

## **Ghanaian Students' Expectations on Off-Campus Housing Facilities: A Case of University of Cape Coast**

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### **Abstract**

Housing expectations are unique to each individual. This research sought to understand the preferences and expectations of university students concerning off-campus accommodation. The study was underpinned by the gap model. The research employed a quantitative approach and distributed questionnaires to students at the University of Cape Coast. The study revealed that students had high regard for the physical features of off-campus housing facilities, specifically, the cleanliness of hostel accommodation surroundings. This ranked first of all physical features of the housing facility followed by the availability of electricity, bath and toilet facilities, security services, kitchen and comfortable beds. In terms of students' expectations about social and management issues of off-campus housing facilities, the findings showed that students highly ranked rules and regulations of accommodation facilities. Also, students expected very good cordial and interpersonal relationships with other tenants. Other highly-ranked expectations of students were accessibility to transport, good behaviour of accommodation staff, affordable rent, and a serene hostel environment that supports learning. The study recommended an evaluation of off-campus accommodation services by university authorities to better students' experiences on campus.

**Key Word:** Student, Accommodation, Off-Campus, Hostels, Expectation

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### **I. Introduction**

The move to higher education is, without a question, a difficult period in the lives of young people. This is because many students have some expectations once they transit into the university (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 2000). Expectations have an impact on how we experience an event and how we respond to it. One of such expectations is the find a conducive housing facility to occupy. In the past, off-campus student housing for educational institutions was not common in Africa. But the rise in student enrolment in African universities has made it extremely impossible to offer on-campus suitable and affordable housing facilities for their students (Oke, Aigbavboa & Raphiri, 2017). Before the introduction of the off-campus student housing concept in Africa, on-campus building designs were assumed to provide acoustics and met minimal size, heating, and lighting needs for people (Oke, Aigbavboa & Raphiri, 2017). The tentative question is: Do off-campus student housing facilities meet the expectations of students? This study adds to this literature by exploring the expectations of Ghanaian university students concerning housing facilities.

Student expectations today are different from those in past years. Unlike their 'baby-boomer' parents who were used to sharing a bedroom and bathroom, the students of the current generation have higher expectations for accommodation (LaRoche, 2010). According to O'Connor (2017), the demand for amenities tops the list when it comes to the most significant changes in housing. The amount of fees students pay for their university education is the reason why they request amenities. According to Sisson (2016), students' expectations have risen due to the rising cost of higher education. The housing infrastructure and amenities of a university are crucial for luring students. Therefore, university authorities must enhance their housing facilities to ensure competition (Fabris, 2014). Since housing is an important element of every institution, colleges and universities are constructing facilities to meet the increasing expectations of both parents and students to remain marketable and competitive in the education industry.

To create a successful home design, it is critical to first understand the housing needs and expectations of potential occupants. However, given a residential building's structural life expectancy and resident turnover, it is nearly difficult to identify all future occupants, making it impossible to investigate their housing needs and

expectations. As a result, it is common for the housing sector and researchers to forecast future inhabitants' housing expectations and requirements by studying the flows of thinking, views, preferences, and demands of certain demographic groups through housing satisfaction surveys (An, Kang & Jo, 2009).

This research intends to satisfy the objectives of Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10, particularly Goal 11, which aspires to make human settlements and cities safe, inclusive, and sustainable to provide equal education to everyone. To avoid the elimination of all forms of prejudice and social exclusion, this necessitates the analysis and incorporation of student expectations about housing designs. As a result, this study investigates students' expectations regarding off-campus living at the University of Cape Coast. The research reveals a lot about the service quality that students get in their housing facilities. It also advises students' housing owners, academics, and social policy specialists on how to build all-inclusive student housing that supports all types of students. Furthermore, establishing the differences among students' expectations regarding an off-campus living will add to the existing knowledge and provoke further research work.

## **II. Theoretical and Empirical Overview**

### *Housing Expectations*

Housing expectations, according to Morris and Winter (1978), are an evaluation of future housing conditions based on the individual's or household's reality. Housing expectation is thought about future housing conditions based on a realistic analysis of existing and future household conditions, as opposed to housing preferences, which is usually a subjective thought about future housing. Housing expectations are ideas and beliefs about housing and its surroundings, such as its shape, function, and how to live in it (An, Jo & Hao, 2009).

### *Studies on Housing Expectations of University Students*

Khozai, Hassan, Kodmany and Aarab (2014) conducted surveys among Malaysian students at public universities to determine their expectations for resident hall architecture. Students prefer suite-style single rooms with shared bathrooms to standard double-sharing accommodations, according to their findings. Similar conclusions were reached by Verhetsel, Kessels, Zijlstra, and Van Bavel (2017). They looked at what Belgian students in Antwerp expected from shared and private housing. Students are most worried about housing type, followed by rent and space, according to their research. Students prefer studio apartments, emphasizing the value of privacy. Adama, Aghimien and Fabunmi (2018), as mentioned in the previous section, highlighted privacy as the most important aspect. The rent, the quality of the neighbourhood, and the social benefits of being near friends and other students were also cited by the researchers.

According to a study on undergraduate students' housing preferences done by Roche (2010), students selected housing options that met their high expectations for privacy and facilities. Zotorvie (2017) conducted another study on students' housing and academic performance, finding that the availability of a study area, spacious and well-ventilated rooms, proximity to lecture halls, price of accommodation, and the availability of electricity and water, as well as a calm and peaceful environment, are the key factors that influence students' residential accommodation choice.

## **III. Theoretical Review**

### *The Gap Model*

The dis/confirmatory model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) can be defined as the difference between an end-pre-purchased user's expectation and post-purchased perception for a product or service (Brown & Swartz, 1989). A product might be a physical thing, such as a student housing facility, or a service, such as facility management. The gap model is an expanded version of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's service quality model (1985). The connection between students' housing managers and students affects service quality in student housing. During the service delivery process, students assess the quality of the services. Students as end-users are frequently unsatisfied when post-consumed expectations do not meet pre-purchased expectations because service quality is not up to par. Interior and indoor air quality, room layout and furniture supporting services, visual comfort and acoustic, and circulation efficiency are examples of service quality in student housing studies (Hassanain, 2008; Sanni-Anibire & Hassanain, 2016).

## **IV. Methodology**

The study utilized the quantitative approach in collecting and analyzing data. Questionnaires were distributed to students living in the University's off-campus hostels using the survey design. The University of Cape Coast has a student population of 15573 (University of Cape Coast Students Record, 2021). Yamane's (1967) sample size determination formula was used to calculate a sample size of 390 students from the population. The multi-stage sampling strategy was used in this investigation. To begin, a stratified sample method was employed to categorize hostels according to their proximity to nearby villages (Amamoma,

Apeowsika, Kwesipra, Ayensu, and Kwaprow). Secondly, purposive sampling was used to select five hostel facilities each from the five communities around the university. Students in their second to final years were the intended participants. The majority of first-year students lived in university halls, thus they had no experience living in private hostels, according to the researcher. As a result, they were not included in the study. The survey was completely optional, and the students were assured of their privacy. The Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) version 26 software was used to enter the data. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and the study's findings were shown using Microsoft Excel. Relationships between the dependent and independent variables were established using cross-tabulations and mean scores.

## V. Results

This aspect addresses the study's findings. The socio-demographic features of students, as well as student expectations about off-campus housing at the University of Cape Coast, are discussed.

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students

The socio-demographic characteristics of the students are shown in Table 1. Out of the 390 students, 300(76.9%) and 90(23.1%) were living in hostels and 'homestels' respectively. 190(48.7%) of the 390 students were males while 200 (51.3%) were females. The majority of the sampled students were single [373(96.2%)] and below 26 years [313(80.2%)] respectively. Most of the students included level 200s, 300s and 400s since most of them rented hostels and 'homestels'. In terms of their religious denomination, the majority of students (86.9%) were Christians, followed by Muslims (10.5%) and traditionalists (2.6%). It was revealed that students' [265 (68%)] main source of information about the hostels and 'homestels' they stayed in was recommended by friends. Parents and guardians played little role in choosing accommodation for their dependents. More than half 164(54.6%) of the sampled students had stayed in their accommodation for just a year

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students**

<b>Socio-demographic characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency (n=390)</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<i>Gander</i>		
Male	190	48.7
Female	200	51.3
<i>Marital status</i>		
Not married	375	96.2
Married	15	3.8
<i>Age</i>		
Less than 25	313	80.2
26-29	69	17.7
30-34	8	2.0
<i>Level of study</i>		
200	137	36.0
300	130	33.0
400	123	31.0
<i>Religious Denomination</i>		
Christianity	339	86.9
Islamic	41	10.5
Traditionalist	10	2.6
<i>Source of information about the hostel?</i>		
Agent	12	3.1
Family	4	1.0
Friends	265	68.0
Personal	64	16.4
Poster	11	2.8
Social media	34	8.7
<i>Type of accommodation</i>		

Hostel	300	76.9
Homestels	90	23.1

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

**Students Expectations of Off-Campus Accommodation**

This section of the analysis focuses on what the respondents expect to have or experience in their off-campus accommodation. The expectations of respondents have been grouped under two major themes namely physical characteristics of the accommodation and social and management matters. In all, twenty-three (23) variables were identified as the facilities and or issues respondents expect to have or experience in their off-campus accommodation with 16 of them relating to the physical characteristics including conditions of the environment (Table 2) whereas seven of them related to management and some social issues (Table 3). Using the adjusted mean scores, the expectations of the students were ranked from the highest to the lowest. Considering the issues related to physical characteristics, students expect their off-campus accommodation environment to be clean and this was ranked as the most important with a mean score of 4.21 among all the listed expectations. This was followed by the availability of electricity with a mean score of 4.20 and structured and clean toilet and bathroom facilities with a mean score of 4.04. The garage facility and a small number of rooms sharing a meter recorded the least mean scores of 3.48 and 3.20 respectively.

**Table 2: Mean Scores for Expectation of Physical Facilities of Off-campus Accommodation**

Physical characteristics of accommodation	Mean	Std. Error	95% Interval	Confidence	Rank
Clean environment	4.21	0.34	3.53	4.88	1 <sup>st</sup>
Availability of electricity	4.20	0.27	3.672	4.73	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Structured and clean toilet and bathroom facilities	4.04	0.29	3.48	4.60	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Security service/facility	4.00	0.40	3.21	4.79	4 <sup>th</sup>
Small number of people per room	3.98	0.27	3.44	4.51	5 <sup>th</sup>
Infirmary	3.96	0.39	3.20	4.72	6 <sup>th</sup>
Kitchen facilities	3.93	0.35	3.25	4.62	7 <sup>th</sup>
Comfortable bed	3.77	0.33	3.13	4.42	8 <sup>th</sup>
Waste disposal facility	3.77	0.38	3.01	4.52	9 <sup>th</sup>
Reading room	3.73	0.41	2.93	4.53	10 <sup>th</sup>
Reliable water supply	3.71	0.34	3.05	4.37	11 <sup>th</sup>
JCR Entertainment facility	3.70	0.38	2.96	4.44	12 <sup>th</sup>
Good room layout	3.66	0.30	3.08	4.25	13 <sup>th</sup>
Spacious room	3.66	0.29	3.09	4.23	14 <sup>th</sup>
Garage facility	3.48	0.39	2.72	4.24	15 <sup>th</sup>
A small number of rooms sharing a meter	3.20	0.40	2.42	3.99	16 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Using the adjusted mean scores again, the expectations of the students concerning social and management issues were ranked. Issues relating to rules and regulations were ranked highest with a mean score of 4.35. This was followed by issues of cordial interpersonal relationships with other tenants, with a mean score of 4.18. It was revealed that students expect good behaviour from hostel staff. This was ranked third with a mean score of 4.10. Good ventilation was the least ranked.

**Table 3: Mean Scores of Students' Expectations of Social and Management Factors of Off-campus Accommodation**

Social and management issues	Mean	Std. Error	95% Interval	Confidence	Rank
Rules and regulations on the accommodation	4.35	0.33	3.71	5.00	1st

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Cordial interpersonal relationship with other tenants	4.18	0.32	3.56	4.81	2nd
Good behaviour of accommodation staffs	4.10	0.34	3.42	4.77	3rd
Accessible to transport	4.09	0.33	3.45	4.74	4th
Affordable price	4.02	0.37	3.29	4.75	5th
The quietness of the environment for easy study	3.95	0.32	3.32	4.58	6th
Good Ventilation	3.88	0.32	3.26	4.50	7th

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Source: Fieldwork (2021)

## VI. Discussions of Findings

According to the study, students expect to have or experience a variety of facilities and services in their off-campus housing accommodations. When it comes to environmental cleanliness, the majority of respondents (73.6 percent) have greater expectations. This demonstrates that students are more worried about their physical well-being. This is because students may become ill if they are exposed to harmful conditions. They are unable to study and attend lectures efficiently when this occurs. They may have to repeat classes. Off-campus housing environments, including hostels, have been claimed to have an impact on students' well-being, connectivity, and credit (Lutalo, 2019). As a result, managers and owners of off-campus housing should seek to improve the hygiene of their units. Students' expectations for off-campus accommodation amenities included the availability of vital utilities such as power and clean, well-structured toilet facilities. This means that students regard utilities as necessary and basic services that every off-campus housing must be able to supply. Furthermore, when it comes to the respondents' expectations, the availability of security facilities was ranked fourth. Simpeh and Shakantu (2020) emphasized the importance of giving these vital services in student housing a high priority. While students are concerned about transportation, reading room availability, and the behaviour of the accommodation staff, they are less concerned about the vehicular garage and the number of individuals sharing a meter. A majority of respondents praised utilities such as water, power, and trash disposal facilities. Similarly, Shakantu and Simpeh (2018) researched five Ghanaian universities, focusing on Accra and the Volta area, and found that electricity is one of the essential amenities that students want to have in their off-campus housing facilities. This backs up an earlier claim that electricity is a basic service that must be provided continually. The fact that a consistent supply of electricity is praised emphasizes the significance of electricity in off-campus housing.

## VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore university students' off-campus housing expectations. The findings suggest that students know what they need from the university and in terms of housing and accommodation, students had certain expectations. The study asserted that when expectations of students concerning housing services are not met by students' housing managers, a gap is created. The study confirmed that new generations have high expectations and standards by expressing strong opinions regarding housing type, service, and quality. Therefore, it is not surprising that students expressed a strong preference for a clean environment. Students also stressed the provision of electricity in housing facilities. This expectation ranked second when adjusted means scores were used for analysis. Using the adjusted mean scores again, the expectations of the students concerning social and management issues were ranked. Issues relating to rules and regulations were ranked highest with a mean score of 4.35. This was followed by issues of cordial interpersonal relationships with other tenants, with a mean score of 4.18. It was revealed that students expect good behaviour from hostel staff. This was ranked third with a mean score of 4.10. Surprisingly, good ventilation was the least ranked.

As a means to improve on future managerial operations, authorities of universities would need to sensitize students' housing owners and managers on the need to understand and appreciate the expectations and preferences of students. Among important managerial needs include noise insulation systems to be installed in all students' housing to provide conducive learning environments, first aid boxes to be made available in all premises at all times, managers to respond to repairs and provide regular facility checks, security to be improved by employing private security and repairing all weak lighting systems around buildings. Theoretically, the study has contributed to the widely used gap model with experience from Ghana.

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