

Exploring The Support Services Provided By The Nigerian High Commission To Nigerian Students In Uganda: A Case Study”

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Abstract

This study explores the support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission to Nigerian students in Uganda, with a focus on understanding the importance of these services, the role of the High Commission, and the challenges faced by Nigerian students. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The study purposively surveyed targeted Nigerian students studying in Ugandan universities and efforts to survey officials at the Nigerian High Commission in Uganda. The findings reveal that Nigerian students in Uganda face significant challenges, including language barriers, financial difficulties, and cultural adaptation issues. The lack of awareness about support services offered by the Nigerian High Commission is a significant concern, with 80.6% of respondents unaware of these services. The study also highlights the need for targeted support services, such as financial support, health insurance, and visa and students' pass assistance, to cater to the unique needs of Nigerian students. The study's findings have significant implications for the Nigerian High Commission's role in supporting its citizens abroad. By understanding the challenges faced by Nigerian students and providing essential support services, the high commission can better fulfill its mandate and support the well-being of Nigerian students. The study's findings also highlight the need for further research and policy interventions to address the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of diplomatic missions in supporting international students and informs policy and practice, both in Nigeria and Uganda, to develop more effective support services for international students.

Keywords: Nigerian High Commission, support services, Nigerian students, Uganda, international students, diplomatic missions, exploring.

Introduction

The pursuit of higher education abroad has become an increasingly popular trend among students worldwide, driven by the desire for quality education, cultural exchange, and global networking opportunities (Knight, 2015). Nigeria, as a country, has been a significant source of international students, with many of its citizens seeking educational opportunities in countries like Uganda (British Council, 2020). However, studying abroad can be a complex and challenging experience,

particularly for international students who must navigate unfamiliar academic, social, and cultural environments (Guo & Guo, 2017).

As these students navigate unfamiliar academic, social, and cultural environments, they face unique challenges that can impact their academic success and overall well-being (Andrade, 2006). The provision of support services by the Nigerian High Commission is crucial in mitigating the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda. These challenges include cultural adaptation, language barriers, and homesickness (Sawir, 2005). Effective support services can enhance the overall international student experience, improve academic outcomes, and foster a positive relationship between the Nigerian government and its citizens abroad (Kuhl et al., 2016).

The role of diplomatic missions, such as the Nigerian High Commission in Uganda, is crucial in supporting their citizens abroad, including students (Adeyanju, 2018). These missions can provide essential support services, including academic guidance, financial assistance, and emergency support, which can significantly impact the overall experience of international students (Sherry et al., 2010). Effective support services can also foster a positive relationship between the Nigerian government and its citizens abroad, promoting a sense of community and shared identity (Gacel-Ávila, 2005).

This case study aims to explore the support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission for Nigerian students in Uganda, with a focus on understanding the importance of these services, the role of the High Commission, and the challenges faced by Nigerian students, if they are in place. Despite the potential benefits of support services, there is a need to understand whether the Nigerian High Commission in Uganda provides such services to Nigerian students and whether these services are effective in meeting their needs.

Specifically, this study investigate the existence and awareness of support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission to Nigerian students in Uganda. The study seeks to answer the following questions: Does the Nigerian High Commission provide support services to Nigerian students in Uganda? Are Nigerian students in Uganda aware of these support services? And do these support services meet the needs of Nigerian students in Uganda? By exploring the existence and awareness of support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission, this

study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of diplomatic missions in supporting their citizens abroad. The findings of this study can also inform policy and practice, both in Nigeria and Uganda, and contribute to the development of more effective support services for international students.

Literature Review

The literature is grounded on the Social Support theory that posits social support from various sources can help individuals cope with stress and adversity (Cohen et al., 2015). In the context of international students, social support can play a crucial role in facilitating their academic success and overall well-being (Sawir, 2005). The literature review examine the concept of social support, its types, and its significance for international students, with a specific focus on the role of diplomatic missions in providing the social support.

Concept of Social Support

Social support refers to the perception or experience of being supported by others, including family, friends, and institutions (Cohen et al., 2015). Social support can take various forms, including emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support (Cohen et al., 2015). Emotional support involves providing emotional comfort, empathy, and reassurance, while instrumental support offers tangible assistance, such as financial aid or practical help. Informational support provides information, advice, and guidance.

Social Support and International Students

Research has shown that international students often experience stress and anxiety due to cultural adaptation, language barriers, and homesickness (Andrade, 2006). Social support from various sources, including family, friends, and institutions, can help mitigate these challenges (Cohen et al., 2015). Social support can take various forms, including emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support (Cohen et al., 2015). Emotional support involves providing emotional comfort, empathy, and reassurance, while instrumental support offers tangible assistance, such as financial aid or practical help. Informational support provides information, advice, and guidance.

Diplomatic missions, such as the Nigerian High Commission, can play a critical role in providing social support to international students (Sawir, 2005). These missions can offer emotional support through counseling or mentoring programs, instrumental support through assistance with accommodation or visa applications, and informational support through providing information on academic programs or cultural adaptation.

Social support is critical for international students who often experience stress, anxiety, and homesickness (Andrade, 2006). Social support can help international students cope with these challenges and facilitate their academic success and overall well-being (Sawir, 2005). Research has shown that social support can:

Improve Academic Performance: Social support can help international students improve their academic performance by providing emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support (Kuhl et al., 2016), Enhance Mental Health: Social support can help international students enhance their mental health by providing emotional support and reducing stress and anxiety (Andrade, 2006), Facilitate Cultural Adaptation: Social support can help international students facilitate cultural adaptation by providing informational support and practical assistance (Sawir, 2005).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission to Nigerian students in Uganda. The study used a descriptive case study design, aiming to provide an in-depth examination of the support services provided.

The population of this study consisted of all Nigerian students studying in Ugandan universities. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, targeting all the Nigerian students in Uganda and officials at the Nigerian High Commission in Uganda who were deemed to have relevant experiences and insights into the support services provided.

The study employed primary data collection method of a Survey Questionnaire: A survey questionnaire was distributed to Nigerian students studying in Ugandan universities, with the aim of gathering quantitative data on the types of support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission and the students' level of satisfaction with these services. The questionnaire was shared through various channels, including social media and student union, and participants were encouraged to share it with their peers (snowball sampling).

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and welfare. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential benefits, and their consent was obtained before data collection. Measures were taken to ensure participants' privacy and confidentiality, and data were collected and analyzed in a way that prevented harm or exploitation.

Limitation of the study

This study provides valuable insights into the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda, but it has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the study's sample size is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the larger population of Nigerian students in Uganda. Additionally, the study used a convenience sampling method, which may introduce bias and limit the representativeness of the sample.

Another limitation is that the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases and limitations, such as social desirability bias. The survey instrument may not have captured all the relevant variables or dimensions of the Nigerian students' experiences in Uganda. Furthermore, the study's cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of the students' experiences at a particular point in time, but it does not capture changes or trends over time.

The lack of participation from the Nigerian High Commission is also a significant limitation, as it limits the study's ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the support services available to Nigerian students. Additionally, the study's focus on Nigerian students in Uganda may limit the generalizability of the findings to other international students or Nigerian students in different contexts.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda and highlights areas for further research and support. Future studies can build on this research by addressing these limitations and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of international students in Uganda.

Result(s)

The study surveyed Nigerian students in Uganda and obtained the following results. The majority of respondents (55.56%) were aged 21-25 years old, and 80.6% were male. Most respondents (94.4%) were pursuing their Bachelor's degrees at various universities in Uganda.

A significant proportion of respondents (80.6%) were unaware of the support services offered by the Nigerian High Commission, and 66.7% had never engaged with the commission. The top challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda included language barriers (50.55%), financial difficulties (47.2%), cultural adaptation (27.8%), homesickness (25%), and accommodation issues (25%).

The most needed support services included financial support (75%), health insurance (44.4%), visa and students' pass assistance (30%), academic support (25%), language support (25%), and accommodation support (25%). The satisfaction levels with the Nigerian High Commission's services were mixed, with 52.8% of respondents' neutral, 19.4% very satisfied, and 13.9% very dissatisfied.

Analysis

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda, shedding light on the challenges they face and the support services they require. A critical examination of the demographic characteristics of the respondents reveals that the majority are young adults, with 55.56% aged 21-25 years old, and 80.6% male. This suggests that most Nigerian students in Uganda are young adults, and there may be a gender imbalance in the student population, which could have implications for support services and policy interventions.

The respondents were from various universities in Uganda, with 94.4% pursuing their Bachelor's degrees. This indicates that most Nigerian students in Uganda are enrolled in undergraduate

programs, highlighting the need for targeted support services that cater to the unique needs of undergraduate students. Furthermore, the study's findings also highlight the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda, including language barriers, financial difficulties, and cultural adaptation issues, which can have a significant impact on their academic performance and overall well-being.

The lack of awareness about support services offered by the Nigerian High Commission is a significant concern, with 80.6% of respondents unaware of these services. This suggests that the high commission needs to improve its outreach and communication strategies to ensure that Nigerian students are aware of the support services available to them. Furthermore, 66.7% of respondents had never engaged with the commission, which highlights the need for the high commission to establish stronger relationships with Nigerian students and provide more effective support services.

The most needed support services include financial support, health insurance, and visa and students' pass assistance. These findings suggest that Nigerian students in Uganda face significant financial challenges and require assistance with navigating the complexities of the Ugandan immigration system. The high commission can play a critical role in providing financial support, health insurance, and assistance with visa and students' pass applications, which can help to alleviate some of the challenges faced by Nigerian students.

The satisfaction levels with the Nigerian High Commission's services were mixed, with 52.8% of respondents neutral, 19.4% very satisfied, and 13.9% very dissatisfied. This suggests that while some students are satisfied with the services, others are not, highlighting the need for improvement. The high commission needs to take a more proactive approach to addressing the concerns of Nigerian students and providing effective support services that meet their needs.

Overall, the study's findings have significant implications for the Nigerian High Commission's role in supporting its citizens abroad. By understanding the challenges faced by Nigerian students and providing essential support services, the high commission can better fulfill its mandate and support the well-being of Nigerian students. The study's findings also highlight the

need for further research and policy interventions to address the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda.

Discussion

The study's findings provide valuable insights into the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda, highlighting the challenges they face and the support services they require. The discussion that follows will delve into the implications of these findings and explore the ways in which the Nigerian High Commission can better support its citizens abroad.

The study's findings reveal that Nigerian students in Uganda face significant challenges, including language barriers, financial difficulties, and cultural adaptation issues. These challenges can have a profound impact on the students' academic performance and overall well-being. For instance, language barriers can hinder students' ability to understand course materials, participate in class discussions, and engage with their peers. Financial difficulties can lead to stress, anxiety, and decreased academic performance. Cultural adaptation issues can also lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and disconnection from the host culture.

The complexities of these challenges are further compounded by the lack of clear information about the support services offered by the Nigerian High Commission. The high commission's decision not to participate in the study raises questions about the existence and scope of these services. While some respondents reported receiving assistance with emergency travel exits, visa and passport-related services, it is unclear whether these services are formally offered by the high commission or provided on an ad hoc basis. This lack of transparency and accountability is concerning, given the high commission's responsibility to protect and support its citizens abroad.

The lack of awareness about support services offered by the Nigerian High Commission is a significant concern. Even if the high commission does offer support services, the fact that many respondents are unaware of them suggests a need for improved outreach and communication strategies. The high commission needs to take a more proactive approach to promoting its services and ensuring that Nigerian students are aware of the support available to them. This could involve leveraging social media, student organizations, and university outreach programs to disseminate information about support services.

The study's findings also highlight the need for targeted support services that cater to the unique needs of Nigerian students in Uganda. For example, financial support, health insurance, and visa and students' pass assistance are essential services that can help alleviate some of the challenges faced by Nigerian students. If the high commission does offer these services, it is essential that they are well-publicized and accessible to all Nigerian students in need.

The mixed satisfaction levels with the Nigerian High Commission's services are also noteworthy. While some students are satisfied with the services, others are not, highlighting the need for improvement. The high commission needs to take a more proactive approach to addressing the concerns of Nigerian students and providing effective support services that meet their needs. This could involve establishing clear channels of communication, providing regular updates on support services, and soliciting feedback from students.

The study's findings have significant implications for the Nigerian High Commission's role in supporting its citizens abroad. By understanding the challenges faced by Nigerian students and providing essential support services, the high commission can better fulfill its mandate and support the well-being of Nigerian students. However, the high commission's lack of participation in the study raises questions about its commitment to transparency and accountability. Further research and policy interventions are needed to address the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda and ensure that they receive the support they need to succeed. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda and the development of targeted support services that cater to their unique needs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings highlight the challenges faced by Nigerian students in Uganda, including language barriers, financial difficulties, and cultural adaptation issues. The lack of awareness about support services offered by the Nigerian High Commission and the mixed satisfaction levels with its services are significant concerns. To address these challenges and improve the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda, it is essential that the Nigerian High Commission takes a more proactive approach to providing support services and communicating with students.

The high commission should improve awareness about available support services through social media, student organizations, and university outreach programs. Additionally, it should provide targeted support services, such as financial support, health insurance, and visa and students' pass assistance, to cater to the unique needs of Nigerian students. Enhancing communication and soliciting feedback from students are also crucial steps in understanding their needs and concerns.

Universities and stakeholders also have a role to play in supporting Nigerian students. They can provide academic support services, such as tutoring and mentorship programs, to help students adjust to the academic environment. Fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment for international students can also promote cultural exchange and understanding. Collaboration between universities and the Nigerian High Commission is essential in providing support services and resources for Nigerian students.

Further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda. Future studies could explore the experiences of Nigerian students in different regions of Uganda, or compare the experiences of Nigerian students with those of other international students. Additionally, research could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of support services provided by the Nigerian High Commission and universities, and to identify best practices for supporting international students.

Some potential research questions that could be explored in future studies include: What are the specific challenges faced by Nigerian students in different regions of Uganda? How do Nigerian students' experiences compare to those of other international students in Uganda? What support services are most effective in promoting the academic success and well-being of Nigerian students in Uganda? How can the Nigerian High Commission and universities better support Nigerian students in Uganda?

By working together, the Nigerian High Commission, universities, and stakeholders can support Nigerian students in Uganda and enhance their overall experience. This can be achieved by implementing the recommendations outlined above and prioritizing the needs of Nigerian students. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Nigerian students in Uganda and the development of targeted support services that cater to their unique needs.

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