

# Relationship between Religious Cultures and Student Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya

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## Abstract

The role of this study was to explain the relationship between religious cultures and student retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. The study was based on Students' Integration Theory by Tinto [1] and Cultural Model of Educational Management by Bush [2]. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The targeted population was 604 year four students, 12 Academic Deans, 5 chaplains, 5 Finance Managers, and 5 Deans of students in Chartered Christian Universities. Census method was used to sample the respondents. Questionnaires which were piloted and tested for reliability using test-retest method and validated by experts were used together with interviews to collect data. Qualitative data was later analysed and presented. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics. SPSS version 22 was employed for data analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlations Co-efficient and regression analysis were computed to establish relationships between the two variables. Embedded Design for mixed methods was used to integrate and present the findings. It was established that religious cultures were related to student retention ( $r=0.437$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternate hypotheses adopted. The study recommends that chartered Christian universities in Kenya should take advantage of their religious cultures and find policies that strengthen the existing cultures as they develop new ones. It also recommends that the Ministry of Education should develop policies that could facilitate student retention and review the existing policies on students' retention in institutions of higher learning in Kenya and beyond. Moreover, further research should be carried out.

**Keywords:** Student retention, Chartered Christian universities, religious cultures, instruction cultures, discipline cultures, study cost management cultures.

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## INTRODUCTION

Globally, the role of organisational culture in influencing organisational effectiveness has been echoed and re-echoed at length in many management studies [3]. According to Kalaiarasi and Sethuram [4], organisational culture is widely considered to be one of the most significant factors of organisation variables. This is because organisational culture significantly influences behaviour at work, managerial practices, organisational effectiveness and efficiency. University cultures which are the specific aspects of organisational culture within the context of higher education institutions have also attracted a plethora of scholarly studies because of their perceived influence on institutional activities, processes, and outcomes [5-8]. According to Zhang [5], a university culture refers to the collective, mutually shaping patterns of practices, norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behaviour of individuals and groups in an institute of

higher education. Although students' retention is considered the single most important issue facing universities worldwide [9], there is limited research in Kenya on the relationship between university cultures and students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities and other institutions of higher learning.

This study sought to address the problem of declining students' retention rates in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. Low retention rates of students in universities are detrimental to institutional success and consequently has far-reaching implications on institutional sustainability. According to Njoroge, Wang'eri and Gichure [10], attrition rates in private universities in Kenya is 37% due to dropouts and other attrition factors such as deferment of studies and exam retakes. Globally, low retention is viewed as a serious problem affecting institutions of higher education throughout the world [11]. The scholars noted that while students' retention signifies a university's

realisation of its mission and purpose, low retention could indicate the universities' inability to meet the needs of its students. Regardless of the university type, low retention of students affects the stability of universities, their budgets, and the public perception of their competence to provide quality education to students. And for most Chartered Christian Universities, low retention of students has more serious implications on institutional sustainability because these universities have low students' enrolment [12] as well. Due to limited substantive literature in Kenya on the relationship between university cultures and students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities, there was a need to carry out this study in order to contribute to existing knowledge.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Religious Cultures and Retention in Chartered Christian Universities

The religious orientation of Christian universities presupposes that they have unique and distinct ways of doing things rooted in their history and religious identity. Being Christian, most of these universities offer faith-based worldview of education which is influenced by their traditions, and practices and values. In addition to the pursuit of scholarship as the key academic purpose, these universities have religious purposes of achieving as well. According to Harris [13] and Baldeo [14], these purposes are achieved through what is scholarly referred to as an integration of faith and learning (IFL). The underlying philosophy in IFL is that holistic learning is rooted in the Bible regardless of the nature of the discipline of study.

Moore defines integration as the "process of forming relationships among all aspects of truth to create a whole" [15]. This definition places interdisciplinary relationship at the core of IFL due to an underlying assumption that truth is one and has one common source. Thus, the grounding of this relationship is in the philosophical belief that "all truth is God's truth wherever it may be found" [16]. The implication of Davignon's [16] perspective of truth is that truth is one, and it does not matter whether that truth is found in science or arts. Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya which existed previously as theological colleges are generally not different from other Christian universities worldwide, thus they exhibit similar characteristics in terms of mission, vision, philosophy, ethos, core values among other distinctive [17]. However, there is limited research on the influence of these core religious practices on students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in general. University mission and vision statements are a critical part of the institution's cultural identity because they provide the reason for its existence and why they exist.

According to Ganu [18], a mission statement can facilitate the communication of the university's

direction, and purpose provides a control mechanism over the behaviours of the employees, and assist the university in creating a balance between competing interests of various stakeholders as well as help in resource allocation. This means a university mission statement has an overarching influence on everything that happens in an institution of learning and on all the employees of the institution because it is at the very heart of the university's existence. Tevis [19] views a mission statement as the foundation upon which the vision and the strategic plans of an institution rest. He opines that any entity that shares common objectives can successfully utilise a mission statement. Cortés-Sánchez [20] observes that mission and vision statements are the most frequently used strategic planning tools and have since become crucial in universities worldwide. None of these studies linked the vision and mission statements to students' retention in universities, and thus there is a need for continuing research in order to establish their influence on students' retention.

Despite the scarce empirical research on mission and vision statements and their influence in Kenya, there have been numerous studies carried out globally and regionally. Three US scholars, Gaedert [21], Tevis [19] and Frawley [22], aver that mission statements of Christian universities are Christ-centred with frequently used terms being Christian, integration, and education. These scholars noted that mission statements answer important questions related to purpose, uniqueness, products, values, and vision of the institutions. The studies did not relate the mission statements to students' decision to continue with their studies in specific universities for higher education. Given their primary roles in institutional identity, purpose, history, traditions, values, sense of direction, and practices, the need to investigate their influence on students' retention is pertinent because students are primary stakeholders in any institution of higher learning.

Scholars in Romania [23], view mission and vision statements as part of the institutional culture and influence institutional performance. They describe the university vision statement as the ability of management to build the desired future, which conveys an ideal condition for the organisation and captures its future perspectives. Based on the observations of the scholars, mission and vision statements have far-reaching implications on institutional performance, management control and future success of the institutions. In an academic institution, success includes the ability to retain enrolled students to the successful completion of their studies. Apparently, success in students' retention has implications on other aspects of institutional success. This means, mission and vision statements being part of the institutional culture need to be studied in order to establish if they influence students' retention in universities and other institutions

of higher learning. Currently, there is scarce literature with such linkage. This is especially the case in Kenyan institutions of higher learning.

In Ghana [18], a study on the mission statements of Christian universities looked at how university mission statements influence students and staff behaviours. The study noted a disconnect in the way mission statements are stated on paper, and the everyday practices of the institutions studied. The disconnect in the institutions studied in Ghana demonstrates a gap in institutions' ideal and the actual manifests. As the scholar points out, although mission statements should influence students' and staff behaviours, this influence gets negated if due attention is not paid by the university management in rallying stakeholders towards embracing the vision and mission statements.

In Kenya, Jonyo, Ouma and Mosoti's [24] study on the effect of mission and vision on organisational performance within private universities found out that for every unit change in mission and vision, organisational performance increases by 0.867 hence implying a positive impact of mission and vision on organisational performance. The study concluded that there was a significant relationship between mission and vision statements on organisational performance. From the finding of the study, it is clear that mission and vision statements have a direct effect on institutional performance. Since the focus of the study was on general organisational performance, there was no relationship established on whether vision and mission statements influence students' retention. This study aimed at establishing if such a relationship exists in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. This is because there is limited research in Kenya on the influence of mission and vision statements on students' retention. In most cases, such statements are only found in university websites and relevant documents [25, 26].

Closely connected to the mission and vision statements are university core values and ethos. According to Camelia and Marius [23], values are derived from well-articulated mission statements. Thus, values represent a set of principles and beliefs that guide the way in which the institution aims to accomplish its mission. The two scholars observed that strategic objectives, which integrate the institution's growing potential and resources while seeking to develop a competitive advantage were the outcome of a clear vision and strong values. In a study in Lund university in Sweden, Brage and Lövkrona [27] note that values have a threefold significance and function in any institution: a) to create values, b) to signal what values apply, c) to support individuals in everyday life at an institution. They argue further that core values summarise the values that apply to a public authority and academic organisation such as a university. In addition, the scholars emphasise that some values may

be considered as non-negotiable and could thus be referred to as absolute values to its employees and students. From the study, universities need to be meticulous in formulating institutional values. Once they are formulated, all the employees, students and other stakeholders of the university should be made to subscribe to them. To ensure continued compliance, a mechanism should be put in place for regular monitoring and evaluation.

In Christian universities, values and ethos reflect the Christian virtues of morality, excellence, integrity and honesty [28-30]. Jelfs [28] argues that ethos refers to the actual reality of life as lived out every day based on particular virtues, values and guidelines. In practical language, ethos or the absence of them are displayed in the day to day realities of the university's primary stakeholders. According to Kureethara and Thomas [31], Christian universities value the primacy of God above everything. They strive for the establishment of God's kingdom in addition to a just and moral world. Such universities promote all forms of unfettered inquiry necessary for the pursuit of the truth, which is epitomised in God Himself. Thus, as observed by the scholars, a Christian university is very articulate in its vision, mission, and core values. Most of the values in a Christian university are drawn from the bible, history and traditions of the church group associated with the institution. Although enforcement of core values in a Christian university is expected to be strict, there is scarce literature on their influence on students' retention. This study sought to establish if such a relationship exists.

Studies on university core values and ethos and their influence on students are generally limited. In England [28], a study on the religious character of the Anglican founded schools showed that faith-based schools reflect the ethos and values of the founding denomination. Some of the practices which are in-built into the day to day practices in these schools include worship, prayer and celebration of the liturgy. In addition, other values and ethos in these schools include the presence of a moral framework, responsibility, honesty, forgiveness, and courteous behaviour. The study assumed that students' retention in the referred schools was influenced by their religious affiliation. However, no study had been done to establish the assumption.

In Ghana [29], a study on *Maintaining Christian Virtues and ethos in Christian Universities* (emphasis mine) observed that Christian universities should impact upon the lives of their enrolled students and society through Christ-centred values and virtues. For this to happen, values and ethos in a Christian university should exemplify godly excellence, godly goodness or godly righteousness. Such values and ethos encompass integrity, honesty, modesty and purity. Locally, there exists no empirical study on the influence

of university core values and ethos on students. Although Chartered Christian Universities websites, student handbooks [25, 26], marketing materials and other relevant documents are awash with university core values, ethos and other applicable virtues, no study has been done to determine their influence on students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities.

As part of the process of integration of faith and learning, and in line with the mission of Christian universities, bible courses constitute mandatory university core courses [32, 33, 14, 28, 34]. These courses are intended to ground students on biblical truth [14, 21], moral development [35]; and biblical worldview [33]. According to Gaeddert [21], integration encompasses four approaches; relational, motivational, intellectual or foundational and applied/ethical aspect of integration. The inclusion of bible courses in the curriculum falls under the foundational and relational approaches. Gaeddert [21] adds that a Christian worldview is one where life is viewed holistically and where life, intellectual pursuits, and culture are seen in relation to God. This makes the inclusion of bible courses a critical foundational component to the entire integration process.

Most studies on the integration of faith and learning are critical of the mere inclusion of bible courses in the curriculum without due diligence and vigilance being put in other aspects of integration. Davignon [16] observes that most of the universities in the US like Harvard and Yale, which were founded on Christian principles, have since drifted from the faith into secularism because they lost the original purpose of a Christian university. Other US scholars have echoed the same and added that the inclusion of bible courses in the curriculum should be backed up by a clear and broader philosophy of learning [32, 33, 36].

Dube [37] of South Africa advocates for the teaching of bible courses in South African public universities, not only in Christian universities. He noted that, despite the disagreement on bible interpretation, the Bible is foundational to knowledge, and thus the approach should be both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. In Kenya, limited research has been undertaken on the influence of mandatory bible courses on students' retention in Christian universities. The low students' retention rates in these universities necessitated a study to establish whether mandatory bible courses influence students' retention in universities.

Spiritual formation and character development are the intended outcomes of integration of faith and learning, and the primary goals of a Christian university [38, 14, 32, 16, 17]. According to White & Afrane [29], Christian universities are established to integrate Christian principles and values into the academic life of enrolled students. The ultimate purpose of this

integration is that, through holistic Christo-centric education, students will fully be prepared to offer honest services and contribute positively to transform society. Based on research in institutions of higher learning, Lindholm, Millora, Schwartz and Spinosa [39], argue that spirituality in Higher Education refers to inner, subjective life, as contrasted to the objective domain of observable behaviour and material objects. Thus, spirituality involves the affective experiences of the students, staff and other primary stakeholders. Such practices are reflected in the values, ideals and beliefs one espouses. The path towards spirituality entails a process that includes a commitment to certain core spiritual practices including bible study, attending chapel services, being part of a mentorship group, engaging in prayers and other pertinent spiritual exercises.

Some of the ways through which spiritual formation and character development are achieved in a Christian university include bible-related mandatory courses, chapel attendance, spiritual mentorship, community fellowships, discipleship, Sunday service attendance, and competent faculty. Chapel attendance, Sunday services, and prayers are basic rituals in a Christian university [32, 33, 14, 28, 34]. The role of lecturers in spiritual formation and character development of students is crucial. He or she serves as a role model and a mentor to students in the integration process. According to Kaul, Hardin, and Beaujean [40], integration cannot happen without the commitment of the faculty. Faculty members in a Christian university are expected to model and foster the development of virtue and integrity in their students. Other aspects of mentorship and discipleship are obtained through Christian fellowships, mission outreaches and chaplaincy department [29]. The reviewed have, however not related spiritual formation and character development to students' retention in the universities.

Studies on spiritual formation and character development are numerous [41-46]. Many of these surveys have been carried out in the USA [47, 46, 45, 48]. The Dernlan [48] study revealed that most modern Christian schools in the USA had abdicated the spiritual vitality, which was prevalent in classical Christian schools. Thus, most modern Christian schools are no longer giving the ideal alternative they were meant to give.

In South Africa, Freeks [42] observes that the present world is in a moral crisis and that educational institutions are experiencing the same crises. He referred to statistics which show a drastic decline in morals, values, standards, ethics, character and behaviour in colleges and universities, which has led to a never-ending cycle of crises. Most of these studies advocate for the re-emphasis of spirituality in schools for purposes of spiritual renewal on one hand and stemming the tide of moral decay witnessed in most

schools on the other hand. Although these studies associate spirituality to proper conduct of students, none of them link students' retention to spiritual formation in universities. This study sought to find out if a relationship exists between spiritual formation and students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

In Kenya, Nyabwari [49] recommends that the government, church, and schools should work together to ensure that character development and formation in students is achieved. The integration of faith and learning practised in Christian universities is intended to achieve character development in the learners. According to Osabwa [50], Kenya had in recent past been witnessing an increase in cases of individuals showing negative social dispositions, indicating a nation on the moral decline. He observes that the majority of the citizens continue to act contrary to such basic values like honesty, respect, responsibility and diligence, a situation that threatens harmonious coexistence and consequently national progress. Despite the government efforts to inculcate good character among children through schools, the reality on the ground showed deviant behaviours on the part of the learners. Apparently, there has been scarce literature on the influence of character formation on students' retention in Kenyan university. This study sought to expound on the influence of spiritual formation and character formation practices on students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design and adopted both logical positivism and constructivism philosophical paradigms. This study focused on Chartered Christian Universities, which are located in four counties in Kenya, namely, Nairobi, Kiambu, Machakos and Kericho. The total targeted population was 604 students, 12 Academic Deans (AD), 5 Deans of students (DOS), 5 Finance Managers (FM) and 5 Chaplains. This study employed census sampling procedure to select students. The research instrument used was a closed-ended questionnaire which was administered to all year four students who were enrolled at the time of study. Interviews were carried out with

Academic Deans, Deans of students, Finance Managers, and Chaplains in the universities studied. Validity was established thorough monitoring and evaluation done by the supervisors and other experts. A pilot study was done for the questionnaires and interview schedule. Test-retest reliability method was employed to assess the reliability of the research instrument. The researcher obtained Kabarak University introduction letters which enabled him to seek permission and authority from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations (NACOSTI) to carry out research. Consent of acceptance was sought from the leadership of the universities studied. Permission was also sought from the HODs, Deans and other relevant gatekeepers of the universities studied. The principle of drop and wait was used in the administration of the questionnaires. Quantitative data was examined using SPSS version 22. Embedded Design was employed in the integration and presentation of quantitative and qualitative data outcomes.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The study objective was to determine the relationship between religious cultures and student retention in chartered Christian universities. To answer this objective, the following analysis was performed on the religious cultures as an independent variable: descriptive statistics (means and percentages), and inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression analysis was also performed to determine the relationship between religious cultures as independent variable and students retention as the dependent variable. All the questions were measured in a four-degree Likert scale; 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Agree (A) and 4= Strongly agree (SA).

### Descriptive Statistics for Religious Cultures (Percentages)

The percentage rating by respondents on the influence of discipline cultures on students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya is presented in Table-1. The per item percentage rating ranking was based on a four-degree Likert scale comprising of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree and Strongly Agree.

**Table-1: Percentage Rating of Religious Cultures**

Item	SD	D	A	SA	Total
Praise and worship services	6.4%	11.2%	40.4%	42.1%	100.0%
The opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students	4.1%	8.6%	38.9%	48.4%	100.0%
On-campus Sunday services	11.8%	18.5%	35.5%	34.2%	100.0%
Mid-week chapel services	10.8%	23.7%	32.5%	32.9%	100.0%
Compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study.	15.9%	27.3%	30.8%	26.0%	100.0%
Christ-centred core values	3.6%	4.7%	37.6%	54.2%	100.0%
Christ-centred mission	4.7%	6.7%	32.7%	55.9%	100.0%
Christ-centred vision	3.9%	7.3%	32.7%	56.1%	100.0%
Bible-centred mentorship programmes	5.6%	9.9%	31.0%	53.5%	100.0%
Teaching which is in biblical perspective	7.9%	10.8%	30.1%	51.2%	100.0%

Table-1 shows that majority of the respondents agree that religious cultures relate to student retention in chartered Christian universities. Generally, 34.22% and 45.55% of students agreed and strongly disagreed respectively that religious cultures influence students' retention while 7.47% and 12.87% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that religious cultures influence students' retention. The finding strongly indicates that these universities should invest more in these cultures in order to retain the students they have as they engage in recruiting others. The religious cultures that apparently influence students more include Christ-centred vision (56.1%), Christ-centred mission (55.9%), Christ-centred core values (54.2%), Bible-centred mentorship programmes (53.5%) and teaching which is in biblical perspective (51.2%). Given the strong relationship influence these religious cultures have on students' retention, there is a need for chartered Christian universities to strategically invest more on these cultures through enhanced publicity and policy formulation while maintaining other retention enhancing practices. This agrees with White and Afrane [29] who observe that Christian universities exert influence in the lives of their enrolled students and society through Christ-centered values, missions and core values.

Other religious cultures which influence students' retention based on the finding include praise and worship services (42.1% and 40.4% strongly agree and agree respectively) and the opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students (48.4% and 38.9% strongly agree and agree respectively). In general, the students positively rated these two items as having an influence on their retention in the respective universities of study but not at the same ranking with higher strongly agree rating. As found out by Gaeddert [21], universities should be intentional in what they need to transmit to their students and staff. Such intentions should be backed up by clear communication of values and practices.

The items of study which received almost equal rating across the different ranking levels include compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study (15.9%, 27.3%, 30.8% and 26.0% strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree respectively), mid-week chapel services (10.8%, 23.7%, 32.5% and 32.9% strongly disagree, disagree, agree and

strongly agree respectively) and on campus Sunday services (11.8%, 18.5%, 35.5% and 34.2% strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree respectively). Generally, these cultures were ranked in favour of agreeing, meaning they equally influence student retention despite the respondents having more diverse opinions. From the finding, these universities need to put more effort into attracting students to embrace these practices for the purpose of enhancing student retention. As observed by a number of scholars [32, 33, 36], the inclusion of bible courses in the curriculum needs to be approached with caution and with a clear strategy in mind. This is because most of these students are non-theological in their areas of study and can definitely struggle to understand why they take such courses without clear orientation on their value. This means universities need to devise strategies which help make these courses more attractive to students.

From the finding, it is very apparent that there is a strong relationship between religious cultures and student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. With a higher number of students who agree (79.77%) that religious cultures influence their decision to continue with their studies until completion in the universities enrolled in, this means these universities should consider such religious cultures as strategic variables in student retention. The finding affirms White and Afrane [29] position that Christian universities exert influence in the lives of their enrolled students and society through Christ-centered values, missions and core values.

#### Descriptive Statistics for Religious Cultures (Means and Standard Deviation)

On the independent variable, the mean and standard deviation were used to test the distribution of the responses. The mean value of  $\geq 3.5$  represented SA (Strongly Agree), the mean value of 2.5 to 3.4 represented A (Agree), the mean value of 1.5 to 2.4 represented D (Disagree) and lastly, the mean value of  $\leq 1.4$  represented SD (Strongly Disagree). When asked to indicate why students continue in their studies to completion in these universities with regards to religious cultures, the responses indicated all the items were ranked as strongly agreed and agreed. Apparently, there was no item that respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed, as presented in Table-1.

**Table-2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Religious Cultures**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1_A	Teaching which is in biblical perspective	535	3.52	1.148
Q2_A	Bible-centred mentorship programmes	535	3.59	1.074
Q3_A	Christ-centred vision	535	3.79	1.034
Q4_A	Christ-centred mission	535	3.79	1.061
Q5_A	Christ-centred core values	535	3.86	.990
Q6_A	Compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study.	535	3.07	1.352
Q7_A	Mid-week chapel services	535	3.34	1.274
Q8_A	On-campus Sunday services	535	3.20	1.263
Q9_A	The opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students	535	3.67	1.045
Q10_A	Praise and worship services	535	3.53	1.151

As seen in Table-2, the religious cultures which influence students' retention most in chartered Christian universities in Kenya by virtue of being ranked strongly agreed were: Christ-centred core values ( $M=3.86$ ,  $SD=.990$ ), Christ-centred vision ( $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=1.034$ ), Christ-centred mission ( $M=3.79$ ,  $SD=1.061$ ), the opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students ( $M=3.67$ ,  $SD=1.045$ ), Bible-centred mentorship programmes ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=1.074$ ), praise and worship services ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=1.151$ ) and teaching which is in biblical perspective ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=1.148$ ).

The finding further shows that the religious cultures which influence students' retention on a slightly lower scale by virtue of being ranked agreed were: Mid-week chapel services ( $M=3.34$ ,  $SD=1.274$ ), on-campus Sunday services ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=1.263$ ), and compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study ( $M=3.07$ ,  $SD=1.352$ ). The standard deviation values were  $>1$ , indicating a diverse level of agreement on the responses. Neutral responses represented midpoint choices of the respondents based on the items of choice.

From the finding, it is apparent that religious cultures in Chartered Christian Universities play a key role in students' retention. This means the respective universities have succeeded in impacting the lives of their enrolled students in the religious perspective among other areas of influence. This agrees with numerous previous scholarly studies. For example, a study conducted in Ghana by White and Afrane [29] observe that Christian universities exert influence in the lives of their enrolled students and society through Christ-centered values and virtues. Other scholars such as Ganu [18]; Tevis [19]; Gaeddert [21] and Frawley [22] argue that vision and mission statements facilitate the communication of the university's direction and purpose, provides a control mechanism, and assist the university in creating a balance between competing interests of various stakeholders as well as help in

resource allocation. Camelia and Marius [23] point out that for vision and mission statements to yield the desired results and capture the desired future, the role of university management is key. Based on the finding, there is a clear indication that the management of the chartered Christian universities under study have created the necessary awareness and condition for their students and employees to buy in and subscribe to the religious cultures of their respective universities.

Though ranked agreed ( $M=3.07$ ,  $SD= 1.352$ ) and thus significantly influencing student retention as well, compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study appear to have more divided opinions among the respondents. The finding reflects the existing perspectives on compulsory bible courses among scholars. According to Jang [32], Ellis [33] and Schuurman [36], the inclusion of bible courses in the curriculum should not merely be for the sake of it but should be backed up by a clear and broader philosophy of learning. The outcome points to the need for these universities to engage students more on the relevance of these courses and why they are required to take them. Without a clear institutional strategy on how to make these courses more appealing, students may develop a negative attitude towards them. Such attitude will, in the long run, hurt the vision, mission and philosophical orientations of the respective universities. Davignon [16] study of US universities which started as theological colleges but ended up becoming secular brings to the fore the need for chartered Christian universities in Kenya to avoid taking the same direction through continuous institutional re-appraisals.

### Test of Significant Relationship between Religious Cultures and Student Retention

In testing the significance of the relationship between Religious Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya, Pearson correlation was tested at 0.05 Alpha Level. The finding is presented in Table-3.

**Table-3: Relationship between Religious Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya**

		Religious Cultures
Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya	Pearson Correlation	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	535

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It was noted that there exists a statistically significant relationship between Religious Cultures and Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya ( $r=0.437$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). Coefficient values in Pearson correlation can range from  $+1$  to  $-1$ , where  $+1$  represents a perfect positive relationship,  $-1$  represents a perfect negative relationship, and a  $0$  indicates no relationship exists. The p-value approach to hypothesis testing, on the other hand, utilises the calculated

probability to find out whether there is evidence to reject the null hypothesis [51]. A p-value of less than  $0.05$  rejects the null hypothesis. The positive correlation in this study implies that as Religious Cultures are upheld, retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya also increases. This includes religious aspects such as bible-centred mentorship programmes, Christ-centred vision, compulsory Bible courses regardless of programme of study and the opportunity to share the

Christian faith with fellow students which significantly influence students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. In a similar study, Burgess [52] found significant relationship ( $r = 0.060$ ,  $p = .05$ ) between empowerment and resistance to change. There was thus a significant association measured between empowerment and Resistance to change ( $r = -.132$ ,  $p = .05$ ). The study noted that as empowerment increased, resistance to change diminished.

### Test of Significant Differences in Religious Cultures among Universities

One-way ANOVA was computed in order to test whether Religious Cultures among the five Universities was significantly different at 0.05 Alpha Level.

**Table-4: ANOVA on Religious Cultures**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.687	4	.672	2.033	.088
Within Groups	175.077	530	.330		
Total	177.763	534			

The findings show that religious cultures were not significantly different at 0.05,  $F(4,530) = 2.033$ ;  $p > 0.05$ . This implies that religious cultures were perceived to be a shared practice amongst the five universities. Further, the outcome being not significantly different means the outcome of the study can be generalised across chartered Christian universities in Kenya. Carter [53] in a similar study using ANOVA for significant differences of five independent variables and dependent variable, noted that the outcome was statistically significant ( $p < .001$ )

pairwise association between each of the five independent variables and the dependent variable. The five independent variables thus had a positive, statistically significant effect on education quality.

### Predictive Capacity of Religious Cultures on Students' Retention

Regression analysis was done to determine how each of the religious cultures' items predict students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya. The results are presented in Table-5.

**Table-5: Religious Cultures Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	1.704	.138	12.331	.000
Teaching which is in biblical perspective	-.007	.034	-.213	.831
Bible-centred mentorship programmes	.085	.038	2.243	.025
Christ-centred vision	.108	.049	2.227	.026
Christ-centred mission	.025	.044	.564	.573
Christ-centred core values	-.004	.042	-.094	.925
Compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study.	.111	.026	4.281	.000
Mid-week chapel services	.014	.029	.470	.638
On-campus Sunday services	.006	.029	.214	.831
The opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students	.128	.038	3.364	.001
Praise and worship services	-.004	.035	-.116	.907

*a. Dependent Variable: Students' Retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya*

The regression analysis revealed that Bible-centred mentorship programmes ( $\beta = 0.085$ ,  $t = 2.243$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Christ-centred vision ( $\beta = 0.108$ ,  $t = 2.227$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study ( $\beta = 0.111$ ,  $t = 4.281$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and the opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students ( $\beta = 0.128$ ,  $t = 3.364$ ,  $p < .05$ ) significantly influence students' retention in Chartered Christian Universities in Kenya. It implies that the opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students relate to student retention most in chartered Christian universities in Kenya by 12.8% while the influence of Christ-centred vision, Compulsory bible courses regardless of programme of study and Bible-centred mentorship programmes influence on student retention

in chartered Christian universities in Kenya is 10.8%, 11.1% and 8.5% respectively. The outcome concurs with similar finding by White and Afrane [29] who observe that Christian universities exert influence in the lives of their enrolled students and society through Christ-centered values, virtues and practices.

As Table-5 indicates, the religious cultures which influence students' retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya non-significantly include Teaching which is in biblical perspective, Christ-centred mission, Christ-centred core values, Mid-week chapel services, on-campus Sunday services and Praise and worship services ( $p > 0.05$ ).

### Qualitative Data Outcome on Religious Cultures Influence on Students' Retention

The interview schedules on the relationship between religious cultures and student retention in chartered Christian universities in Kenya targeted four chaplains hereby referred to as R1, R2, R3 and R4. The guiding questions for the interview sessions were drawn from the students' questionnaire, which had ten items, meaning the interview theme was predetermined by the research objective and the items in the students' questionnaire. The analysis of the interview data was based on the respondents' answers to the questions posed to them as per the ten items in the students' questionnaire. The findings from the analysis of the interview data are as follows.

On the first research item which was on teaching in biblical perspective and the second item which was on bible-centred mentorship programmes, all the respondents agreed that the two items influence student retention because they influence the lecturer's attitude towards students, the teaching profession and the ethical conduct of the teacher. R1, for example, said on teaching in biblical perspective that *"it influences retention because there is a concern for the well-being of students and sincerity"*, a position which was summed up by R2 who said, *"it influences retention because teachers are ethical in their teaching profession and perceive it as a calling"*. Concerning bible-centred programmes, R4 said among other things, a bible-centred mentorship programme *"helps students to form a close relationship with lecturers, staff and faculty"* which ultimately enhances the teaching-learning process.

Although all the respondents considered items three (Christ-centred vision), four (Christ-centred mission) and five (Christ-centred core values) influential, they observed that students may not be aware of them or may not be Christ-oriented, and thus their influence may be negated by these factors. One respondent, for example, said, *"yes, but mostly if the students are aware of the mission and vision of the university because when students own the vision, it will enhance their retention"* (R2). Another respondent observed that *"It does, but the challenge is that the majority of the students are not aware of the university mission"* (R4).

On item six, which was compulsory bible courses regardless of the programme of study, there was divergent of opinion among the respondents. R2 argued that it had no influence on students' retention because *"majority of them struggle to understand the relationship between these bible courses and their programmes"*. R1, R3 and R4, on the other hand, said the influence is dependent on the Christian-mindedness of the students. R1, for example, said, *"Yes, particularly for Christian minded students who feel at home at the university"*.

Like item six, all the respondents were in agreement that item seven (mid-week chapel services), item eight (On-campus Sunday services), item nine (The opportunity to share the Christian faith with fellow students) and item ten (Praise and worship services) have significant influence on students' retention but is dependent on the Christian-mindedness of the students. Concerning the on-campus chapel services, R1 said, *"yes, for religious-minded students will want to continue"* implying that non-religious minded students may not have this as the reason for their continued stay in the institution. On the other hand, R2 said *"It influences retention because so many students attend these mid-chapel services and they feel more encouraged"* thus indicating there was an inherent influence on those who subscribed to the practice.

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