

Strategies for Enhancing Service Satisfaction and Students' Retention in Private Secondary Schools: A Case Study in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania

Matata John Mbegalo

Department of Technical Education

Mbeya University of Science and Technology, P.O Box 131, Mbeya, Tanzania

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62277/mjrd2024v5i30062>

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article History

Received: 26th June 2023

Revised: 14th April 2024

Accepted: 25th April 2024

Published: 30th September 2024

Keywords

Service satisfaction

Students' retention

Private secondary schools

Strategies

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the strategies for enhancing service satisfaction and student retention in private secondary schools in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. It aimed to explore the levels of service satisfaction, identify the strategies for enhancement, and investigate interventions for retention. Using a case study design, 47 respondents participated, including 20 students, 8 parents, 4 school managers, and 8 head teachers, alongside 7 other education stakeholders. Data collection encompassed interviews, observation, and documentary reviews, with subsequent content analysis employed for data interpretation. The study's findings highlight a concerning trend: low service satisfaction among customers within the selected schools. Despite existing strategies, the overall experience falls short of expectations. The study recommends that schools focus on designing and implementing internally driven strategies by considering the uniqueness of the needs of their students, conduct regular needs assessments to identify gaps and areas for improvement, implement a mechanism to track customer satisfaction continuously to make necessary adjustments through regular feedback, and schools should use customer satisfaction data to identify at-risk students.

*Corresponding author's e-mail address: mbegalomatata@gmail.com (Mbegalo, M.J.)

1.0 Introduction

The relationship between customer satisfaction and student retention in the context of education—especially in private secondary schools—has received a lot of attention from academics. Research conducted in prosperous nations such as the United States has demonstrated a strong association between these two variables (Deshields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005). According to the service-profit chain theory, institutions with higher customer satisfaction scores have higher student retention rates, resulting in better long-term financial outcomes (James *et al.*, 1997). Furthermore, the studies conducted by Tinto (1975 & 1993) show disturbingly high dropout rates among pupils, particularly in their early years of schooling. These studies highlight the complexity of factors influencing student retention beyond just satisfaction, suggesting that there may be other variables at play that contribute to dropout rates among students, especially in their early years of schooling.

In developing nations like Tanzania, the landscape of private secondary education reveals the intricate dynamics. While some studies have established a connection between customer satisfaction and student retention, as evidenced by the WBG report of 2015, other research, such as Maura, 2020, and Gellar *et al.* (2005), presents more nuanced findings. Factors that contribute to this complexity include parental educational levels and family circumstances, as highlighted by UNESCO (2008). Although some researchers stress the clear connection between service satisfaction and student retention (Deshields, Kara & Kaynak, 2005; UNESCO, 2008), others argue that retention rates can be impacted by factors other than satisfaction (Nickse, 1990; Colby, 2012).

The studies also report on the various difficulties that private secondary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa confront, such as the increasing competition across institutions and financial constraints that make it even more important to address customer satisfaction and student retention challenges (Handel & Lewis, 2005; Dew, 2009).

Despite available literature on the importance of customer satisfaction and student retention, there is still a clear lack of empirical research on the strategies managers use to improve service satisfaction and student retention. In Tanzanian private secondary schools, the Iringa municipality serves as an example. The previously cited work in this study has identified factors that contribute to dissatisfaction and attrition, but little is known about the specific strategies designed for this situation.

This study attempts to fill a significant gap in the academic literature by illuminating managers' strategies to increase customer satisfaction and student retention in Tanzanian private secondary schools.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design. This was selected because it allows for a detailed examination of a specific subject within a single setting. The participant pool consisted of 47 respondents, who were purposefully selected to represent various key stakeholders in the educational process. The selected sample consisted of 20 students, 8 parents, 4 school managers, 4 head teachers from four selected private secondary schools, 8 teachers, 2 secondary school inspectors, and 1 chairperson for private secondary school owners. The basic principle that governed the selection of these participants is rooted in Kuhlthau (2004), who emphasized that "the person's information-seeking process and effectiveness depend on the level of their understanding, engagement, and mastery of the information resources available to them". As a result, all of the selected participants were resourceful in gathering the required data for the study. This selection aimed at gathering a wide range of viewpoints from key actors involved in the educational process.

The study employed three techniques for data collection: interview, documentary review, and observation. In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant category. These interviews allowed the researcher to explore individual

experiences, motivations, challenges, and aspirations related to education. The researcher observed classroom activities, school events, and interactions among stakeholders. Observations provided context and helped validate interview findings.

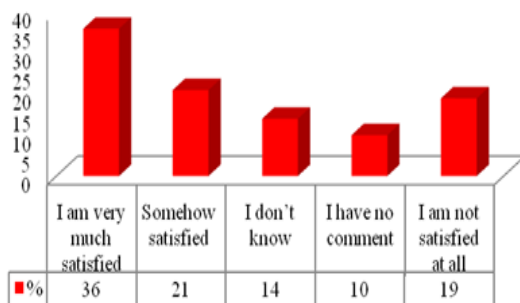
Relevant documents, such as policies, curriculum materials, and student records, were reviewed. These documents offered insights into institutional practices and practices. To analyze the collected data, the content analysis technique was used. The researcher systematically examined interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents. Themes, patterns, and recurring ideas emerged from the data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the context.

3.0 Results

3.1 The Level of Students'/Parents' Service Satisfaction

To understand the level of service satisfaction, students and parents were asked whether they were satisfied with the services offered in the respective schools. In addition, parents were asked if they would continue encouraging their children to study in the individual schools. Figure 1 displays the findings from student responses.

Figure 1
 Students' Level of Service Satisfaction



The data from Figure 1 reveal that students express low satisfaction with the services provided by the private secondary schools under study. Specifically, only 36 percent of respondents reported being highly satisfied with the services offered in the

sampled schools. These students are referred to as "safe customers."

21 percent indicated some level of satisfaction, categorizing them as "happy but mobile customers." 28 percent expressed uncertainty or a sense of comfort, labeled as "unhappy but static." The remaining 18 percent were dissatisfied, falling into the "customers at risk." Their likelihood of attrition is notably high.

These findings underscore a critical issue within private secondary schools: a significant proportion of students are dissatisfied or uncertain about the services they receive. The high percentage of "customers at risk" suggests that attrition rates may increase. Addressing these concerns promptly is essential to improving overall service quality and enhancing student retention. Strategies should focus on enhancing satisfaction levels, fostering engagement, and minimizing the risk of student attrition.

The findings from parents' responses indicated that parents play an essential role in encouraging their children to stay or quit the schools under investigation. Most of their responses showed that they were not fully satisfied with the quality of services offered in the selected schools. For example, during an interview, one parent had the following to say:

..... yes, if I find another school better than this, I will send a transfer of my child..... I think, and I hope, that if I send my child to a school that has good teaching and learning environments, he will pass his examinations.
 (interview, parent, school B: 07/03/2014)

This means that if he finds a school that is better than their current one, he will transfer his child there.

The findings from both students and parents suggest that if they are dissatisfied with the services provided by the private secondary schools under investigation, their confidence in the quality of service at these schools may decline. As a result, they may attend school, but their attention may be diverted, leading them to either drop out or seek alternative options.

3.2 The Attitude of Customers' Intention to Stay or Quit

Information on the attitude of students and parents' intention to stay or quit the school was collected using interview guide questions. Students were asked, "Will you stay or quit the school?" Parents were asked, "Will you encourage your children to stay or quit the current school?" Responses from students are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Intention of Students towards Staying or Quitting the School

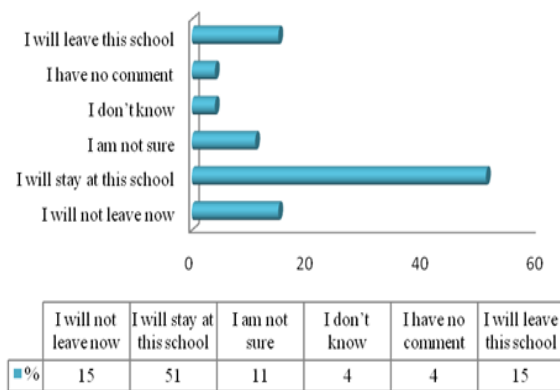


Figure 2 shows that almost 30% of the respondents said they were unsure whether to leave the school or wanted to stay. Therefore, these customers are at risk. The percentages of respondents who said they were unsure or gave no feedback on how satisfied they were are represented by 11%, 4%, and 4%. Together, these numbers represent 19% of all respondents. Those who fall into this category are known as "unhappy but static customers," and they represent a portion of the clientele that may not actively look for other options but carry discontent or doubts about the offered service or goods.

These findings concur with the results from various studies, such as Crockett *et al.* (2005), who noted that about 68 percent of customers leave because they are unhappy with the service they receive, 14 percent are dissatisfied with the product or service, and 9 percent use a competitor.

Furthermore, a researcher interviewed the parents, and the findings indicated that they had a negative attitude towards the services offered in the studied

schools. This is supported by the following statements:

"I will not leave this school now, but if it does not improve teaching and learning, I will send my child to another school."

(interview, parent, school B, 03/04/2014)

"I am not sure, although what can force me to think of another alternative school is the irregular increment of school fees and other expenses that I will not be able to pay."

(parent, school D, 07/05/2014)

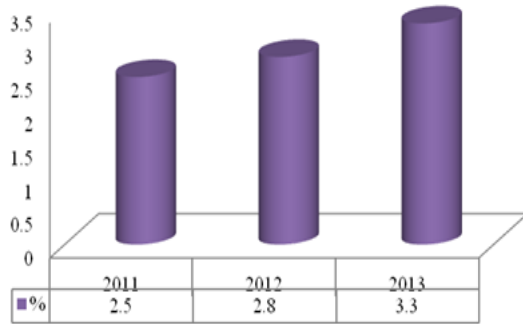
This implies the poor quality of education provided and the financial burden could potentially lead them to explore alternative schools.

The findings from students' and parents' responses imply that they were unhappy with the service offered and had a negative attitude towards their current school. As a result, they intend to leave if the schools do not improve their services. Most respondents, who said they would not live now or were unsure if they would leave, agree that this argument is justified. Generally, a researcher found a link between service satisfaction and the intention of parents or students to stay or quit. Therefore, it is evident that to help clients more intelligently and manage their happiness, it is better to categorize them based on their characteristics and attitudes (Colby, 2012).

3.3 The Level of Students' Attrition, Dropout and Attendance in 2011-2012

Transfer, dropout, and attendance rates were used to determine student attrition, dropout, and attendance. Other factors included truancy, pregnancy, and misbehavior. Information was collected from the available data in school documents. Data are summarised and presented in Figures 3(a), 3(b), and 3(c).

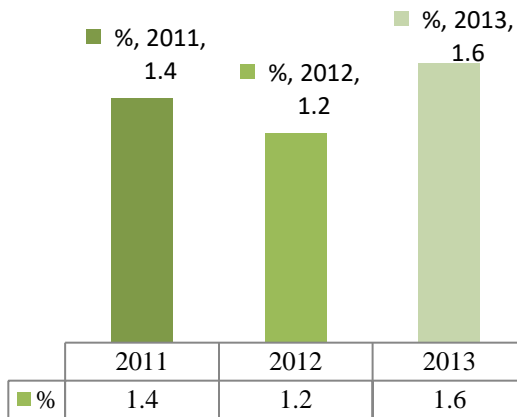
Figure 3(a)
 Students' Attrition Rates, 2011-2013



Source: Cumulative & attendance register reports (2014)

Figure 4.3(a) shows that the attrition rates were increasing. For instance, from 2011 to 2013, 2.5% to 3.3% of all students in the sampled schools withdrew from these schools. These findings imply that attrition exists and it is increasing from time to time.

Figure 3(b)
 Students' Dropout Rates by Other Factors

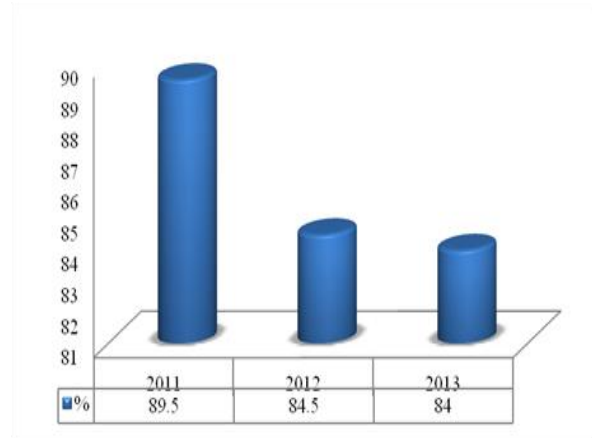


Source: Cumulative & attendance register reports (2014)

The findings in Figure 4.3(b) reveal that students drop out by other factors fluctuating from 1.4% in 2011, 1.2% in 2012, and 1.6% in 2013. These findings imply that other salient factors, such as

misbehavior, truancy, and pregnancy, also cause dropouts in these schools.

Figure 4(c)
 Students' Attendance Rates, 2011-2013



Source: Cumulative & attendance register reports (2014)

The findings in Figure 4.3(c) show that students' average monthly attendance rates at the selected schools were somewhat reasonable, ranging from 80 to 90, although decreasing. Students' attendance rates exceeded the national standard of 75% (MoEC, 1995). Absenteeism negatively affects students' learning by perpetuating inconsistencies in education, low grades in examinations, repetition, and eventually, student withdrawal from school. The following respondents' explanations shed light on this concept:

"Sometimes we are forced to send students home to collect school fees, though others who have paid continue to learn."

(interview, headmaster school D: 23/03/2014)

"Some students who pay fewer miss classes because of being sent home to collect school fees" (interview, Retired headmaster, 18/03/2014).

This implies that financial constraints can impact students' attendance, hence leading to student attrition.

Therefore, the findings show that the current level of service satisfaction in schools under study is at risk because attrition and dropout existed in the sampled schools. The researcher noted that

students' attrition or dropout in private secondary schools has a negative spillover effect.

3.4 Factors Influencing Students' Dissatisfaction, Attrition or Dropout

This subsection explores the significant factors influencing students' service dissatisfaction, attrition, or dropout in the sampled schools. Data

were obtained through interviews, document review, and observation. Respondents were asked to answer this question: "What factors influence student dissatisfaction or dropout at your school?" Hence, respondents were asked to give reasons behind students' dissatisfaction or defection, as summarised and displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Factors for Students' Service Dissatisfaction, Attrition and Dropout

Factor	RESPONSES							Total	%
	PSSC	SIOs	PSSOs	HMs	STDs	PRTs	OTHs		
School perform poorly	1				1	1	3	5	9
Poor supplementary services	1							1	2
High school fees	1	2	1		2	1	1	9	16
High fixed average scores	1	1	1		6			9	16
Lack of qualified teachers		1			2		3	6	11
Discipline matters		1	1	2	5			9	16
Parents decisions					2			2	4
I don't know					1			1	2
No comments					3			3	5
Harsh rules and regulations					1			1	2
Personal behavior					1			1	2
Poor learning environment					2			2	4
Distance factors					1			1	2
Poor management					2	1	2	5	9
TOTAL	4	5	3	2	29	3	9	55	100

Key: PSSC=Private Secondary School Chair person, SIO=Secondary School Inspection Officer, HMs=Headmasters, STDs=Students, PRTs=Parents, OTHs=Others

The information shows that several factors influence students' discontent, attrition, and dropout rates:

The two most common difficulties, according to 9 respondents (16%), are poor school performance and a shortage of qualified teachers. These issues are attributed to a variety of factors.

High fixed average scores and discipline issues are also major problems, as indicated by 9 respondents (16%).

High school fees were mentioned as a contributing issue by 16% of respondents.

Poor Management: Respondents took note of this.

Other factors include inadequate additional services, judgments made by parents, strict regulations, a bad learning environment, distance, and respondents' expressed uncertainty.

To address dropout rates, retention, and student satisfaction, a multimodal strategy is required. Both academic and extracurricular facets of schooling should be addressed via interventions.

3.5 School Academic Performance

The interviews and documentary analysis findings showed that the school's general academic Performance is another reason for students' dissatisfaction and attrition. This was in line with researchers and some other literature. For example, Harwood (2002), Marthur (1,984), and Gronroos (1984) show that good or bad school academic performance is critical in the teaching and learning

industry, where all firms offer the same kind of products. Here is the student's response:

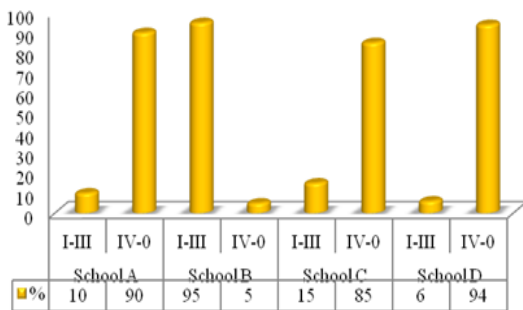
" I think those students who are defecting from our school are looking for better academic performing schools. In recent years, our school's academic performance, especially in NECTA examinations, has been bad."

(interview, student, School C, 07/04/2014)

This implies that students' decisions to leave the institution could be influenced by its academic standing. The quotation emphasizes how crucial it is to deal with academic quality to keep pupils and enhance overall learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the researcher traced more information on NECTA 2011/2013 students' academic performance for the schools under study. The data is summarized and presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Students' Academic Performance in CSEE (2011-2013)



Source: URT (2011, 2012 & 2013)

Figure 4 shows that in schools A, C, and D, the number of students who scored division I to III ranges from 0 to 12 percent. These students had a greater chance to continue with Form 5. The number of students scoring division IV-0 ranges from 8 to 56 percent. These are students whose chance of joining Form Five was very minute. School B had 95 percent of students who scored division I-III and only 5 percent who scored sections IV-0. The findings imply that if the number of students who scored IV and 0 is more significant, the chance of a student failing is also greater. Therefore, this can influence a student to seek other schools with good academic

performance, such as school B. Other factors that contributed to the dissatisfaction and eventual dropout of students or parents included poor management, a poor learning environment, harsh rules and regulations, inadequate supplementary services, and parental decisions. These findings align with the findings from various studies, including Hunt (2008), Lim (2008), Tinto (1975), and Clewell and Ficen (1989). These studies highlight that the current situation contributes to students' low service satisfaction or dropout, and the attrition or withdrawal situations provide valuable insights for school management on how to improve service satisfaction and student retention while reducing costs.

3.6 The Level of Service Satisfaction and Students' Retention in Private Secondary Schools

The findings are consistent with the researcher's expectations, as are various studies on service satisfaction levels and student retention in the schools under investigation. The study establishes that the level of service satisfaction and student retention in sampled schools is low for the following reasons: Firstly, most students in schools under investigation are dissatisfied with the offered services, while others are quitting or dropping out. Secondly, the researcher gained insight into the low level of service satisfaction and student retention by analyzing the indicators of existing students' dissatisfaction, attrition, or dropout, as well as the categories of customers. On the other hand, the indicators give school management insight into how to design and implement better strategies that could help schools under study manage students' dissatisfaction, attrition, or dropout before it occurs or extends beyond the existing proportions (Colby, (2000), Thirdly, parents, students, school management, and other education stakeholders are aware of the controversial level of service satisfaction and student retention in respective schools, as well as the factors influencing student dissatisfaction, attrition, or dropout. Therefore, the findings clearly show that the level of service satisfaction and student retention in schools under study is troublesome, as most students were either

dissatisfied with the service offered and others were leaving or dropping out of their current schools. Similarly, the existing indicators of service dissatisfaction, students' attrition or dropout, and the identified categories of customers in schools under study provide insight to school managers to design effectively the strategies that could help in enhancing service satisfaction and students' retention beyond the current student expectations (Babbar, 1995)

3.7 Strategies for Enhancing Service Satisfaction and Students' Retention

3.7.1 Strategies Related to Creating a Caring Environment

The findings showed that this category includes strategies that are geared to build caring relationships among all participants: students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, as a step forward towards enhancing service satisfaction and student retention. During the interview, one parent argued that learning requires a personal touch and teaching depends on interpersonal communication. These arguments support the observation noted by Brum (2007) that, when students believe their teachers care about them, see them as competent, respect their views, and desire their success, they tend to work towards fulfilling those high expectations. In this category, we identified the following strategies: enhancing availability and expanding school infrastructure; enhancing teacher availability to lower student ratios, thereby fostering interaction; implementing a looping strategy where a teacher stays with the same class for more than a year, thereby improving general student discipline; enhancing consensus building through meetings and employee contracts; enhancing parent involvement by establishing a school parent day; and implementing school parent meetings.

3.7.2 Strategies Related to Creating a Safe and Structured Environment

Respondents identified strategies related to creating a safe and structured environment. These included enhancing the provision of meals, accommodation,

and security services. Additionally, we are advocating for a secure and sustainable physical infrastructure, ensuring the accessibility of sustainable teaching and learning resources through financial institution loans and aids, cutting down on unnecessary expenses, and expanding the range of services related to teaching and learning. These strategies support the argument that, in a safe, structured environment, students can focus their attention on learning (Blum, 2007). Human beings also require body security, property security, morality, and so on. A high degree of safety fosters peace of mind in students and motivates them to achieve higher needs (Maslow, 1943).

3.7.3 Strategies Related to Creating an Academic Environment

The findings revealed the following: enhancing early academic interventions, improving teaching and learning methods, and enhancing teachers' and students' motivation. These strategies support the argument that a sense of belonging is essential to student success, but it alone is insufficient to produce desired outcomes. School managers must create an environment focused on excellence in teaching and learning and communicate this emphasis to students, teachers, and parents.

3.7.4 Strategies Related to Creating a Participatory Environment

The findings revealed various strategies such as engaging students in service-learning and after-school activities, holding meetings, debates, and school barazas, and acknowledging the creativity and opinions of both students and parents. The following are detailed discussions of the initiatives taken to ensure effective implementation of the identified strategies:

3.7.5 Looping Initiative

Respondents explained that looping is a tendency of a teacher to teach the same class for more than a year. The findings from interviews indicated that the studied schools employ a looping strategy. One respondent argued that to foster student understanding of the subjects, a teacher who teaches let's say mathematics for Form One has to

continue teaching them up to Form Four. The following are some of the respondents' statements on looping:

We meet one teacher in particular, our mathematics teacher, every year. He is good, and I understand him. We respect our different positions but..., I can talk to him about mathematics friendly, anything I want, and it is not weird. I wish all subject teachers could be like him.

(interview, student, school B: 09/04/2014)

Based on this finding, it is agreed that when a teacher teaches the same class for a long time, in this case, more than one year, then they are going to build a strong bond with students, something which is very crucial in enhancing learning hence satisfying and eventually retaining them.

The findings indicated that the looping initiative is good, though it is hard to implement effectively in investigated schools because of high teacher turnover. The results suggest that teachers in these schools do not stay longer due to poor motivation. Some respondents argued that some private secondary schools have a high teacher turnover rate due to insufficient grounds. Some insisted that although these schools respond quickly to recruit new teachers to fill the vacancies created because of teacher turnover, learners become disturbed mentally. This finding is justified by the following statement depicted by a teacher:

We receive new teachers every time because teachers in our school do not stay longer...I don't know why. Maybe they are not satisfied with what they get.

(teacher, school C: 27/03/2014)

4.0 Discussion

This finding implies that for these schools to meet high service satisfaction levels, they must improve teacher motivation. This finding is consistent with, Corby *et al.* (2003), who noted that bonus schemes, reward systems, pay systems, and benefits packages are essential in the process of retaining key employees.

4.1 Student Mentoring Advising or Counseling

The findings indicate that a strong emphasis on student discipline is employed in investigated schools to enhance service satisfaction and, eventually, student retention. This is because, during interviews, some respondents argued that student mentoring and counseling are done daily. Additionally, fantastic staff members are assigned as mentors or advisors to students. Others contended that a school discipline master typically provides counseling.

4.2 Enhancing Consensus Initiative

The findings indicate that misunderstandings between members in the studied schools are among the significant hindrances to enhancing service satisfaction and student retention. Some respondents during the interview agreed that misconceptions exist and the best way to do away with them is through consensus building. Some argued that they meet with staff every morning before lessons begin, discussing several matters. Others argued that they are always bound to terms and conditions as stipulated in contracts. During the interview, a teacher from school C claimed that consensus-seeking between teachers and staff is very important in building a positive learning environment, which is a beneficial ingredient of service satisfaction and student retention. This argument is in line with various literature (see, for example, Blum (2007) and Smink & Reimer (2005), who note that teachers and staff need to enjoy their work and be willing to contribute to the school's positive learning environment). Teachers cannot create a democratic classroom in an autocratic school. They cannot teach interpersonal respect when they are treated disrespectfully by administrators, and they cannot set high standards for students if administrators set low standards for them.

4.3 Initiatives are Taken To Ensure The Practical Sustenance of a Safe and Structured Environment

The main focus of this part is to find out how the sampled secondary schools ensure that the safe learning environment, such as security, meals,

accommodation, and medical services, as well as the physical plant, teaching, and learning, are well kept and maintained as a step forward towards enhancing service satisfaction and students retention. Data were collected through interviews, documentary reviews, and observation. The findings were guided by the question, which aimed at identifying the practices used to ensure the sustainability of the available physical plant, teaching, and learning resources. The findings indicate that the school under investigation had the following initiatives (1) Provision of meals and accommodation, medical services, and security; (2) investing in school maintenance; and (3) setting school rules and regulations. The initiatives are presented and discussed below.

4.3.1 Teaching Staff Recruitment

Respondents revealed a high teacher turnover rate in private secondary schools. Hiring a teacher when needed received greater attention as an initiative towards enhancing service satisfaction and student retention. The findings indicate that schools under study recruit teachers to cover the gap usually left by teachers leaving these schools for various reasons, including low salaries, and poor motivation.

4.3.2 Monitoring Students' Academic Progress

Monitoring students' academic progress is another initiative the sampled schools took to enhance students' learning to improve service satisfaction and student retention. The sampled schools' findings indicated several initiatives taken to monitor students' academic progress. They include; (1) the set minimum average score; and (2) follow-up assignments such as home works, weekly tests, monthly tests, and the like. These findings imply that the studied schools have some initiatives to monitor their student's academic progress. They should be more creative in designing those strategic actions. The following are the strategies:

4.3.3 Creative Instruction Initiative

Creative instruction means applying various instructional methods and the available resources to build skills and encourage critical thinking in both a teacher and a student. The findings from the studied

schools indicated that there are two significant initiatives taken to enhance creative instruction as a way forward towards improving service satisfaction and student retention as follows:

4.3.4 Reward Innovation

The findings indicate that the four sampled schools had the following innovations: giving money to those who perform better in the examination, for instance, in school A, an A worth 10,000/= and 5,000/= for NECTA and Mock, respectively. For students, it is 5000/= to 2500/= respectively.

4.3.5 Enhancing Teaching and Learning Methods

Based on the argument that teachers who work with youth at high risk of academic failure need to feel supported and have an avenue by which they can continue to study (Smink & Reimer (2005)). The researcher was interested in how the selected private secondary schools take action to improve teachers' teaching methods. The findings indicate that there were no effective and long-term initiatives. Most of those schools argued that mentoring and seminars improve teachers' capabilities. Studies insist schools must diversify teaching and learning methodologies to satisfy their students. Schools that have found ways to educate all students well have provided ongoing learning for teachers and staff (National Commission on Teaching and America Future (1996).

4.4 Initiatives Related to Creating a Participatory Environment

This subsection presents and discusses the findings on the strategies related to the participatory environment as a step towards enhancing service satisfaction and student retention. It explores how those schools create a participatory setting for teachers, students, and parents. The findings indicate that the schools under study had the following initiatives: (1) activities that engage students; and (2) activities that engage parents. These findings align with other kinds of literature (for example, Blum (2007), who notes that leadership is at its best not confined to teachers and administrators but also involves parents and students in decision-making.

4.4.1 *Extending the Time of Teaching and Learning, Sports and Games Programs*

Extending the time of teaching and learning programs accompanied by scheduled academic and sports competitions with other schools in long and short vacations plays a central role in enhancing students' learning, as indicated in section 4.2.3(c).

4.4.2 *Enhancing Teaching and Learning Methods*

The findings reveal that the utilization of underqualified teachers is among the significant factors that caused low service satisfaction and, eventually, Dropout in the studied schools. During an interview with a chairperson for private schools, he argued that although they have insufficient funds, they always have monthly seminars and workshops where teaching and learning methodologies are presented. This finding supports the argument that trained teachers make a difference in more advanced grades, especially in more complex subjects, than untrained ones (Rosimiller,1987). Therefore, diversifying teaching and learning methods through short and long-term training can help the studied schools enhance teachers' teaching capabilities, enhancing service satisfaction and, eventually, student retention.

4.4.3 *Enhancing Education-Related Services*

In addition to diversifying teaching and learning methods, these schools can also diversify their Education-related services. The findings from kinds of literature indicate that the investigated schools depend solely on school fees to run their daily activities and some few initiatives such as securing loans and aids from financial institutions such as CRDB and NGOs such as GOT. These sources are not sustainable. Therefore, introducing and establishing centers for private candidates, stationeries, and cafeterias can help enhance the school's budget.

Interventions with more significant contributions to the effective enhancement of service satisfaction and student retention

4.4.4 *Enhancing the Internal or School-Driven Strategies*

The findings indicated that Internal or school-driven interventions were preferred; they are easily implemented and predictable compared to external or general ones. The findings revealed that creating a positive school environment results in positive school performance and, eventually, positive service satisfaction and student retention. During the interview, one teacher argued that service satisfaction needs immediate interventions, not statements of full and unmet promises. From this argument, headteachers might perceive that school-based interventions are reliable and sustainable; hence, they can positively enhance service satisfaction and student retention. Montecel *et al.* (2004) note that the school has to be responsive to the needs and characteristics of their customers (students and parents) and engage them in innovations that focus on solving school-related problems, in this case, student attrition or Dropout, hence, enhancing service satisfaction and students retention.

4.4.5 *Making the Interventions Work for At-Risk and Other Mobile Customers*

The findings reveal that school-based interventions cannot be effective without effective initiatives that will guide those strategies. Blum (2007) suggests that for a school to implement the system effectively, tracking and trending customer service satisfaction is crucial for the following reasons:

Firstly, tracking service satisfaction helps to understand whether the initiative taken has positive or negative impacts. Secondly, it helps to understand whether overall service and individual satisfaction for unhappy customers have improved. Thirdly, on the hip side, tracking and trending customers helps determine if satisfaction has declined. These allow the schools under investigation to flag them proactively and follow up. Learning who is unhappy can quickly address and retain at-risk customers in school.

The results of this study shed light on the challenges faced by private secondary schools in Iringa Municipality in terms of service satisfaction and student retention. The identified strategies align

with existing literature on enhancing service satisfaction and improving students' retention rates (Bryant & Boden, 2017; Mooney *et al.*, 2019). Creating a caring environment fosters a supportive and nurturing atmosphere where students feel valued and cared for. Establishing a safe and structured environment focuses on providing a secure and organized setting conducive to learning. Fostering an academic environment emphasizes the importance of high-quality teaching and learning experiences. Promoting a participatory environment involves engaging students in decision-making and involving parents in the educational process (Chapman *et al.*, 2016).

5.0 Conclusion

Based on the findings, private secondary school managers should design and effectively implement internal-driven strategies prioritizing service satisfaction and student retention. Everyday needs assessments will help align educational services with students' and parents' specific needs and expectations (Clark & Estes, 2017). Moreover, tracking and monitoring customer satisfaction can provide valuable insights into identifying at-risk students and implementing targeted interventions to prevent Dropout (Pomerantz *et al.*, 2020). While private secondary schools employ various strategies to enhance service satisfaction and student retention, sustained creativity and continuous improvement are necessary to ensure long-term success (Jones *et al.*, 2018). By implementing these strategies and initiatives, private secondary schools in Iringa Municipality can strive towards providing an enriching educational experience for their students and improving overall retention rates.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends Schools to focus on designing and implementing internally driven strategies by considering the uniqueness of the needs of their students, conducting regular needs assessments to identify gaps and areas for improvement, implementing a mechanism to track customer satisfaction continuously to make necessary adjustments through regular feedback and

schools should use customer satisfaction data to identify at-risk students.

7.0 Funding Statement

I sincerely thank the management of Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST) for the generous support in crafting this manuscript. Through funding crucial training in manuscript writing, MUST management has empowered me to effectively communicate this research manuscript. MUST management's commitment to academic excellence and capacity building has greatly influenced this work, reflecting the dedication to fostering scholarly talent and scientific communication. MUST's unwavering support has significantly enhanced the quality and impact of this manuscript, for which I am deeply grateful

8.0 Acknowledgments

I want to express my gratitude to the participants of this study for their valuable contributions. The support and cooperation of Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST), the Directorate, Postgraduates Studies, research, the principal, the College of Science and Technical Education, and publications Journal of Research and Development (MJRD) are also acknowledged.

9.0 References

- Anderson, E. W., & Sullivan, M. W. (1993). The antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for firms. *Journal of Marketing Science*, 12(2), 125-143. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.12.2.125>
- Astin, A. (1993). *What matters in college?* Jossey-Bass.
- Babbar, S. (1995). Applying total quality management to educational instruction: A case study from a US public university. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 8(7), 35-551.
- Babyegeya, E. G. (1993). Efficiency and cost-effectiveness indicators in private and public secondary schools. *M.A. (Ed) thesis*, University of Dar es Salaam.
- Blum, R. (2007). Best practices: Building blocks for enhancing school environment. *John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public*

- Health. <https://www.jhsph.edu/resources/bestpractices>
- Bryant, J. L., & Boden, R. (2017). Enhancing student retention in higher education. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 65(3), 178-183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2017.1368666>
- Chapman, P. T., Burt, J. E., & Dorling, D. (2016). Enhancing the experience of geography undergraduates through providing a supportive learning environment. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 40(3), 339-354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2016.1140123>
- Clark, R. E., & Estes, F. (2017). *Increasing student retention: New challenges and potential solutions*. Routledge.
- Clewell, B. C., & Ficklen, M. S. (1989). Improving minority retention in higher education: A search for effective institutional practices. Jossey-Bass.
- Colby, A. (2012). *Rethinking undergraduate business education: Liberal learning for the profession*. Jossey-Bass.
- Corby, B., Shemmings, D., & Wilkins, D. (2003). *Child abuse: An evidence base for confident practice*. Open University Press1.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Crockett, M. J., Clark, L., Lieberman, M. D., Tabibnia, G., & Robbins, T. W. (2010). Impulsive choice and altruistic punishment are correlated and increase in tandem with serotonin depletion. *Emotion*, 10(6), 855-862. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019861>
- DeShields, O. W., Kara, A., & Kaynak, E. (2005). Determinants of business student satisfaction and retention in higher education: Applying Herzberg's two-factor theory. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 19(2), 128-139. <https://doi.org/10.1108/095135405105824261>
- Dew, J. R. (2009). *Quality-centered education: The essential elements of quality management in the classroom*. Quality Press.
- Gellar, E., Smith, J., & Brown, L. (2005). *Managing educational change: A handbook for practitioners*. Sage Publications.
- Grönroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 18(4), 36-44.
- Handel, S. J., & Lewis, E. (2005). *The transfer student experience: Challenges and opportunities for academic success*. The College Board.
- Harwood, T. (2002). Higher education marketing: Is it time to get serious? *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 12(1), 1-13.
- Hunt, T. C., & Lim, C. P. (2008). Educational management: Theory and practice. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(1), 5-20. [doi:10.1108/095782308108498571](https://doi.org/10.1108/095782308108498571)
- James, W., Heskett, J. L., Sasser, W. E., & Schlesinger, L. A. (1997). *The service profit chain: How leading companies link profit and growth to loyalty, satisfaction, and value*. Free Press.
- Jones, A., Smith, B., & Taylor, C. (2018). Strategies for enhancing service satisfaction and student retention in private secondary schools. *Educational Management Journal*.
- Kuhlthau, C. C. (2004). *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services* (2nd ed.). Libraries Unlimited.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h00543461>
- Mathur, S. (1984). Understanding the role of academic performance in educational systems. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(2), 15-22.
- Maura, M. (2020). *Educational leadership and management: Theory, policy, and practice*. Routledge.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (1995). *Absenteeism*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Government Printer.
- Mooney, L., Hartnett, M., & Corcoran, M. (2019). Strategies for enhancing student engagement and satisfaction. *Innovative Higher Education*, 44(1), 29-41. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-018-9452-0>
- Nickse, R. S. (1990). Family and intergenerational literacy programs: An update of the "noises of literacy". *ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education*.
- Pomerantz, J., Wang, J., & Ng, F. (2020). The role of satisfaction, trust, and student engagement in building student loyalty in higher education. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 30(2), 216-233.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2020.1725951>
- Rosimiller, J. (1987). *The impact of teacher training on student achievement in advanced grades*. Educational Research Journal.
- Smink, J., & Reimer, M. S. (2005). *Fifteen effective strategies for improving student attendance and truancy prevention*. National Dropout Prevention Center/Network.
- Smith, A. (2019). Exploring student satisfaction in private secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Research*, 42(2), 123-136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2019.1574706>
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543045001089>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- UNESCO. (2008). *Education for all by 2015: Will we make it?* UNESCO Publishing.
- World Bank Group. (2015). *Annual report 2015*. World Bank Group. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/annual-report-2015>