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GEOGRAPHICAL DIVERSITY AND STUDENTS' HOUSING SATISFACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Geografska raznolikost i zadovoljstvo studentskim stanovanjem u Južnoj Africi[∇]

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Abstract

This article examines how students' geographical background influences their satisfaction with university hall of residence. The reason for this study is bore out of the fact that the diversity of geographical background is a major issue in post-apartheid South Africa as most students' comes from diverse background. Moreover, few studies have been conducted to explore relationships between cultural differences and the housing satisfaction of university students in South Africa. The primary data for the study was collected through a structured questionnaire survey distributed to a sample of 60 occupants' from a female hall of residence at the Doornfontein campuses of the University of Johannesburg. The findings from the survey revealed that 26.67% of the students reside in urban areas while 73.33% of the students reside in rural areas, township and informal settlement. Further findings revealed that the urban students were less satisfied with specific features in the hall of residence while student's who reside in the rural area, 'location' and informal settlement were more satisfied. However a unified finding in the study revealed that students' from different geographical background were satisfied with the neighbourhood facilities. Diversity of geographical classification is a major issue in many societies as no society is mono-ethnic. Hence there is a need to determine the influence of geographical diversity in students housing so that universities can better serve students' needs.

Keywords: *Student housing, student satisfaction, cultural diversity, South Africa*

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1. Introduction

The multiplicity of culture is a major issue in many societies more so to a country like South Africa (SA) which has had its fair share of a great cultural divide that has affected every facet of life of the citizens; most especially the housing context. The housing situation in South Africa has generally been a contentious issue since 1910, when laws were made that restricted a majority of the population to own land and properties because of the percentage allocation that imposed the limitation. Hence, De Loo (1992) refers to housing as either or both emotional and a very personal issue in South Africa because of the deprivation suffered by a majority of South Africans during the apartheid days. For instance, when the Union government was established in 1910 in SA, they developed several strategies in form of decrees to control the movement of blacks, especially in areas referred to as white urban areas. Since 1910 to the end of the segregation rule, various approaches were used to advance the inhumane idea called apartheid. Most significantly from the literature was the drafting of the segregation policy, which was advanced at the national and provincial levels of government. Foremost in the Acts was the Natives' Land Act 27 of 1913. This Act was concerned with land issues, and since land and housing issues are inextricably linked, this also effected the provision of housing for the blacks (Phago, 2010). The enactment of the Native Land Act 27 of 1913, cemented housing policy issues in the apartheid era, which created the divide in housing issues till date and also institutionalized the form of residential segregation known successively as the 'location' or 'township'. Location or township were the areas zoned exclusively for black during the past regime, which still remains till date and has created a divide in the country's housing context.

Diversity is nothing a difference from the majority because in any culture there is a majority and many minorities. Culture is a set of norms that set standards for a society of what is an acceptable behaviour. In every culture there are basic standards for housing construction; family living; social interaction such as personal space distance, eye contact, amount of body language displayed in public, and negotiating style amongst others. According to Ratcliff (1999) no society is mono-ethnic and there is clearly a diversity of needs, desires, expectations and aspirations to be met. Likewise, there are also diversity of needs and expectations regarding housing, be it private or public. The design and use of houses reflects certain cultural and social values and ideas embedded in a particular society. Also, Aragones, Francescato and Garling (2002) stated that a house is more than a structure full of things; its form and organization are influenced typically by the culture in which it is developed and may be viewed to reflect the relationship between culture and environment. This is because the design and use of houses reflects cultural values, ideas, and people of all ages have different housing experience according to their cultural backgrounds.

South Africa young people mostly moves to the new cities and leave parental home when they become student, entering a new phase on their housing pathway. This phase, called the young-adult phase by Frønes and Brusdal (2000), is characterized by the way young people live without established families and in pursuit of ideals, friendships and new experiences. Frønes and Brusdal (2000) further states that accommodation which is perceived as satisfactory in their respective situations is an important part of it. Perceived housing satisfaction varies among different social groups as individuals do not necessarily compare their own situation to the average norm in society but refer to the norm of the group they belong to. People belonging to different social groups consequently show different levels of satisfaction with the same housing

condition (Thomsen and Eikemo, 2010). Therefore the description of students being young adult entering a new phase in life captures a major part of the students in South Africa.

Since education has become the major hope for new inventions of science and technology which in turn drives economic development of any nation; any national state that is positioned towards advancement must be willing to invest in educating the youth as a preparation for the future. The need for education has compelled many higher education institutions, to build student housing facilities to accommodate registered students coming from different background, provinces, countries and sometimes even students from different continents during their enrolment period. The rate of students' enrolment in higher institutions is increasing almost every decade because obtaining a college or university qualification is also perceived as vital achievement today despite the contribution to national development, as compared to hundreds of years ago. For instance the Higher Education in South Africa are faced with a dilemma to adequately absorb the large number of students passed their senior secondary school examinations (matric) yearly; of which the University of Johannesburg a multi-cultural Pan-African university absorbs the largest number of students amongst other higher education institutions in the country. The supply and development of student housing is a challenge for many university cities world-wide as a result of the ongoing expansion of higher education institutions and rising student numbers. In this context there has been an increasing amount of research focusing on student housing; the influence of student demand on local housing markets and the impact on the development of university cities, as research from the UK shows. Hence, if colleges and universities are attempting to increase their enrolment rates, they first need to update their student housing facilities. Unfortunately the more students enrol in post education institutions the more the need for student housing grows, since the estimated supply is mostly exceeded by the escalating demand for student housing.

Student housing has long been regarded as an essential component of the facilities provided by higher learning institutions in assisting students to expand their intellectual capabilities. According to Hassanain (2008), well planned student housing promote desirable educational outcomes and help to achieve the broader objectives of university education, such as social cohesion and responsible citizenship. Literature has reveals that a good student housing encourages interactions between roommates of different backgrounds and specializations; and thus broadens the students' knowledge. Amole (2005) claims that facilities such as study areas or meeting places for academic discussions and social gatherings provided in the student housing will encourage informal intellectual activities outside the students' own faculties which enhances the total student development. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to explore how students' geographical background influences their satisfaction with features associated with university hall of residence. The study is focused on students who stayed in the on-campus students' hall of residence. The paper starts with an overview of literature on residential satisfaction from students' perspective; followed by a discussion on the methodological approach used in meeting the objective of the study. Also, the results of the analysis and findings of the research are presented. The empirical discussions first explore the students' demographical profile. Secondly, findings for the students' satisfaction with building characteristics are presented and lastly the survey results for the students' satisfaction with the neighbourhood features are presented. All these are presented through the lens of the level of influence as caused by the students'

geographical background on their levels of satisfaction. Finally, the paper draws some conclusions.

2. Residential satisfaction from student's perspectives

The discussions on residential satisfaction (RS) have become a prominent discussion among the built environment researchers and scholars since years ago. Peck amongst these debates is the focus on RS perceptions from the adults' stance (family residents), who lives in either public or private and landed or high-rise housing scheme. Nonetheless, there are less or limited discussions on RS perceptions from young-adults' viewpoint (students) especially in the South Africa context and other developing countries. Very little is known about what predicts satisfaction in students' housing most especially in South Africa. However, some of the limited studies on students residential satisfaction (SRS) are studies done by Amole (2007; 2009), Hassanain (2008) and Radder and Han (2009). Radder and Han (2009) is the only notable study on SRS in South Africa. Amole (2009) investigates SRS among students in Nigeria and found a low level of satisfaction with the provided student housing. While Radder and Han (2009) a South Africa based study of students in the Eastern Cape Province found that students were dissatisfaction with the campus residences. Alternatively, Hassanain (2008) found that students in Saudi Arabia indicated a high level of satisfaction with their housing. However, most of the studies apart from that of Radder and Han (2009) were conducted in countries where the culture and geographical background are different from that experienced in South Africa which provided an indication of what is done elsewhere but does not apply to the subject in South Africa. Thus, the results of the previous studies may not be applicable to the present context. Nevertheless, Amole (2009) states that this form of housing represents a special type of housing for a number of reasons: first, students' housing is a major form of accommodation for university students who are in a transitory stage of life. Second, this type of housing has very peculiar characteristics, being different from the single-family house and the apartment building for singles persons which are the common forms of housing. Thirdly, the setting of students' housing is usually the campus environment rather than the normal urban setting, but the buildings do take the form of urban building as most universities are situated in the urban Centre's and even when not, they are still made to have a form that resembles the urban area.

Student housing are housing types specifically designed to accommodate students, such as a 'live-in' residential college, boarding house or other purpose built development containing student units with other ancillary facilities such as study areas, communal lounge and kitchens amongst others. These forms of development can also be referred to as students' hall of residence or student accommodation or students' hostel or 'boarding house'. But a 'boarding house' provides a principal place of residence, in which bedrooms are not self-contained and usually share a common kitchen and/or bathroom. Likewise, a student housing can also be referred to as building which contains a dwelling unit occupied by two or more students who are not related to each other by adoption or marriage or are not related biologically to one another. Furthermore, Najib et al (2011) also defined student housing as a supervised living-learning hostel consisting of shared housing facilities and amenities for the community of residents who use it that is built on-campus, owned by the university, provided for inexpensive chargeable rooms, and administered to accommodate the undergraduate or postgraduate students. The reason for providing on-campus student housing is to cater

for students' housing needs in accomplishing academic, living, and social goals during their study life span at the university (Hassanain, 2008), just as it is with the provision of a normal home. Therefore, the idea of building a student housing should be based on the model of building the conventional family housing.

Furthermore, Mohit et al. (2010) stated that residential satisfaction is the positive experience expressed by occupants when their housing needs meets their expectations for the housing features, housing services and neighborhood facilities. Also, Najib and Yusof (2010) specify that residential satisfaction among students is achieved from high-quality facilities, positive roommate relationships, strong floor communities and quiet study environments in their living accommodations. However, Kaya and Erkip (2001) submits that student satisfaction is based on having wider and brighter rooms with less noise and stress in the living areas, whereas Amole (2005) claims that students assess residential satisfaction based on the levels of crowding and privacy in their rooms. Thus, Najib et al. (2011) argues that student residential satisfaction is an evaluation of their on-campus living accommodations. In other words, residents' satisfaction mainly stems from the perceived quality of housing facilities and services. Similarly, Hassanain (2008) points out that student perceptions can be assessed in terms of both technical (acoustic and visual comfort) and functional (room finishes and room layout) requirements. Hassanain (2008), considers the technical and functional performances as two different aspects that can be used to explain student residential satisfaction. In a different approach, Amole (2009) and Khozaei et al. (2010) all investigated residential satisfaction beyond the scope of housing facilities and thus added management attributes as a factor in student satisfaction. They include elements such as student housing rules and the attitudes of student housing employees. Other factors that can be used to assess the overall satisfaction with student housing, including physical variables such as facilities and extra services (Hassanain, 2008); social variables such as student relationships, financial support, crowding and privacy (Frank and Enkawa, 2009) and a combination of these aspects. A major characteristic of student housing is its transitory nature. This is because when evaluating RS, the time perspective (long-term or short-term stay) can have a decisive influence on satisfaction measurement. Students in an ephemeral housing situation may consider different aspects important for their housing satisfaction than people in a long-lasting housing situation (Thomsen and Eikemo, 2010).

3. Research methodology

The research location for the study is the Doornfontein Campus (DFC) of the University of Johannesburg, where the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment is situated. Primary data for the research was collected through a structured questionnaire survey distributed to a sample of 60 occupants' from a female hall of residence. The respondents involved in the data collection were female students who reside in Aurum female residence in DFC campus. The questionnaire was administered to students who are registered members of the particular hall of residence and who have lived there for more six months. Using a simple random stratified sampling technique, the eleven floors residence was divided into five different levels by selecting the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th floors respectively. All students on each selected floors had an equal chance to be drawn and to occur in the sample. All students on the selected floors were chosen as the sample frame. A total of 12 students were chosen in each floor for the research, making the overall sample size to be 60 students.

This was achieved as follows: since each floor has 15 rooms each, the questionnaire were distributed in alternative rooms and for easy of identification of the next room, room numbers were used to determine the number of the next alternate room in each floor. In all, 12 rooms were selected for the research in each floor. This process was essential to obtain true representativeness of the entire sample. Out of the 60 questionnaires sent out, all were received back representing 100% response rate. A 5-point Likert type scale was used to determine the students' levels of satisfaction with regard to some specific building and neighbourhood features respectively. The scale read as follows, 1=Very dissatisfied, 2= Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, and 5=Very satisfied. The questionnaire responses for the analysis was recoded to a two-point scale of 1 and 2, where 1 through 2 on the five-point scale was coded as 1 for 'not satisfied' and 3 through 5 was coded as 2 for 'satisfied'. Therefore, the next section of the paper presents the findings of the survey and some discussion.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Students' demographic profile

The survey result for the students' demography revealed that out of the 60 students' respondents, 90.0% were undergraduates while 10.0% were postgraduates. The majority of the students were undergraduates' students because postgraduate students usually preferred to reside off-campus. All respondents (100.0%) were female students since the research was based on a female hall of residence. Further findings revealed that all respondents (100.0%) were South Africans as shown in **Table – 1**. Also, the survey on the geographical area where the student originally reside revealed that 26.67% lives in the urban areas, 18.33% lives in rural areas, while 53.33% lives in the locations (township) and 1.67% lives in informal settlement. Lastly, when the students present levels of study was assessed, findings revealed that 55.0% were at their first year of study, while 28.33% were at the 2nd year, those at the 3rd year were 8.33% and 4th year 8.33%. This further confirms that older students usually prefer to lives at off-campus residence as against the new students who just finished their high school and are studying at the first year. The current findings for the study is supported by Amole (2009), where it was found that postgraduates' students are not always satisfied with student housing because of their experiences and duration of stay as compared to first year and second year students (undergraduates) who are very satisfied. Also, Allen and Maimone (1989) study among 855 students concluded that the year of study is important in terms of both perceptions of the residence and satisfaction with the residence experiences. In contrast Rodger and Johnson (2005) revealed that first year students are less satisfied with student housing compared to postgraduates students, because first year students rated themselves as feeling "less engaged" and less involved within the student housing community on campus.

Table – 1: Students’ profile

Demographic	Categories	% of respondents
Student status	Undergraduate	90.0%
	Postgraduate	10.0%
Province of Origin	Gauteng	21.67%
	Mpumalanga	6.67%
	Limpopo	41.67%
	Kwazulu-Natal	5.00%
	Eastern Cape	6.67%
	Northern Cape	0.00%
	Western Cape	1.67%
	North West	10.0 %
	Free State	6.67%
	Students geographical area	Urban
Rural		18.33%
Location (township)		53.33%
Informal settlement		1.67%

Source: Author’s empirical findings

4.2. Students’ Satisfaction with building characteristics

This section of the questionnaire survey asked questions on certain internal features of the residence and the findings presented relates to the satisfaction of the students from diverse housing geographical background. When the students’ were asked their level of satisfaction with the building features, the survey findings revealed that a combined percentage of 63.34% from the Township (Location), rural area and informal settlement were satisfied with the sizes of the rooms while 36.66% representing the students’ who lives in the urban area were dissatisfied with the room sizes. When the students were further asked the reason for dissatisfaction, the students from the urban areas indicated that the rooms they live in at home are twice what they currently have. While some of the students from the township, rural areas and informal settlement indicated that though the rooms are small, but it is more than adequate compare to what they have at home. Some other respondents indicated that they do not really care about the size of the room as they are only there for a short period to get an education. Also, when the students were asked to rate the bathroom facilities provided at the hall of residence, 38.33% of the students who lives in the urban area indicated that they not satisfied with the facilities while the students from the township, rural areas and the informal settlement indicated that they are satisfied (61.33%) with the facilities. However, a physical observation of the facility by the researcher revealed that each floor of the hall of residence have two bathtubs and one shower facilities. The reason while the students who do not live in the urban areas were satisfied can be attributed to the fact that most do not have a bathtub at home and though the facility is limited in number, they nonetheless were satisfied. Further findings revealed that the rural and other students – except the urban students were satisfied with the location and amenities in the TV room (72.0%), while the urban student were dissatisfied (28.0%). However, a majority of the students (66.66%) from various cultural backgrounds were satisfied with the location and amenities in the kitchen. These confirm Amole (2009) findings that students with high economic status (urban dwellers) were the least satisfied with residence halls when compared to students with an average economic status who are

satisfied with the hall of residence. In disparity, Alkandari (2007) study found that female students (without a pre-classification) are more satisfied than male students with their residence halls and that there is no significant differences in responses between students of different nationalities, but in the present study, findings from the building features satisfaction survey revealed that there is a significant disparity in the satisfaction level of student from different cultural and geographical background. Also, the current study concurs with Salleh et al. (2011) findings that the level of satisfaction towards housing differs according to geographical backgrounds. Also, this is supported by Husna and Nurizan (1987) study findings which stated that there is a difference in satisfaction towards housing among different backgrounds, in which it was found that Malaysians' have a low level of residential satisfaction towards their housing as compared to Chinese and Indian residents.

4.3. Students' Satisfaction with Neighbourhood features

Residents' satisfaction with neighborhood and locational factors have been perceived as a vital determinant of residential satisfaction to the point that housing residents are willing to compromise the inefficiencies within the building because of the satisfaction that is provided by the neighborhood facilities (Ukoha and Beamish, 1997). Neighborhood facilities and locational factors refer to the location of the dwelling unit, neighborhood relations, distance to the shopping areas, distance to the workplace or school, distance to the police services, distance to recreational facilities, secure and clean environment, the building image and parking facilities. Awotona (1991) posits that housing residents are mostly dissatisfied with housing location that requires them to travel or walk long distances to school, to workplace, shopping areas, medical centres and the geographical areas around their dwelling units. Easy access to good public transportation, community and shopping facilities and physical environment variables are said to be determinants of satisfaction with neighborhood and locational factors. Hence this section of the survey asked the respondents questions relating to their surrounding areas and the findings are presented according to the students' geographical background to determine the group that are more or less satisfied.

Therefore, when the students were asked of their satisfaction towards the distance they walk or travel to classes, a majority of the students from the different geographical background were very satisfied (90.0%). This finding shows that there is no geographical difference in terms of the distance traveled or walked as all students have the same access to the provided facilities by the university to make sure all students get to their respective settings for classes. Also, when the students' were asked if they were satisfied with the distance they walk to the student centre, a majority of the student from all geographical location indicated they were also satisfied (86.67%) with the distance. Likewise, further findings showed that they were also satisfied (86.67%) with the distance between their hall of residence and the security service post as both are diagonally positioned. The study also revealed that the students from the urban areas were the only ones that were satisfied with the university sport field (13.40%), while those from the other areas were not satisfied (86.60%) with the sport facility. The reason for this is because of the location. The university sport field is located in the main campus at Auckland Park which is about 9 km, 943 meters apart. Because some of the students from the urban areas had cars, it was easy for them to access the facility while the other students depend on the campus bus shuttle to get there, which they informed is not always available. Another neighbourhood facility the students were accessed on was

the gymnasium. Findings on this feature revealed that the students from the urban centres were satisfied (75.0%) while the others were not satisfied (25.0%). This is because there is a monthly fee for the use of the gymnasium facilities and most students from the townships, rural areas and informal settlement could afford it, hence the reason for the dissatisfaction. Further findings revealed that a majority of the students from all geographical background were satisfied (82.45%) with the location of the worship facilities. However, it was also found that 13.40% of the urban students were satisfied with the parking facility while 86.6% of the other students were not. Lastly, the survey result revealed that a majority of the students from all geographical background were not satisfied (79.29%) with the university provided computer laboratories while only 20.68% of the students were satisfied. Most attributed this to the fact that they systems were too slow and at time you had to wait on the queue for more than two hours before you could have access.

The findings from the survey support the study done by Thomsen (2010) in a student housing in Norway where it was identified that the distance to classes, student centers, security services, school bus station, sport field, gymnasium, computer laboratories and worship facilities are the major factors of satisfaction in student housing. Also, Khozaei et al. (2010) found that student living on campus are mostly satisfied with student housing facilities that are close to classes, food cafeterias (student centres) and exposure to opportunities of meeting new people. In addition Kollec and Berkoz (2006) claimed that satisfaction with neighbourhood facilities reflects the resident's positive reaction towards the housing facilities and its surroundings. Likewise, Abdul and Yusof (2006) reveals that neighbourhood facilities factors are the most dominant factors in determining the level of satisfaction towards housing; and the dominant factors of neighbourhood facilities that causes a low level of satisfaction are poor public transport, lack of sport fields, lack of multipurpose halls, lack of parking areas which were also reflected in the current study. Therefore, based on the findings from the current study and the previous studies, it can be infer that neighbourhood factors have a huge impact on the overall satisfaction with any given housing facilities and most especially to student housing despite its transitory nature.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper examined residential satisfaction in the context of students' housing in South Africa. Findings from the study proved that students' geographical background influences their residential satisfaction with aspects of university hall of residence. The study showed that the students' housing provided performed above average from the students' evaluations; implying that the residences matched the needs of the students to an extent. It also provided awareness into the students' geographical group characteristics which were predictors of satisfaction. The study identified the attributes of building and neighbourhood features which predicted satisfaction, and it was also able to show that the neighbourhood features are significant in predicting students residential satisfaction. This study has shown that the outcomes of satisfaction studies in other housing settings cannot simply be generalized to students' housing. Hence differences arise from the students' characteristics as well as from the measured features of the housing. However, the characteristics of the students which predicted satisfaction were almost similar to those of adults in previous studies; the measurements of the housing they were satisfied with or not satisfied with were likely to be related to the transitory nature of the housing and their age. There were also certain aspects of the

students' housing which differed significantly from the family house. The current study has specifically shown the roles which the students' geographical background plays in determining students' satisfaction with university hall of residence.

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Apstrakt

Ovaj članak ispituje kako geografska pozadina učenika utiče na njihovo zadovoljstvo univerzitetskim domovima. Razlog za ovu studiju rodio se iz činjenice da je raznolikost geografske pripadnosti glavni problem Južne Afrike posle Aparthejda jer većina učenika dolazi iz različitih mesta. Osim toga, sprovedeno je nekoliko studija koje su istraživale odnose između kulturnih razlika i zadovoljstva stanovanjem studenata univerziteta u Južnoj Africi. Primarni podaci za studiju prikupljeni su putem strukturalnog upitnika distribuiranog na uzorku od 60 stanara ženskog doma Doornfontain kampusa Univerziteta u Johannesburgu. Nalazi istraživanja pokazali su da 26,67% učenika živi u urbanim sredinama a da 73,33% učenika živi u ruralnim područjima, okruzima i neformalnim naseljima. Nalazi su dalje pokazali da su studenti iz urbanih sredina manje zadovoljni specifičnostima doma dok su studenti koji žive u ruralnim područjima i neformalnim naseljima zadovoljniji. Međutim, jedinstven je nalaz koji otkriva da su zadovoljni objektima u susedstvu sa učenicima iz različitih geografskih sredina. Raznovrsnost geografske klasifikacije je glavni problem u mnogim društvima koja su monoetnička. Stoga postoji potreba da utvrdi uticaj geografske raznolikosti studentskog stanovanja tako da univerziteti mogu bolje služiti potrebama učenika.

Ključne reči: *studentsko stanovanje, studentsko zadovoljstvo, kulturna raznolikost, Južna Afrika*

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