MATERIALISM AND ITS EFFECT ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF SOKOINE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

Materialism is often defined as a tendency by an individual to admire and prefer material possessions. While it is true that almost all human beings prefer material possessions, the degree of preference and admiration of material possessions differs from one person to another. This study aimed to assess the level of materialism among university students at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Morogoro region of Tanzania. The study also intended to assess the effect of materialism on university students' performance. In Tanzania, this field of study has rarely been investigated. The study was carried out at Sokoine University of Agriculture in 2016 in Mazimbu campus located in Morogoro urban area. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaire on students from 10 degrees programmes. Secondary data on university students' performance were taken from SUA examination records. Data analysis was done using Likert scale, chi-square test and multiple linear regression using STATA software. Findings indicate that the university students are generally materialist with female students and young students being on the higher side of materialism than their counterparts. As regards the influence of materialism on performance, it was found that materialistic students perform poorer than students who are less materialistic, consistent with the available literature. The study recommends to the government through its universities to discourage the materialistic culture among students much as apart from leading to poor performance, it may also lead to other bad behaviors such as prostitution. This can be done through encouraging philosophical and religious studies among the university students.

Key words: Materialism, students' performance

1.0 Introduction

Different researchers offered various perspectives of what materialism encompasses. Belk (1985) define materialism as the formative experiences of the people, who consider their possessions as part of themselves (Belk 1985). Further, Belk (185) contend that at the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Materialism is the pursuit of personal material well-being (Easterlin & Crimmins, 1991) .A materialist may prefer to work longer hours to earn more money rather than using the same time for leisure pursuits (Richins & Dawson, 1992).

Materialism develops when individuals are exposed to social models that encourages materialistic values (kasser et al 2004). Materialism drives society in different ways in such a way that people always want to have more than what others have, some will do things that they would not normally do. people go to school, colleges and universities mostly to obtain materialism things.

Materialism is a lifestyle based on accumulating and acquiring consumer goods beyond what is necessary to meet basic needs (kasser, 2002 It is a lifestyle of a high degree of material consumption that acts as a goal and serves as plans (Daun, 1983).

A number of studies in children and adolescent indicates that materialistic children are less committed to school and are more occupied with consumerism (Goldberg et al.2003). They also face risk of suffering from depressions (cohn,1996) and unhappiness (kasser, 2005). Further they are not only less likely to experience family togetherness (Flouri, 2004), but they are also less likely to be socially integrated, or inclined to connect to and help others in their neighborhood and community (Froh et al, 2010).

Kasser(2002) in his work links materialism with unhappiness as both cause and effect. He argues that "materialism expends the energy necessary for living, loving and learning, and instead of more delivering happiness, delivers stress and strain. Conversely, materialism seems to develop deeply among people who have feelings of personal insecurity".

Generally speaking, materialism is bad and should be discouraged among children. Dobson (1976) provides two character -building reasons to avoid saturating children with excessive materialism. The first is that children who are given whatever they want rarely develop a sense of appreciation. Second a child who is given too much is actually cheated out of experiences of pleasure. By depriving a child from having what he wants immediately, the parent enables the child to experience the pleasure that occurs when an intense need is satisfied.

In Tanzania like in other countries, materialism exists from family level to national level. Some of the family careers, focuses on which kind of living styles prefers. Materials affects people in different ways, it has great influence in our society since it affects almost everything we do. It affects peoples' plans and people may become self-centered and ignore others, the desire for money and possession affect the way people think and decide.

Students' performance has widely been studied at all levels (primary, secondary, colleges & universities) in Tanzania. Unfortunately, few studies have addressed materialism as one of the possible causes of students' poor performance. This study aims to assess the role of materialism

on students' academic performance, using students from Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) as case study. Specifically, the study has addressed three aspects

(I)   Extent of materialism among the university students
(II)   Examining degree of materialism across students' gender and sex
(III)   Effect of materialism on students' performance

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design, Area of study and population of study

The study' design was a cross sectional study design where data from the individuals were collected at one point in time. The study was done at Mazimbu campus of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA). The campus is located in Morogoro urban area between the Dar es salaam - Iringa Road and the Dar es salaam -Dodoma Road. The target population was of students doing undergraduate degree in the Campus.

2.2 Sampling Procedures and Sample size

The study sample size was taken to be 300 which was calculated based on Yamane (1967) formulae for sample size calculation from finite population. The Mazimbu campus at the time of this study had about 1000 students with about 10-degree programs. These were BSc Geography & mathematics, BSc Chemistry &Mathematics, BSc Informatics and Mathematics, BSc Geography & Biology, BSc Chemistry & Biology, BSc Environment Sciences & Management, BSc Agriculture Economics, Bachelor of Rural Development, Bachelor of Tourism and Management, BSc Range Management. With the exceptional of the last five-degree progammes the rest had roughly 80 students each, while the last five had roughly 120 students each. The study opted to use stratified random sampling with proportional allocation of students into the sample. The proportional allocation is shown in Table 1.

Table1: Proportional allocation of units in the Stratified Sample

s/n	Degree progamme	Sampling proportion	Sample size out 300
1	BSc. Geography & Mathematics	80/1080	24
2	BSc. Chemistry & Mathematics	80/1080	24
3	BSc. Chemistry & Biology	80/1080	24
4	BSc. Mathematics & Informatics	80/1080	24
5	BSc. Geography & Biology	80/1080	24
6	BSc Environmental Sciences & Management	120/1080	36
7	BSc Agriculture Economics	120/1080	36
8	Bachelor of Rural Development	120/1080	36
9	Bachelor of Tourism and Management	120/1080	36
10	BSc Range Management	120/1080	36
	Total	1	300

Using a register list from the class representatives, students were randomly selected from each degree program as indicated in Table 1 above.

2.3 Materialism Measurement and Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to all the selected students. The questionnaires consisted of questions asking students' demographic variables including age and gender and questions probing about their level of materialism. The degree of materialism was measured through asking students on whether they admire possession of material things such as electronic devises, attending out and dressing styles. In this study 8 statements were used to assess students' materialism. Previous studies such as by Belk (1985, 1988) and by Richins (1987) and may others followed a similar approach. While Belk (1985) used 24 statements to measure three components of materialism identified as possessiveness, non-generosity and envy, Richins(1987) used six statements to measure people' materialism.

As it may not be likely that a person can be completely materialistic or non-materialistic, questions were in a form of a five-point Likert scale asking a student to choose among five options (strongly agree (SA), agree(A), Neutral(N), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD)). The same approach has been followed by most scholars including Belk(1985) and Richins(1987). As in previous studies these questions were subjected to a validity test using Cronbach alpha test of internal consistency and revealed an alpha value of 0.71 which suggest that the questions used were consistent with what they measure.

2.4 Data analysis

The five-point Likert scale answers were finally converted into 3-point Likert scale with options as agree, neutral and disagree. Analysis on the percentage of students falling under each of those categories was done and presented in Table 2. Later a categorical variable called materialism was created with two dummies. A student was assigned with a value 1 if he/she was falling under agreeing status and was assigned a value of "0" if he/she was falling under either neutral or disagreeing status. This dummy variable was used to assess the degree of materialism across gender and sex, with a help of a chi-square test of association.

As regards the influence of materialism on students' performance a multiple linear regression model was used with a dependent variable as a student GPA against a set of independent variables including the students' materialism behavior measured as categorical variable as described before. Other independent variables were included as control variables and these were students' age, gender, A level division score, O-level division score, and whether a student lives on campus or off campus. The regression model is specified below;

$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 Age + \beta_2 sex + \beta_3 A\text{-Level points} + \beta_4 O\text{-levelpoints} + \beta_5 Degreeprogam + \beta_6 Campus + \beta_7 materialism$

Where Age=age of a student measured in years

Sex=1 if a student is a male and is 0 if otherwise

A-level points= points scored in the division ranging from a minimum of 3 points up to a maximum of 18

O-level points= Points scored in the division ranging from a minimum of 7 points up to maximum of 42 points

Campus status=1 if a student lives on campus and is 0 if otherwise

Materialism= 1, if a student fall under agreeing category and is 0 if a student fall under either neutral or disagreeing category

NB: It is worth noting that for points scored in the division the higher the points the poorer is the performance and the vice versa also is also true. The national Examination Council of Tanzania assign higher points to a lower grade and the vice versa.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Summary Statistics of the Respondents

Table 2 provide summary statistics of the variables used in the analysis

Table 2: Summary Statistics

variable	frequency	percentage
sex		
male	150	50%
female	150	50%
Age group		
20-24	75	25%
25-29	75	25%
30-34	75	25%
35-39	75	25%
A-Level division		
Division I	50	17%
Division II	80	26%
Division III	120	40%
Division IV	50	17%
O-Level Division		
Division I	60	20%
Division II	90	30%
Division III	110	37%
Division IV	40	13%
Campus status		
On campus	200	67%
Off-Campus	100	33%
Materialism		
Agreeing	180	60%

Disagreeing or neutral	120	40%
GPA		
1st class or 2nd Upper	40	
Lower 2nd class	120	
	140	

Results from Table 2 indicates that 300 students were involved in the study, half being males and half being females. This was done deliberately so as not to bias influence of materialism across student gender. The same was done for age groups by ensuring that number of students are the same across age group. Perhaps it is worth to note that the study involved students in age group 35-39, which is an extreme age group for undergraduate students in Tanzania. This is true, at the time education programmes were introduced at SUA, the university received a good number of matured secondary school teachers who joined different education programmes (CB, GB, IM, GM, CM). As for O-level and A-level divisions results show that division I and division IV were not the majority while diviosn II and III comprised the majority of the students. For on campus and off campus students the study had more of campus students than off-campus students. This scenario was brought up by the complexity of tapping up the off-campus students. As regarding materialism, results indicate that generally most students were materialistic (60%) as compared to non-materialistic (40%). The non-materialistic students consisted also of those who were regarded neutral. This was done for an ease of analysis.

3.1 Level of Materialism among the Students

Level of materialism was assessed using Likert scale as discussed in section 2.4. The results are given in Table 3:

Table 3: Likert Scale Analysis on the Level of Materialism

Sno	Statement	A	N	D	mean	SD1
1	People who puts on most expensive clothes deserve respect in a society	70%	30%	0%	3.7	1.5
2	Girls putting on nice hair dress are most beautiful	60%	20%	20%	3.5	1.2
3	I admire people who own expensive car, homes and clothes	70%	20%	10%	3.9	0.9
4	I admire people who enjoy music, outing and up to date fashion	50%	20%	30%	3.2	1.2
5	I admire students who owns expensive mobile phones and watches	50%	40%	10%	3.5	0.8
6	After graduating I would wish to have a good job earning me a lot of money to buy expensive things	60%	30%	10%	3.7	0.9
7	After graduating I will be very happy and feel satisfied if I own more than three expensive cars and a mansion	80%	20%	10%	4.3	0.8
8	I think having a lot of money brings a lot of happiness	70%	10%	20%	3.7	1.5
	Overall summary					
	Agree 180 (60%)					

Neutral	60 (20%)	
Disagree	60 (20 %)	

Results in Table 2 shows eight statements which were used to prob students on their level of materialism. Although originally the statements were in a five-point Likert scale, later were compiled into only three options (Agree, Neutral and Disagree) as shown in the Table. The overall results indicate that in general students are more materialistic as 60% of them tends to agree with most statements. Only 40% were either neutral or disagreeing. This observation could be reflecting most literature which contend that materialism is high at young age as the study had mostly young students 20--39). Sung (2017) found that materialism unlike frugality to be high among young consumers (<50) than among old consumers (>50).

3.2 Examining Degree of Materialism Across Gender and Sex

Table 4: Gender and Materialism

Materialism	Gender	
	male	female
Agree	40 (27%)	120 (80%)
Disagree	110 (73%)	30 (20%)
Total	150	150

Table 4 reveal that there is a higher percentage of female students (90%) who agrees to the statement of being materialistic compared to a percentage of males' students (33%) who agree o the statements of being materialistic. The vice -versa is also true that a percentage of male students disagreeing to the statements of being materialistic is much higher compared to percentage of females disagreeing to the statements of being materialistic. The chi-square test of association of attributes confirm this relationship to be significant (p=0.000 and chi-value=95.28) This result is contrary to most of the finings such as by Kamineni (2000) who concludes that men are more materialistic than women, and are more likely to associate material possessions with own success and happiness .

Table 5: Age and Materialism

Materialism	Age group			
	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
Agree	60 (80%)	60 (80%)	45(60%)	30 (40%)
disagree	15 (20%)	15(20%)	30(40%)	45 (60%)
Total	75	75	75	75

Results from Table 4 indicates that percentages of students who agree with statements pointing to materialism decline with age group, with the highest percentage being in age groups 20-24 and 25-29 where 80 % of the students appears to be materialistic. On contrary the percentage of materialistic

students is low in the age group 35-39. The Chi-square test of the association of attributes confirm this relationship to be significant (p=0.000, chi-value=36.24). This observation is consistent with most literatures which assert that level of materialism at infant age is very low but becomes high at young ages later declines as age goes up (Sung 2017)

3.3 The Influence of Materialism on Students' Performance

The influence of materialism on university students' performance was assessed using multiple linear regression as described section 2.4. The results of the analysis are given in Table 6.

Table 6: Results on the Influence of Materialism on Students' Performance

GPA	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t
Age	-0.014	0.012	-1.140	0.265
sex	-0.049	0.121	-0.400	0.691
A-level points	0.001	0.038	0.030	0.975
O-level points	-0.069	0.016	-4.320	0.000
Campus-status	0.401	0.187	2.150	0.041
Materialism	-0.756	0.253	-2.990	0.006
Cons	5.130	0.354	14.480	0.000
Adjusted R Square=0.61				
P-Value=0.000				
F=47.68				
N=300				

Table 6 indicate that the model is highly significant (p=0.000). The diagnostic tests indicated that the model did not suffer from multicollinearity problem as all the VIF's were all less than 4. The model's residuals were normally distributed as p-values from Shapiro-Wilk test for normality was 0.25. The test for independence of the error terms indicated Durbin Watson statistic to be 1.629 which is well around 2 suggesting independence of the observations. The Breusch-Pagan test for homoscedastic error terms yielded a p value of 0.08 suggesting that the residuals from the model have a constant variance. Finally, the Ramsey test for omitted variables which is infact the test for model specification indicated a p-value of 0.11, implying that the model has been somehow correctly specified.

The results from Table 6 shows only three variables influencing students' performance. These are O-level division points, campus status and level of materialism. These results are not as such surprising in the sense that a university student' performance can rarely be influenced by factors affecting their performance in secondary schools such as sex. The students are generally regarded to be adults and are supplied with loans from the government to take care of their needs. Normally what could affect them are other factors which could buy their time to concentrate with studying. Much of these factors could be reflected in their materialistic behaviors which as seen from Table 6, it is significant with negative influence on their GPA.

This result is consistent to the observation by Datu and King (2017) who found that materialistic students are less likely to achieve good academic performance. Similar observations were made by Kul (2016) when studying similarity between materialism and achievement motivation. The study concluded that materialism works its negative effects on school performance by undermining intrinsic mastery-oriented learning and shifting learners' attention from competence *development* to competence *d*emonstration. Kul et al (2014) observed similar scenario when studying the effect of materialism on *British and Chinese* Children's Learning.

Regarding the influence of campus status, this could be reflecting poor off campus studying environment. At that time (2016), the off-campus students relied on private accommodation which were not up to standard compared to campus accommodation. Apart from having electricity and water most of the houses in off-campus accommodation had little rooms with poor ventilation, and poor writing and reading tables. Apparently, the situation is different as the residence around Mazimbu Campus have invested heavily on standard hostels for university students to rent.

On the A-level and O-level points it is worth noting as said before in section 2.4, that the higher the points scored by a student they imply a poorer performance by a student at O-level or A-level. This scenario explains why both the two variables indicate negative influence on a student' GPA. However, the A-level points are not significant while the O-level points are significant.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has examined the level of Materialism among the university students at Sokoine university of Agriculture, its level across students' gender and age and its effect on performance. The level of materialism is quite high and particularly dominant among young students and female students. Its effect on performance is significant and negative. Therefore, the study recommends efforts to lower down materialism among students. This could be done through teaching of philosophical and religious studies. The study recommends the universities in Tanzania to widen a room for such studies which might ultimately contribute to a better performance by students in their studies.

5. Area for further study

There being few studies for materialism, the author recommends similar studies in other Tanzanian Universities as well as among consumers in different cities of Tanzania. Such studies will make the relationship between materialism and other variables such as gender and age to be much clearer for Tanzanian case.

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