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*Full Length Research Paper*

# The Role of Tuition Fees on Universities' Sustainability in Arusha Region-Tanzania

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**ABSTRACT:** The goal of this research was to investigate the impact of tuition costs on the long-term viability of universities in the Arusha region. Convergent parallel design was used in the study as part of a mixed research methodology. The study's population was made up of private universities in the Arusha Region. The study's population included 22003 education stakeholders. The sample size was 154 people. The study involved two deputy principals of finance, two loan officers, fifty lecturers, and one hundred students. Simple random and purposive sampling procedures were used to obtain the sample. With the help of SPSS version 20, quantitative data were evaluated using descriptive analysis. Data was analyzed using qualitative theme analysis. The study revealed various roles of tuition fees on university sustainability, such as paying workers' salaries, staff development, staff retention, and developing university infrastructures such as classes, staff houses, staff offices, and libraries, all of which are important for sustainability and the provision of quality education. According to the study, because most universities rely heavily on students' tuition fees, the government should establish a method of paying tuition fees for all university students in order to make it easier for universities to implement various plans on time, particularly those related to the provision of quality education.

**Keywords:** Tuition fee, tuition fee dependency, quality education, universities' sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

Tuition fees have an impact on the sustainability of institutions and the overall quality of education. Several scholars have investigated the function of tuition fees in the survival of institutions in order to better understand their impact. Dearden et al. (2011) conducted research on the impact of tuition fees and financial aid on university participation in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this study was to estimate the distinct effects of tuition fees and maintenance grants on the decision to attend university in the United Kingdom.

The study uses Labour Force Survey data covering 1992–2007, a period of important variation in higher education finance, which saw the introduction of up-front tuition fees and the abolition of maintenance grants in 1998, followed some eight years later by a shift to higher deferred fees and the reinstatement of maintenance grants.

The researcher develops a pseudo-panel of university participation cohorts specified by gender, region of residence, and family background, then calculates the number of various specifications based on these aggregated data. Our data reveal that tuition fees have a considerable negative influence on involvement, with a £1,000 increase in costs resulting in a 3.9 percentage point drop in participation, corresponding to an elasticity of –0.14. Non-repayable support in the form of maintenance grants has had a beneficial effect on involvement, with a £1,000 increase in grants resulting in a 2.6 percentage point rise in participation, corresponding to an elasticity of 0.18.

Almagtomea et al. (2019) conducted research on

higher education's financial sustainability and accountability. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between financial sustainability and accountability under university autonomy, as well as to objectively assess the financial sustainability of public higher education institutions in Iraq. Using semi-structured interviews and content analysis tools, the research takes an exploratory approach. The findings show that financial sustainability and accountability are intertwined, and that in order to maintain appropriate funding, management must supply the essential financial data for the accountability function and to legitimize its operations.

The study also discovered that the sample university's financial sustainability prognosis is low, and as a result, it will be unable to operate as a financially self-sufficient institution without government funding. Further investigation reveals that the financial shortfall in the financial situation at the time of the study was an unavoidable result of the absence of financial and administrative authorities. Other governmental higher education institutions can use the information and data to assess the financial viability of their own institutions.

The country's political and socioeconomic changes, which began in the 1990s, enabled the private sector to play a significant part in socioeconomic activities such as the provision of high-quality higher education (Paschal et al., 2020). According to the World Bank (2017), coordination between the public and private sectors in holistic education is suggested. This is when private institutions emerged, and tuition fees became the primary source of revenue to cover their operating expenses (Rubagora, 2012).

Despite the fact that private universities rely heavily on tuition fees to provide quality higher education, the effects are unclear, since some private universities failed to meet educational standards and the existence of survivors to the point of being barred by TCU (The Citizen, 2017). According to this viewpoint, there was a need to identify methods that may assist private universities in maintaining their existence and improving the provision of quality education in the future. The issue was, "What role do tuition fees play in improving university sustainability?" In this regard, the study aims to examine the impact of tuition prices on the viability of institutions in the Arusha Region of Tanzania.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed research approach using the Convergent Parallel Design. This is a design that combines qualitative and quantitative data in order to provide comprehensive analysis of the research problems. The design was useful in this study as it allowed the researcher to collect data one time and then analyzed them separately and integrated the information in the interpretation of the overall results.

### Population and sampling

The population of the study comprised of private universities in Arusha Region. The population of the study was 22003 personnel. The sample size was 154 respondents. The study included 2 deputy principals finance, 2 loans officers, 50 lecturers and 100 students. The sample was obtained by using simple random and purposive sampling techniques as it is illustrated in the (Table 1).

### Data collection

### Questionnaire

The researcher administered questionnaires to lecturers and students in the selected universities in Arusha region. The questionnaires were structured into three sections. The first section consisted of a brief introduction about the researcher and the objective of the topic under study. Secondly, was the task of the researcher to expose the respondents on various parts of the questionnaire on how to complete them. Finally, the questionnaires were distributed to respondents to fill-in the necessary details. A substantial time was given so as respondents could complete them.

### Interview

Martyn (2014) asserts that interview is the method of gathering fresh data from the field whereby the researcher verbally asks questions to respondents who orally respond to the questions asked by a researcher. The interview guide was conducted to the deputy financial officers and the loans officers due to their effectiveness in collecting detailed information for a short period of time.

### Observation

Information about the role of the tuition fee in enhancing universities' sustainability was also collected through direct personal observation. A camera device and other recording devices were used by the researcher to take a record of the observed facilities and their conditions.

### Validity and Reliability

The researcher used content validity which means intending to obtain the accuracy of data gathered using different instruments. The researcher carried out pilot study whereby 12 participants who were not involved in the study were requested to answer some questions in the questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher sent the

**Table1: Respondents' distribution by sample size.**

| Category | Population | Technique | Sample size |
|---|---|---|---|
| DPAF | 2 | Purposively | 2 |
| Loans officers | 2 | Purposively | 2 |
| Lecturers | 102 | Simple randomly | 50 |
| Students | 21897 | Simple Randomly | 100 |
| Total | 22003 | | 154 |

instruments to the research experts from the faculty of education and supervisor to check whether the instruments cover the area intended to be measured. The majority agreed with the proposed items, irrelevant items were deleted. The reliability of research instruments was tested through the split-half technique where the participants were divided into two halves and being investigated one half first before administering the second half. The results from the first group correlated with the score from the second group. Thus, the researcher adopted the instruments for study.

### Data analysis

Qualitative data were recorded using sound recorder note-taking from the interviewees and was later transcribed for analysis. Quantitative data which were obtained from questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of the SPSS version 20. Finally, data were presented using figures.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows the percentage response of the lectures on the role of the tuition fee in the university. The majority of the respondents equal to 22% of lecturers reported that the collected fee was used in paying salaries to the workers. Also, 17% of lecturers reported that the fee collected was used in staff development, likewise, 17% of lecturers mentioned that the fee collected was used in the retention of staff. As well as 17% of lecturers reported that the fee collected was used in advancing teaching infrastructure. Moreover, 15% of lecturers reported the acquisition of modern teaching facilities. Furthermore, 10% of lecturers reported that the fee collected was used in strengthening research. Figure 2 shows the students response to the role of tuition fees. Where 31% of students reported that the fee collected was used in the payment of salaries to the university workers. Also, 26% of the students reported the fee collected used in training staff in the university. Moreover, 28% of students mentioned that the fee collected by the university was used in improving infrastructures. Furthermore, 16% of the students reported that the fee collected by the university was used in ensuring adequate teaching and learning facilities in the university. Generally, this means that the fee collected by the university is important in the growth of the university in both aspects including the academic aspect. Based on the findings presented in (Figures 1 and 2) as well as on the information from the interview there are different themes extracted that explain the role of tuition fees collected by the university as below explained.

### Advancing teaching infrastructure

The fee collected by the university is important in advancing teaching infrastructure; this was revealed from the study where 17% of lecturers mentioned advancing academic infrastructures as one of the roles of tuition fees (Figure 1). The results imply that tuition fees are used for developing university infrastructures like classes, staff houses, staff offices, libraries which are important for sustainability and provision of quality education. Apart from that, 28% of participants mentioned improvement of infrastructures as the role (Figure 2). The finding entails that universities utilize tuition fees to improve infrastructures like classes, tables, chairs and other related teaching and learning infrastructures. The result is in line with Lorraine *et al*. (2011) who found that the tuition fees was used by universities to improve and maintain teaching and learning infrastructures for the provision of quality education. Developing university infrastructure is crucial since it can attract the majority of students and staff which are important for the sustainability of universities to get connected in the university. Generally, this means that infrastructures are the backbone of the universities in the provision of quality education and its sustainability. Unimproved infrastructures could be an obstacle to the sustainable learning in universities. Therefore, universities should improve learning infrastructure to attract students and teaching staffs that are important for the sustainability of universities.

### Paying salaries

The payment of salaries to the workers was identified as a role of the fee collected, this was revealed in the study where 22% of participants showed paying staff salaries

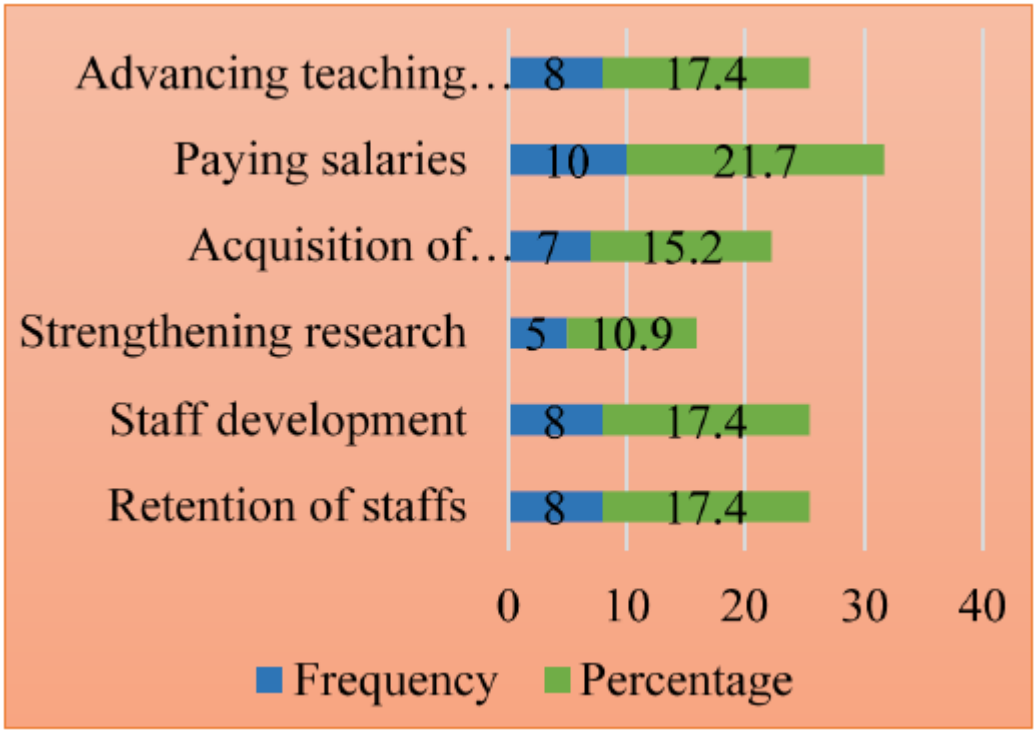


**Figure 1:** Responses on the role of tuition fees on the sustainability of universities.
Source: Field Data, (2021).

as among the role of tuition in universities (Figure 1). The finding entails tuition fees are used for paying staff salaries. Payment for staff is crucial for the sustainability of the university. Paid staff could be able to work effectively for the development of the university. Likely, paid staff could attract the majority of personnel to work in the institutions. Also, paid staff could have high morale of working which is important for the growth of universities. Thus, for the sustainability of universities, there should be improved paying for staff.

On the other hand, the study revealed that 31% of students pointed out that payment of salaries as the role of the tuition fees in universities (Figure 2). This means that tuition fees are used for paying salaries to the workers in universities. Workers' salaries are important for the effective teaching and learning process. Paying staff could ensure universities with enough staff that are crucial for the provision of education. Enough qualified teaching staff may certify the sustainability of universities in the provision of education. The findings supported with Kiamba (2004) in his article he pointed out that, staff salaries and related welfare areas were the largest category, taking about 45% of the total. In view of the poor terms and conditions of staff employment, which were important reasons for starting the new ventures, a substantial proportion of the net income has been allocated to improve staff benefits. Rough indications are that the extra compensation has gone some way toward enabling the university to attract, motivate, and retain competent staff.

**Staff development**

The development of staff in the university depends on the tuition fee collected by the university. This was revealed in the study whereby 17% pointed out staff development as among the role of tuition fees in universities. The result implies that tuition fees are used for developing teaching staff to ensure workable universities. Staff development is crucial in universities since it helps to bring new knowledge, skills and ideas that could be used to improve the institutions and guarantee the sustainable provision of quality education. Staff with new knowledge and skills could be able to ensure the sustainability of the institutions. Apart from that, the results indicate that participants by 25.8% pointed out training staff as the role of tuition fees (Figure 2). This means that the selected universities in Arusha use tuition fees in upgrading knowledge and skills for their teaching staff to bring new ideas which are important for the development of universities. Training of staff is much needed since it could help staffs to be more updated with the changing teaching and learning methodologies. Universities should be allocating enough funds from tuition fees to ensure staffs attend training. The findings were supported by Oluwaseun (2018); Raymond (2017); Rodriguez and Walters (2017) who supported the staff development and

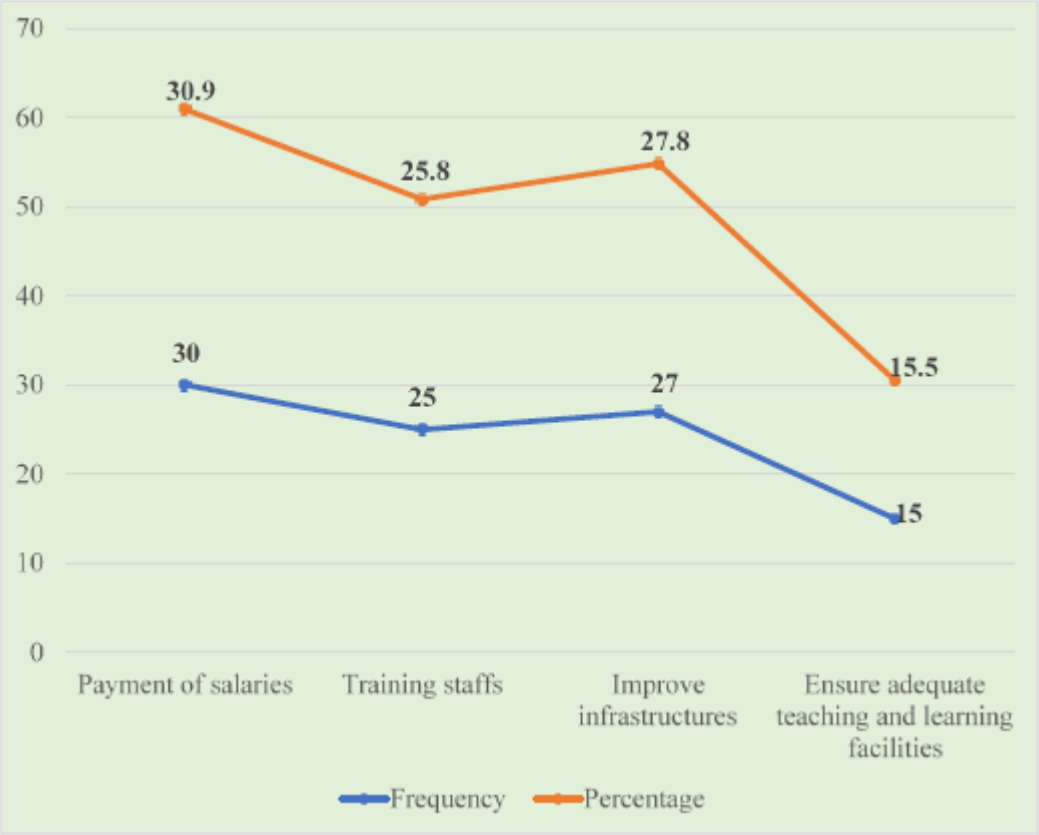


**Figure 2:** Students' responses on the role of tuition fees. Source: Field Data (2021).

training while in the working station. Collectively, they deem the process as professional development in many educational institutions, which can be defined as a purposeful learning experience undertaken in response to identified needs. Its general purpose is to improve organizational and individual performance in achieving institutional goals. Staff development helps employees to develop their potential and to improve their ability to meet job responsibilities. A need for staff development exists when a discrepancy between the current situation and the desired situation exists. Staff development needs are generated by the need for maximizing congruence between the organization and the environment, organizational structure and purposes, individual employees and the organization, and individual employees and their aspirations. Lack of congruence in these four areas is most often due to change. Staff development programs are designed to aid employees and the organization in coping with or responding to change. From the point of view of the institution, staff development programs are designed in response to change that is generated either externally or internally. The need to maximize congruence between the organization and its environment is a response to external changes, this also happens in the university context whereby administration should ensure they use tuition fees paid by the student to conduct and provide staff development

**Retention of staff**

To ensure teachers remain in the institution the fee collected by the university are used. This was revealed by the study in figure 2 which indicates that 17.4% of participants pointed out the retention of staff as the role of tuition fees. The result entails in the selected universities in Arusha use tuition fees to ensure the available manpower continue to work at the university and are happy with the environment. Both teaching and non-teaching staffs are key figures for the growth of the university and the provision of quality education. University staffs act as a bridge between the university and learners; they are the ones who determine the development of universities. Retaining staff is highly needed in universities as it could ensure the stability of teaching and learning. Participants agreed that the approach is applied in their university and according to most respondents they were aware of the approach, and they agreed that the presence of staff retention is among

the role of tuition fees paid by students as a technique of retaining staff from not quitting from their job at the university. Tettey (2015) indicates that dissatisfaction with salaries is a key factor undermining the commitment of academics to their institutions and careers, and consequently their decision or intent to leave. Some institutions offer various allowances which supplement staff members' base salaries. While acknowledging that allowances do help supplement staff income, it is important not to construe the difference between the base salary and the consolidated remuneration to mean that staff members are necessarily well catered for. Some of the allowances are specifically for research and the purchase of books. So, if staff channel the allowances toward their intended purposes, instead of personal needs, their situation does not get much better. Furthermore, the cost of living erodes much of the cushion provided by the allowances. Some institutions have devised creative ways of rewarding their academic staff which include salary 'top-ups' which come from income generated from students enrolled in fee-paying programs.

**Strengthening research**

In relation to the current study, participants pointed out that strengthening research as among the role of tuition fees in sustainability by 10.9%. This implies that the selected universities in Arusha use tuition fees for research activities. Research is vital for the prosperity of universities as one of their roles; research could be used to solve different challenges that hamper the growth of universities. Conducting research needs funds to facilitate those activities, universities should be investing in researcher development in different areas such as administration, teaching innovation, recruitment of staff to guarantee the sustainability of universities.

**Acquisition of modern teaching facilities**

One among the roles of the fee collected from the university is to ensure the acquisition of modern teaching facilities. This was revealed in the study where 15.2%o f lecturers indicated that acquisition of modern teaching is the role of tuition in universities (Figure 4.2). Also, the results in figure 4.3 show that participants by 15.5% demonstrated that ensuring enough instructing and learning resources as the role of tuition fees. The finding implies that tuition fees are used to purchase teaching and learning resources that are important for the provision of quality education. Effective learning cannot be achieved with inadequate resources. This implies that tuition fees are used for the acquisition of necessary teaching and learning facilities in universities. Teaching and learning resources are vital for effective provision of education, sustainability of universities relates to effective provision of education. Thus, universities should be ensuring enough teaching and learning resources for effective and efficient delivery of quality education. In relation to that, also Kiamba (2004) points out that tuition fee is also used to do expenditures on academic materials and equipment to improve the learning environment, including teaching materials, library acquisitions, etc., which amounted to about 28%. These expenditures have obviously improved the quality of teaching and research that had until then.

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that tuition fees play a great role in ensuring universities' sustainability. These include developing university infrastructures like classes, staff houses, staff offices, libraries which are important for sustainability and provision of quality education. Also, tuition fee was found to be very important in staff retention. Retaining staff is highly needed in universities as it could ensure the stability of teaching and learning. On top of salaries, the tuition fee is also used as allowances and incentives that help supplement staff income. The tuition fee was found finally to empower universities to ensure enough teaching and learning resources for effective and efficient delivery of quality education. Through tuition fees staffs are paid which is very important for their development and motivation. Staffs' development is highly needed to maximize congruence between the organization environment, organizational structure and purposes, individual employees and the organization, and individual employees and their aspirations.

**Recommendations**

By considering the findings of the study, most of the universities are largely dependent on students' fees, the government thus, should find a way of paying tuition fees for all university students to make it easier for universities to implement on time various plans, particularly those related to the provision of quality education. Secondly, the government should acknowledge the contribution of universities in the provision of quality education and the challenges they face especially financial challenges and hence provide material and financial support to ensure the sustainability of providing quality education. Moreover, students should be fully aware of the need to have to know that in order to be legible for university studies one need to be assured that they are fully prepared for tuition fee and the challenges they might face once they attend universities without having an assurance to fee payment. This will then help students to overcome challenges that they mostly face which include wandering around, denied access to attend lectures,

denial of access to seat for university exams and other alike. Lastly, given the challenges that private universities face in the process of collecting tuition fees from students to run various university plans including the provision of quality education, universities should establish various projects like agriculture activities, keeping animals, consultations to generate extra funds to support the operation of universities activities and plan. Also, universities should seek to establish a partnership with various local and international institutions to secure material and financial support for the provision of quality education.

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