responses are shown in table 4.20.

**Table 4.20 Teachers Impact and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>25.48</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14.00</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9.86</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>29.32</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>21.64</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

107(29.32%) of the respondent disagreed that teachers had an impact in their University Choice, 93(25.48%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 79(21.64%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, 50(14.00%) agreed while 36(9.68%) were undecided on whether teachers had influence on University Choice or not. This meant that the respondents to a smaller extent agreed that teachers played a crucial role in helping them making their institutional choices while to a larger extent parents were the major influencers of college choice process. The study findings agrees with Rowe (2002) who observed that research on the influence of school counselors on the college choice process is not extensive and its conclusions are not unanimous on the strength of this influence” (p. 48). Moreover, there is some evidence that points to the “declining influence of the high school counselor in the college choice process of seniors” (Rowe, 2002, pp. 50-51).

#### 4.6.5 Peer influence and student choice of Public Universities

The study was interested in establishing how friends influenced student's choice of Public Universities. Friends are important sources of information consulted by students during the search and choice phases of the college choice process. The respondents were asked if they were influenced by their friends in choice of University. The responses are shown in table 4.21

**Table 4.21: Peer influence and student choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>72.05</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>28.22</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From table 4.21 above, 263(72.05%) of the respondents agreed that they were influenced by friends in making their college choice while 103(28.22%) of the respondents differed with friends being their reference to college choice as they stated they were influenced by the institution academic reputation, socio economic status and their academic ability. This implied the importance of friends as influencers in college choice since they tend to act as role models as it plays as a motivational factor too. The study is in agreement with several researchers (Coleman, 1966; Fasler & Haynes, 1984; Russell, 1980; Tillery, 1973) who examined the relationships between student interaction with other college bound students and their college participation. According to Hayden (2000), opinions of friends and former students weigh heavily on the minds of African American college applicants when deciding between colleges. These studies and others expound upon the knowledge that the more a high school student interacts with other students with college plans, the more likely they are to consider going to college. Hossler and Stage (1987, as cited in Hossler et al., 1985) showed a correlation between non-college bound students and their non college bound peers. These researchers stated that students with peers with no college plans influence the predisposition phase of students; college choice. Their research also found that students who were not planning to attend a PEI were more likely to consult their peers. While parental encouragement still is considered the greatest influence on college attainment, the effect of student's peers does add an additional dynamic to the overall college choice process for high school students.

#### 4.6.6 Friends influenced my College choice

The study sought to find out if friends had an impact on University Choice. The respondents were asked if they measure in a scale of Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) with the statement of friends playing a major role in their University Choice. The responses are shown in table 4.22.

**Table 4.22: Friends influence and students' choice of Public Universities.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>43.84</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>35.62</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2.74</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>15.06</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2.74</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the tabulated results, 160(43.84%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were influenced by their friends in choosing the college of learning, 130(35.62%) agreed, 55(15.06%) disagreed, 10(2.74%) were undecided while another 10(2.74%) respondents strongly disagreed with friend being influential in their college choice decision. This signifies that the respondents to a larger extent were of the idea they were influenced by their friends unlike the other respondents who argued being influenced by other factors as campus visit, parents, teachers, internet disagreed. The study is in agreement with the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS), which started with surveying a nationally representative sample of 1988 eighth graders, with follow-up surveys in 1990, 1992, and 1994, research by Choy, Horn, Nuñez and Chen (2000) suggest that “parents, peers, and school personnel can all contribute to increasing the college enrollment rates of students at risk of dropping out of high school and of students whose parents had no college experience” (pp. 46, 51). Their study found that peer group effects were especially strong. In fact, having friends with college plans was the strongest predictor of college enrollment. If most or all of their friends had college plans, the odds of moderate- to high-risk students enrolling in Colleges were four times higher than if none of their friends planned to go to college. (Choy et al., 2000, p. 53)



#### **4.7 To examine how students qualification influences students' choice of Public Universities.**

This was the fourth objective that the study was out to achieve and areas of focus included entry requirement and socio economic status respectively The researcher asked the respondents questions pertaining students qualification and students choice of Public Universities

##### **4.7.1 Entry requirement and students' choice of Public Universities**

The study was interested in establishing how entry requirement of students influenced student's choice of Public Universities. Student ability is a factor that influences the predisposition, search, and choice stages of the College choice process. The respondents were asked if they met the minimum entry requirement for their respective programmes they are pursuing at different levels of study. The responses are shown in table 4.23.

**Table 4.23: Entry requirement**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>86.30</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13.70</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From table 4.23 above, 315(86.30%) said that they met minimum entry requirements for the programmes they are pursuing since they had good grades at their O' level which enabled them to choose the University of their choice while 50(13.70%) said they did not qualify direct as they were forced to start from a lower level than expected of them in order to qualify to their study level they wished to start from. This implies that most students ended up to the institutions of their choice by the virtue of attaining good grades as a basic requirement for those institutions. The study is in agreement with Paulsen (1990), who after reviewing previous research (Conklin and Dailey, 1981; Tuttle, 1981; Carpenter and Fleishman, 1987; Davies and Kandel, 1981), who concluded that a person is more likely to desire to attend college when student academic aptitude is greater and when student academic achievement is greater. According to Hossler et al (1985) student ability and student achievement have a significant and direct impact upon the predisposition of high school students toward a postsecondary education. Chapman's (1981) model examines students' aptitude or high school achievement as an external factor to college

enrollment. Chapman also stated that students' aptitude is associated with their performance on college entrance exams. In Jackson's (1982) research, he found a strong correlate of high school students' aspiration (educational or occupational) to their academic achievement (p. 239). Therefore, the higher the performance of a student in high school, the higher the academic and occupational aspirations of the student. High achieving students are also "more likely to aspire to attend a PEI and they are more likely to follow through on their plans" (Hossler, et al, 1985, p. 253).

#### 4.7.2 I met the minimum entry requirement for admission

On a scale of strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly disagree (1). The students were asked if they agreed with the statement they met the minimum admission requirement for admission at the University. The responses were as follows in table 4.24 below:

**Table 4.24: Meeting the minimum entry requirement for admission and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agree	200	54.79
Agree	143	39.18
Undecided	14	3.84
Disagree	8	2.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From the tabulated results, 200(54.79%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they had the required entry requirement for the respective programmes they are pursuing, 143(39.18%) agreed to have qualified, 14(3.84%) were undecided, 8(2.19%) disagreed while none of the respondents strongly disagreed with them meeting the minimum entry requirement for admission. The results showed that the respondents to a larger extent agreed to have met the minimum entry requirement before they joined the institutions and this gave them an upper hand in pursuing their programmes and institution of choice. The study findings are in line with Paulsen (1990) who suggested the higher the academic ability of a student, the greater the concern about academic standards and program offerings. According to Manski and Wise

(1983), a high school student's GPA and SAT scores are very strong indicators of their enrollment into higher education. Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) also stated that student's ability is an indicator of college attainment, but they also conclude that the "ability of the student seems to moderate the amount and quality of parental encouragement" (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000, p. 9).

#### **4.7.3 Socio economic status and students' choice of Public Universities**

The study was interested in establishing how socio economic status influenced student's choice of Public Universities. Differences in Socio economic status (SES) are prevalent when students begin discussing college. This section looked at how Socio economic status or financial ability influenced the choice of Institution of learning. The following was how the respondents answered the question in table 4.25.

**Table 4.25: Socio economic status and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>50.95</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>49.05</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.25 above shows 186(50.95%) of the respondents agreed that their socio economic status was good or they had the financial ability to cutter for their education needs since the University allowed installment fees payments while 179(49.05%) of the respondents disagreed with them having the ability to pay for their education since it was expensive to them. A similar study done by (Perna & Titus, 2004) supported the study as it discussed the increasing economic stratification of higher education, pointing the increasing numbers of students from upper-income families enrolling in Private and Public Universities, and lower numbers of students from middle and upper-class families enrolling in Public institutions. According to Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), the higher a student's Socio economic status (SES), the less susceptible the student was to risk factors such as dropping out, mobility rate, low grade-point average, and single-parent families. On average, low SES students had at least one risk factor influencing their high school career as opposed to middle and high SES students who had less than one risk factor influencing their high school experience (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

#### 4.7.4 My Socio economic status or financial ability was stable

In addition the researcher asked the respondents to specify their socio economic strength or financial ability in supporting their education on a scale of, Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) and the response was as follows.

**Table 4.26 Good Socio economic status and students' choice of Public Universities**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>21.64</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>37.26</b>
<b>Undecided</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>15.62</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>21.64</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3.84</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4.26 above illustrates that, 136(37.26%) of the respondents agreed that they had the financial ability to support themselves, 79(21.64%) strongly agreed, 79(21.64%) disagreed, 57(15.62%) were undecided while 14(3.84%) strongly disagreed with their financial ability being stable. Plank and Jordan (2001) found that socio economic status as a major factor in impacting enrollment for students in Universities since their socio economic status is stable hence increased enrollment in pursuing University education unlike when they have low socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Koyoma (2007) he stated that retention rates for underrepresented students were often due to financial concerns. Low-income students were less likely to attend college because of this financial constraint and that to increase college access we must move beyond traditional financial approaches that have focused narrowly on issues of college enrollment, without sufficient attention to the multiple factors required to be academically, socially and culturally prepared.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter covers summary of the findings, conclusion drawn from the study as well as recommendations based on the study findings and suggestions for further studies.

#### 5.2 Summary of the findings

The study sought to find out factors influencing student's choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya Region; a case of University of Nairobi and Kibabii University. University choice is a complicated process and involves a wide range of individuals including high school students, family members, University administrators and public policy makers. Understanding why and how potential candidates seek University education and determining which factors affect their choices is an important area of study.

##### 5.2.2 Influence of Institutional factors and student choice of Public Universities

From the study (90.14%) of the respondents received financial aid from family members or guardian, Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development fund while (9.86%) of the respondents indicated they financed themselves. (78.36%) of the respondents afforded to pay for the Programmes they were pursuing since they were working, making installment payments as others sought financial aid from Higher Education Loan Board, Constituency Development Fund and County Government funds while (21.64%) could not raise the required tuition fees for the programme since they were unemployed. (88.22%) of the respondents indicated that they pursued the programmes they wished for since they were marketable while (11.78%) of the respondents indicated they did pursue a different course since what they wanted to pursue was not offered at the time they joined the University.

##### 5.2.3 Influence of Source of information and student choice of Public Universities

The study showed that (86.30%) of the respondents knew about the University through advertisement since it was effective as they got satisfied with the information given to them and they were free to ask questions about the Institution and programmes offered getting an immediate feedback while (13.70%) of the respondents acknowledged they got information through friends and alumni. (72.60%) of respondents said internet and website was their major

source of information as they were well conversant with technology and it offered sufficient information while (27.40%) of the respondent used for friends and brochures to seek information as they were not conversant with technology. The study revealed that majority of the respondents (88.22%) agreed to have at least visited the campus before making a decision on where to join in order to seek more clarity from the administrators while (11.78%) of the respondents disagreed they never visited the campus as they relied more on advertisements from newspapers, internet and websites. This implied that most students found campus visit to be more important to them before making a decision.

#### **5.2.4 Influence of Decision makers and student choice of Public Universities**

Most respondents (54.79%) were influenced by parents in making University Choice; this was as a result of them being alumni from the same University and the Institution having a good academic reputation while (45.21%) indicated they were influenced by friends and job opportunities. Most respondents (66.58%) disagreed with teachers being their main influencers in University Choice as they suggested they were influenced by institution good reputation while (33.42%) of the respondents agreed teachers played a major role in their University choice as most of the teachers were alumni from the same University. (86.30%) of the respondents agreed that they were influenced by friends in making their college choice while (13.70%) of the respondents differed with friends being their reference to college choice as they stated they were influenced by the institution academic reputation, socio economic status and their academic ability. This implied the importance of friends as influencers in college choice since they tend to act as role models as it plays as a motivational factor too.

#### **5.2.5 Influence of Students qualification and choice of Public Universities**

The study showed (86.30%) of the respondents met the minimum entry requirements for the programmes they are pursuing since they had good grades at their O' level which enabled them to choose the University of their choice while (13.78%) of the respondents didn't qualify direct thus they were forced bridge in order to qualify. (50.95%) of the respondents had a stable socio economic background or financial ability to cutter for their education needs since the University allowed installment fees payments while (49.05%) of the respondents said it was expensive for them to attend University.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study ought to find out whether institution characteristics, sources of information, decision makers and student's qualification had any influence on students choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya Region.

In conclusion, financial aid from family members or guardian, Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development fund was an importance factor for many students in making their University choice since few students were able to finance themselves. The study also found that few students could not raise the required tuition fees for the programme since they were unemployed. Most students pursued the programmes they wished for since they were marketable.

Advertisement of University programmes played an important role in ensuring information about the Institution is widely spread to prospective students. College enrollment officers were effective as they were able to respond to any questions raised by prospective students hence they were satisfied with the information given. Internet and website was the major source of information to students as most were well conversant with technology and it offered sufficient information. Campus Visit also played an important role in students University choice.

Parents were found to be the most influencers on University choice since they were alumni from the same University and preferred the Institution academic reputation as a factor too; peer were second in command in influencing University choice; teachers had a lesser influence on University choice.

Most students met the minimum entry requirements for the programmes they were pursuing while those who didn't have a direct were required to bridge in order to qualify. A bigger number of the students had the financial ability to cutter for their education needs since the University allowed installment fees payments as others thought University education was expensive for them.

#### **5.4 Recommendation of the study**

Based on the major findings of the study, the following are recommended.

1. The Government should put up measure in ensuring more financial aid from the Higher Education Loans Board and Constituency development fund is being allocated to the needy students so as not to deny them access to higher education which is a basic need in realization of their valid dreams.
2. For Universities to realize increased enrollment, more should be done by the University advertisement department by coming up with more marketing strategies that could be ideal to all stakeholders since most of the prospective students said they were not familiar with the Internet and website as a source of information as they opted for friends and fliers.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for further study**

The study was conducted in Western Kenya Region, University of Nairobi and Kibabii University. The following observations were noted for further research;

1. Future studies done could include other factors that influenced choice of Public Universities by students.
2. The research was limited to Public Universities thus a comparative research should be done on the factors influencing choice of Private Universities over Public Universities in Kenya.



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**APPENDIX I:**

**LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL**



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND EXTERNAL STUDIES  
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF EXTRA-MURAL STUDIES  
KAKAMEGA & WESTERN KENYA AREA**

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: Uon/Cees/Kak/1/47/(25)  
Kakamega 056-31038

P.O. Box 422  
KAKAMEGA  
Telephone

**12<sup>th</sup> June, 2016**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**REF: MAHANGIRU ISSA MARCUS - REG NO. L50/76467/2014**

This is to confirm that the above named person is a student at the University of Nairobi, College of Education and External Studies, School of Continuing and Distance Education, Department Of Extra-Mural Studies, pursuing a course leading to the award of Masters of Arts in Project Planning and Management. He has completed the coursework and is now working on research work on the topic. *“Factors influencing student’s choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya region. A case of University of Nairobi and Kibabii University.”* Kindly accord him the necessary assistance to collect data for the above research. This is purely for academic purpose.

Any assistance accorded to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr. Stephen Okelo,  
Resident Lecturer,  
Kakamega & Western Kenya Area**

## APPENDIX II

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear respondents,

I am a student of Masters of Arts in Project Planning and Management at the University of Nairobi. I am currently doing a research on factors influencing student's choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya region a case of University of Nairobi and Kibabii University. As a respondent you have been identified as a potential respondent in this research. The information you provide will help the higher education institution plan their recruitment and admission policies and systems to better address the needs of their potential clients. This information will be treated as confidential. Kindly provide the information that is well known to you. **DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.** Your support and cooperation will be very important and will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

#### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

**Please tick [] where appropriate**

##### 1. Gender;

Male []                      Female []

##### 2. Age;

18 -20 []              21-30 []              31-40 []              Above 41 []

##### 3. Level of study

Certificate []                      Diploma []                      Bachelors []

Masters []                      PhD []

**SECTION B: OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS**

**INSTITUTION FACTORS AND STUDENTS CHOICE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

**1. Were you offered any financial aid before choosing which institution to attend?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Explain your answer.....

**2. Is the cost of attending the programme of your choice affordable to you?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Explain your answer.....

**3. Did the University offer the major and course you intended to pursue?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

What is your opinion on the course you are currently pursuing? .....

**SOURCE OF INFORMATION AND STUDENTS CHOICE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

**4. Was the University’s advertisement of the programmes or courses effective towards you’re joining the institution?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Explain your answer.....

**5. Did the internet provide sufficient information regarding the choice of the institution?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Explain your answer.....

**6. Did Campus visit play any role in your institution choice of learning?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Explain your answer.....

**DECISION MAKERS AND STUDENTS CHOICE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

**7. Did your parents or guardians influenced your choice of the learning institution?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

If yes, explain your answer.....

**8. Did your high school teacher have any influence on the choice of your higher learning institution?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

If yes, Explain your answer.....

**9. Did your friends have any influence on the choice of your higher learning institution?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

If yes, Explain your answer.....

**STUDENT QUALIFICATION AND STUDENTS CHOICE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES**

**10. Did the entry requirement of the institution on the level of study you wished or intended to pursue favor you?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Explain your answer.....

**11. Did your socio economic status or financial ability had any impact on the choice of your institution of learning?**

Yes ( )                      No ( )

If yes, Explain your answer.....

**SECTION C: LIKERT QUESTIONS**

**1. To what extent do you agree with the following statements in selection of a college? You can rate them as follows**

On a scale of SA (Strongly agree), A (Agree), U (Undecided), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly disagree)

	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
The University offered financial aid to students					
The cost of attending University was affordable					
The University had Variety of majors and programmes I wanted					
The University college literature e.g. flyers, brochures was the source of information					
Visiting the University website was the major source of information					
Campus visit influenced my college choice					
My parents influenced me in choosing the institution of learning					
Teachers had an impact on my college choice					
Friends influenced my College choice					
I had met the minimum entry requirement for admission					
My socio economic status or financial ability is good					

**APPENDIX III**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS**

**Instructions:** This interview schedule is aimed at investigating factors influencing student choice of Public Universities in Western Kenya Region a case of University of Nairobi and Kibabii University. You are requested to answer all questions with a lot of honesty. The researcher guarantees confidentiality for all the responses to the questions.

1. What are some of the institutional factors that influence students’ choice of Public Universities? .....
2. How does this institutional characteristics influence students’ choice of Public Universities?.....
3. What are some of the source of information that influences students’ choice of Public Universities?.....
4. How does this source of information influence students’ choice of Public Universities?.....
5. Who are some of the significant persons that influence student’s choice of Public Universities?.....
6. To what extent does this significant person influence student’s choice of the Public Universities?.....
7. What are some of the student’s characteristics that influence students’ choice of Public Universities?.....
8. How does these students ’characteristic influences students’ choices of Public Universities?.....

**APPENDIX IV:**

**DETERMINING SAMPLE SIZE FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	140	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

**Note:** “N” is population size

“S” is Sample size

**Source:** Krejcie & Morgan (1970)