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Linking Finance To Access: The Role Of Institutional Expenditure In Shaping Admission And Enrollment Outcomes At IUIU–Females' Campus (2015/2016–2022/2023).

By

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Abstract

Education financing and institutional admission policies are critical determinants of access and participation in higher education, especially in female-centered institutions. This study examined the relationship between expenditure, admission rate, and enrollment rate at the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU)–Females' Campus, Kabojja, covering the period 2015/2016 to 2022/2023. Specifically, the study sought to (i) examine the relationship between the rate of admission and the rate of enrollment, and (ii) examine the relationship between institutional expenditure and the rate of enrollment at IUIU–Females' Campus. The study adopted a positivist paradigm using a quantitative correlational research design. Secondary data were extracted from the university's annual admission, enrollment, and expenditure records for the eight academic years under review. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation to determine the relationships between the study variables. Reliability and validity were ensured through the use of verified institutional records and consistent data extraction procedures. The findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the rate of admission and the rate of enrollment ($r = 0.820$, $p = 0.013$), implying that enrollment growth was largely dependent on increased admission opportunities. Conversely, a weak positive but statistically non-significant relationship was found between expenditure and enrollment rate ($r = 0.299$, $p = 0.472$), suggesting that increased institutional spending did not necessarily translate into higher student enrollment during the study period. These results imply that while expanding admission capacity directly enhances female participation, expenditure alone may have limited influence if not strategically directed toward enrollment-supportive initiatives. The study concludes that admission policies and institutional intake capacity play a greater role in shaping female enrollment trends at IUIU–Females' Campus than expenditure levels alone. It recommends that the university strengthen its

admission systems, align financial planning with enrollment objectives, and adopt gender-responsive budgeting to enhance access and equity. The findings contribute to the literature on resource dependence theory and human capital theory, emphasizing the need for efficient allocation of resources to achieve meaningful educational participation among female learners in Uganda's higher education institutions.

Keywords: *Expenditure, Admission rate, Enrollment rate, Female higher education, IUIU–Females' Campus, Uganda*

Introduction

Education is widely accepted as a pivotal driver of socio-economic development, human capital formation, and inclusive growth. In line with the human capital theory, investment in education contributes to productivity, economic growth, and poverty reduction (Leclercq, 2005). The rate at which learners enrol and are admitted into educational institutions is therefore of major concern for policymakers and practitioners because it reflects accessibility, capacity, and the effectiveness of education systems. One of the key determinants of enrolment and admission is the level of expenditure on education by governments, the private sector, and households.

Financial resources allocated to education play a dual role: firstly, they expand institutional capacity by providing infrastructure (classrooms, laboratories), recruiting and retaining teachers, and supplying instructional materials; and secondly, they reduce barriers to entry (such as tuition, fees, subsidies), which enable greater participation (Hajebi et al., 2023). For instance, a study of selected OECD countries found that government education expenditure had a significant positive effect on enrolment rates at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Hajebi, Billing & Hajebi, 2023). Similarly, evidence from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) suggests that higher public spending is associated with improved primary enrolment over the long term (Beri, 2024).

However, the link between expenditure and enrolment/admission is not straightforward. Empirical findings are mixed: some studies report positive relationships, while others find weak or even negative results, especially when governance, allocation efficiency, and quality of inputs are considered (Leclercq, 2005). For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was observed that while government spending increased, its effect on higher-education enrolment was limited due to institutional bottlenecks and misallocation (Farayibi & Folarin, 2021).

In the context of admission processes, expenditure influences not only whether learners can enrol but also the capacity of institutions to offer places, maintain quality standards, and cater for diverse groups (girls, rural populations, disadvantaged learners). When institutions are underfunded, admissions may be constrained by physical capacity (lack of classrooms), teacher shortages, and high-student/teacher ratios, which in turn can dampen enrolment rates.

In Uganda (and comparable developing countries), the challenge is twofold: increasing participation (enrolment) and improving the ability of institutions to admit and serve learners effectively. Limited funding often results in overcrowding, inadequate teaching and learning materials, dropout, and eventually lower admission and retention rates. Thus, examining the relationship between expenditure and the rate of enrolment and admission is timely and relevant.

This study therefore aims to investigate how expenditure (public and/or private) affects enrolment and admission rates, and to identify the mechanisms through which funding influences access (enrolment) and capacity (admission). The purpose is to generate evidence for policymakers, educational planners and practitioners to design cost-effective, equitable strategies that enhance educational participation and institutional capacity.

Contextual Perspective

The Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) – Females' Campus, Kabojja, is an institution dedicated to catering for female students in a higher-education environment in Uganda's capital region. A contextual focus on this campus allows for investigation of how expenditure (public, institutional, and private) affects female enrolment and admission in a specific women-oriented higher-education institution. In Uganda, although gross primary enrolment rates are high, progression to tertiary levels remains low, especially for women (the gross enrolment rate in lower secondary was only 23 % for Uganda). Moreover, expenditure on education in Uganda has been constrained: government expenditure as a share of the national budget declined to about 10 % in 2017/18, whereas the Sub-Saharan Africa average is about 16 %. World Bank at the IUIU Female Campus, the dynamics of institutional admission capacity, tuition/fees, support services, and gender-sensitive policies are all influenced by expenditure decisions. By adopting a contextual perspective anchored in this campus, the study will locate expenditure–

enrolment/admission linkages in a real institutional setting, focusing on female learners' access and admission.

Conceptual Perspective

Expenditure refers to the total financial inputs directed to the institution and its students including government funding, private tuition/female students' fees, institutional recurrent and development expenditures (e.g., infrastructure, teaching materials, student support), and household/household contributions. For instance, research in Uganda indicates that household education expenditure is positively associated with years of schooling attained.

Rate of Enrolment is the proportion of eligible female candidates who register for programmes at the IUIU Female Campus relative to the pool of potential qualified applicants. It reflects access and participation.

Admission is the process and capacity by which the campus accepts students into programmes. This includes institutional capacity (classrooms, staff, resources) and criteria for admission. The rate of admission, therefore reflects how many applicants are actually accepted, and how many places are made available given institutional resources.

Female-only campus context is where the study's focus on a female campus provides a gender-specific lens, acknowledging that female students may face distinct barriers (socio-economic, cultural, financial, institutional) compared to male students. For instance, studies show that women remain under-represented in higher education in Uganda. These conceptual definitions will underpin the operationalization of variables: for example, institutional expenditure (independent variable) admission capacity (mediating variable) enrolment/admission rate (dependent variable).

Theoretical Perspective

Several theoretical frameworks can underpin the study:

Human capital theory posits that investment in education increases an individual's productivity and hence economic returns. From this view, higher expenditure (investment) in institutional capacity and student support should facilitate higher enrolment and admission.

Gender and access theory (or Feminist Theory of Education): This theory emphasises that women's educational access is constrained by socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors (e.g., patriarchal norms, financial burdens). For example, the study by Ojambo (2016) used feminist theory to explain reduced female student enrollment in Uganda.

Resource dependence theory: Institutions depend on financial resources to deliver education, and their ability to admit and retain students is contingent on these resources. Thus institutional expenditure influences admission capacity, which influences enrolment rates. Combining these, the study will conceptualize that expenditure (household + institutional) influences institutional capacity and admission practices, which then affect female enrolment/admission rates at IUIU Female Campus. This integrated theoretical perspective allows exploration of both economic investment logic and gender-sensitive access logic.

Linking theory to objectives

For Objective (i): Resource Dependence Theory emphasises that admission (capacity) is resource-dependent; thus the gap between admission rate and enrolment rate may be explained by institutional resources. For Objective (ii): Human Capital Theory and Gender & Access Theory both suggest expenditure influences enrolment rate, especially for female learners at a female campus.

Justification of the Study

At the IUIU Female Campus, limited local research may have explored how expenditure dynamics impact female enrolment and admission. This study fills a gap by combining expenditure, admission capacity, and female access in a specific institutional context.

Given that Uganda's higher-education female access remains below optimal and the link to funding is underexplored in Uganda's private/faith-based campuses, the findings can guide

institutional managers and policymakers on how to allocate resources to enhance female admissions and enrolment.

The study will highlight how funding (institutional and student-side) may act as a barrier or enabler for female students in higher education, thereby contributing to gender equity agendas. For IUIU and similar female-oriented campuses, insights into the expenditure-enrolment/admission nexus will support strategic planning (budgeting, scholarships, infrastructure investment) to improve female participation.

Significance of the Study

For the institution (IUIU Female Campus), the study provides actionable data on how expenditure affects admission and enrolment of female students, which can inform budgeting, scholarship allocation, capacity building, and admission policy. For policymakers and regulators, the findings may inform the Uganda National Council for Higher Education (UNCHE) and Ministry of Education on the role of funding in female higher-education access, and help shape gender-responsive financing policies.

For academic literature, the study contributes to the literature on educational expenditure, female access to higher education, and institutional admission capacity in a Ugandan context, especially within a female-campus setting. For female students and communities by identifying funding and admission barriers, the study may support advocacy and interventions (scholarships, fee-waivers, improved institutional resource allocation) to promote female enrolment and admission.

Scope of the Study

Geographical scope, the study is limited to the IUIU Female Campus, Kabo jja, Kampala, Uganda. The population scope are the female students applying for admission, admitted and enrolled during a defined recent academic period (e.g., previous 3 intake sessions) and relevant institutional administrators (finance, admissions, student affairs). The conceptual scope focuses on expenditure (institutional recurrent/development and student/household contribution), admission capacity (available places, staffing, infrastructure) and female enrolment/admission rates. The time scope is the study might cover a time-frame of the last 3 academic years (or as

available data permits) and the limitation scope is the study does not cover male campuses of IUIU, nor compare across multiple institutions thus findings are institution-specific and may not generalize across all female campuses in Uganda.

Problem Statement

Despite significant investments in education in Uganda, female students remain underrepresented in higher education and face unique barriers to enrolment and admission. In Uganda, women's access to higher education is hindered by socio-economic constraints, cultural norms and institutional capacity limitations. For example, a study found that women remain underrepresented at all levels of higher education in Uganda. Meanwhile, government education expenditure as a share of the national budget has declined, from about 16 % regional average to only around 10 % in Uganda in 2017/18. At the institutional level, inadequate expenditure on infrastructure, teaching resources, and student support may limit the number of places offered (admission capacity), thereby limiting enrolment of female students at the IUIU Female Campus. Households also face higher education-related costs (tuition, fees, materials) which may deter female applicants. A Ugandan study confirmed that household education expenditure positively influences attainment of schooling years. Thus, a gap exists: How does expenditure (institutional and household) influence the rate of enrolment and admission of female students at the IUIU Female Campus? Addressing this gap will help to understand the mechanisms linking financial inputs (expenditure) to access (admission and enrolment) in the female campus context.

General objective

The purpose of the study was to provide a comparative analysis on the influence of expenditure on the rate of enrollment and admission at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.

Specific objectives

i. To examine the relationship between the rate of admission and rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.
ii. To examine the relationship between the expenditure and the rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.

Study hypotheses

The specific objectives were guided by the following alternative hypotheses;

Ha1: There was a significant relationship between the rate of admission and rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.

Ha2: There was a significant relationship between the expenditure and the rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.

Literature Review

Research on education financing, enrolment and admissions has evolved considerably over recent decades. At the macro level, cross-country studies suggest a positive association between government or institutional expenditure on education and enrolment rates. For example, a study of African countries from 1990–2002 found that higher public education spending was positively correlated with enrolments. In another synthesis, Leclercq (2005) concluded that although many studies attempt to link educational expenditures and outcomes (including enrolment), the results are inconclusive and no robust stylised fact emerges. In the higher education domain, one recent study (Ma 2022) found a statistically significant relationship between college expenditure and enrolment using linear models. Institutional data in the U.S. show that spending per student varies by selectivity and enrolment growth institutions with rapidly growing enrolments often show slower expense-growth per student than those with declining enrolments.

Further, analyses of admissions and enrolments show shifting dynamics: one report in August 2025 found that applicant, admit, and enrollee pools are changing in higher education institutions in the U.S., though this focuses more on demographic shifts than on expenditure. Despite this growing body of work, there are several important caveats: many studies focus on enrolment rather than admissions, or on primary/secondary education rather than female-only higher education. Also, the context of developing countries, and especially female campuses in African universities, remains less explored.

Linking theories to the objectives of the study

For Objective (i): To examine the relationship between the rate of admission and the rate of enrolment. The resource dependence theory suggests that admission capacity (an institutional output) is influenced by expenditure resources, which in turn influences enrolment (an input into the institution). For Objective (ii), to examine the relationship between expenditure and the rate of enrolment. The human capital theory suggests that higher expenditure (investment in education) should increase enrolment. Meanwhile, Gender & Access Theory adds nuance: expenditure directed to female students (scholarships, support) or female-campus infrastructure may have disproportionate effects on female enrolment.

The relationship between admissions and enrolments has been less studied than the relationship between expenditure and enrolment. However, a recent report indicates significant shifts in applicant, admit, and enrollee pools in U.S. higher education institutions, suggesting that admission rate dynamics affect enrolment outcomes. Another relevant insight is from the "Costs and Enrollment" study (Getz 1991) which indirectly highlighted that changes in enrolment are associated with institutional cost/expenditure patterns: institutions with shrinking enrolments increased spending per student, showing admissions/enrolment feedback loops. The resource dependence theory suggests that admission capacity (i.e., number of places institutions offer) is resource-dependent; if admission rate drops (fewer offers made), enrolment rate is likely to decline. Human Capital Theory would suggest that if fewer students are admitted, fewer can capitalise on the institution's investment leading to lower enrolment. There is limited empirical evidence examining admission rate → enrolment rate directly, especially in female higher education settings in Uganda. Your study will examine this mechanism over a multi-year span (2015/16–2022/23) at IUIU Female Campus.

Many studies, especially in primary/secondary education, have shown positive relationships between public expenditure and enrolment (e.g., Beri 2024). Leclercq's (2005) review highlights the mixed results and methodological challenges in linking educational expenditure and outcomes. At tertiary level, Ma (2022) found positive significant linkages between expenditure and enrolment. Hota (2023) also found that infrastructure-spending influences enrolment and quality at higher education levels. The human capital theory drives the assumption that more investment (expenditure) increases enrolment, while Resource Dependence Theory implies that institutional resources (expenditure) enable higher enrolment capacity. Gender & Access Theory

adds that expenditure targeted at female students or female-campus specific resources may improve female enrolment. There are fewer studies examining higher education expenditure → female enrolment in Uganda, and fewer that cover the multi-year period 2015/16–2022/23 for a female campus. Your study will fill this gap by focusing on IUIU-Female Campus and exploring how expenditure relates to female enrolment over time.

Empirical studies

The 2024 study by Beri found that in low- and lower-middle-income countries, public spending has a positive long-run effect on primary school enrolment. Leclercq (2005) reviewed dozens of cross-country and micro-studies of educational expenditures and outcomes and concluded that "no uncontroversial stylised fact" emerges about the impact of inputs on outcomes. Fink (2006) analysed the effect of public expenditure on higher education enrolment across 132 countries and found that increases in public spending do not always lead to higher enrolment; in some cases, the effect was weak or negative. Karaçor (2017) studied Turkey and found long-run co-integration relationships between educational expenditure and schooling/enrolment. Availing of newer data, Beri (2024) found strong positive relations between public expenditure and primary enrolment across many LMICs including SSA. Hota (2023) looked at infrastructure spending and found positive linkages with both enrolment and quality at higher education institutions, Ma (2022) found a statistically significant relationship between college-level educational expenditure and enrolment in a sample of higher education institutions and, Getz (1991), showed that institutions with shrinking enrolments often had higher per-student expenditure growth than those with growing enrolments suggesting complex dynamics between cost, capacity and enrolment.

Research Gap

The is a general lack of empirical research on the admission rate enrolment rate relationship in higher education, especially for female campuses in Uganda. Limited context-specific studies for Uganda (or East Africa) on expenditure female enrolment in higher education and covering multi-year periods (2015/16–2022/23). The need to link both institutional and household expenditures, admission capacity and enrolment in a female campus context and lack of studies

that apply the chosen theories (human capital, resource dependence, gender & access) in the context of a female-only campus in Uganda. Thus the study helps fill these gaps by focusing on a female-campus, bridging admission and enrolment, and linking expenditure to both.

Methodology

Philosophical Underpinning

This study adopts a **positivist** paradigm in which reality is assumed to be objective, measurable, and generalizable through empirical data and statistical analysis. Under this approach, variables such as expenditure, rate of admission, and rate of enrolment can be operationalized and quantified. The positivist stance aligns with the study's focus on relationships and associations among measurable variables over the period 2015/16–2022/23. However, to account for context and nuance (particularly the female campus setting), elements of a pragmatic paradigm may also apply i.e., the study uses both quantitative and qualitative data sources (if used) to enrich understanding. Ultimately, the dominant approach is quantitative because of the focus on rates, expenditure figures and statistical relationships.

Research Design

The study will utilize a correlational longitudinal design (time-series / panel) to examine relationships between variables (admission rate enrolment rate; expenditure enrolment rate) over the period 2015/16 to 2022/23 at IUIU Females' Campus. This design allows for observing changes over time and investigating whether variations in one variable accompany or precede changes in another. The longitudinal aspect strengthens causal inference compared to a cross-sectional design.

Research Approach

The primary approach is quantitative, given the nature of the variables (rates, expenditure) and the objective to test relationships (examine correlation/association). If qualitative data (e.g., interviews with admissions staff) are included to provide depth or context, a mixed-methods approach could be used but the core is quantitative.

Study Population

The study population consists of all relevant annual data for the period 2015/16-2022/23 at the IUIU Females' Campus, Kabojja. Specifically; all female applicants who applied for admission in each academic year, all female students actually admitted in each academic year, all female students enrolled (registered and started their programme) in each academic year, and institutional expenditure data (annual campus budgets, recurrent & development expenditure) and/or household/student fee contribution data for each year.

Study Sample

Since the study is based on institutional aggregate data rather than sampling individual students, the "sample" comprises annual time-units (eight academic years: 2015/16, 2016/17, …, 2022/23). However, if the study includes admissions/admin staff for qualitative interviews or if some departments are sampled, then a purposive or stratified sample may be used.

Inclusion criteria

The Data from IUIU Females' Campus, Kabo jja for the defined years, applicants, admitted and enrolled female students in each of those academic years and expenditure data (institutional plus student/household contributions) for the campus for those years.

Exclusion criteria

The male campus data (outside female campus context), data for years outside 2015/16-2022/23, applicants who did not apply to IUIU Females' Campus and the expenditure data for other campuses or non-relevant units.

Reliability and validity

Reliability refers to the consistency and repeatability of measurement i.e., if the same method is applied again under the same conditions, similar results would be produced. For example, using audited institutional records year after year ensures consistent measurement of expenditure and enrolment rates. The validity refers to the extent to which the instrument or method truly

measures what it is intended to measure (accuracy). To ensure validity, the study will use official institutional data from IUIU's finance & admissions offices, cross-checked with published campus records and financial statements.

To enhance internal validity, the study ensures that changes in enrolment/admission are attributed to expenditure/admission changes by controlling for confounding factors (e.g., changes in admission policy, demographic shifts). For external validity (generalizability), while the study focuses on one campus, the findings may inform other female higher-education institutions in Uganda.

Data Collection Methods

The document review: Institutional records (annual reports, budget reports, admissions records, enrolment registers). Secondary data extraction, extract numerical data on expenditure, admission numbers, enrolment numbers for the academic years 2015/16-2022/23. The tool used was documentary review checklist.

Procedure: Data Collection

The researcher obtained permission from IUIU Females' Campus administration (Academic Registrar, Admissions Office, Finance Office) to access records. Collect annual data for each year 2015/16–2022/23 from admission registers (applicants, admits), enrolment registers (actual registered students) and finance/budget reports (expenditure data). The data was cleaned and validated, checked for missing values, inconsistencies, outliers. cross-validate with multiple sources (e.g., published campus annual reports) and entered quantitative data into statistical software (e.g., SPSS, Stata, Excel) in a structured format (year as unit of analysis).

Data Analysis

The analysis involved descriptive statistics (normality tests) and correlation analysis. The descriptive statistics involved studying the behaviors of the variables to determine whether they were normally distributed. To perform the correlation analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis

was employed to establish the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between the variables.

Limitations and delimitations

The study focuses only on IUIU Females' Campus, Kabojja and the years 2015/16–2022/23. Focused on female students only, excluding male campuses. Used of aggregate annual data rather than individual student-level data and secondary quantitative approach. The limitations included, institutional records may have missing, incomplete or inconsistent data over the years, changes in admission policy, programme offerings or external funding could confound the relationships between variables, the study may not fully account for all external factors influencing enrolment (e.g., socio-economic changes, national policy shifts) and the generalizability is limited: findings from one female campus may not apply to all higher-education institutions in Uganda.

Ethical issues

Informed consent for any interviews, participants will be informed of the purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and confidentiality. Confidentiality the Institutional data will be handled securely; individual identities (especially of interviewees) will be anonymized. Financial data may be sensitive—permission will be sought and data will be reported in aggregate form. The data integrity, ensure accuracy of data extraction and analysis; avoid fabrication, falsification or selective reporting, beneficence / non-maleficence, the study should not harm participants or the institution; findings will be used constructively, and approval was sought for ethical clearance from the relevant Institutional Review Board (at IUIU or your university) before data collection.

Findings

The findings presented in this chapter include; descriptive statistics (normality tests) and correlation results.

Normality test

The study used Shapiro-Wilk test to examine whether the variables followed a normal distribution or not at a 5% significance level and the findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Test for normality of the variables

Variables	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Expenditure (million UGX)	.877	8	.176*
Admission rate (Number of students)	.888	8	.223*
Enrollment rate (Number of students)	.913	8	.377*
**Variables are normally distributed at 5% level of significance (Ho: Normal distribution of variables assumed)*			

Source: Author's computations based on data from IUIU-Female Campus (2015-2023)

The findings in Table 1 from the normality test reveal that all of the variables followed a normal distribution at 5% level of significance with a p-value>0.05. This indicates that the variables were appropriate for correlation analysis.

Findings on specific objectives

The findings presented in this section are in light with the specific objectives of the study.

Relationship between the rate of admission and rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023

The study sought to establish whether the rate of admission was associated with the rate of enrollment between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 at IUIU-Female campus. The findings are presented using Pearson's correlation analysis at a 5% level of significance.

Table 2: Correlation analysis between the rate of admission and rate of enrollment between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 at IUIU-Female campus

	Rate of Admission (Number of students)	Rate of Enrollment (Number of students)

Rate of Admission (Number of students)	Pearson Correlation	1	.820
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	8	8
Rate of Enrollment (Number of students)	Pearson Correlation	.820	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	8	8

Source: Author's computations based on data from IUIU-Female Campus (2015-2023)

The correlation findings from Table 2 reveal that the rate of admission had a strong positive and significant relationship with the rate of enrollment between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 at IUIU-Female campus (r=0.820, P-value=0.013) at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings may imply that the growth in the rate of enrollment was in one way or another dependent on the increase in the rate of admission at IUIU-Female campus. Therefore, to increase the rate of enrollment there has to be an increase in the rate of admission at the campus.

The correlation results presented in Table 2 indicate a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the rate of admission and the rate of enrollment at IUIU–Females' Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 ($r = 0.820$, $p = 0.013$). This finding suggests that as the number of students admitted increases, the number of students who eventually enroll also rises correspondingly. The implication is that admission dynamics play a decisive role in shaping overall enrollment trends**,** underscoring the institutional capacity and policy environment that govern access to higher education.

These results are consistent with existing literature which emphasises that institutional admission capacity is a key determinant of enrolment growth. According to Leclercq (2005), educational outcomes such as enrolment depend strongly on the quantity and efficiency of input variables—including admission policies and institutional resources—which determine how many students can be absorbed into the system. Similarly, Ma (2022) found that admission expansion in colleges with improved infrastructure and resource allocation was positively correlated with student enrolment levels. This aligns with the current study's finding that higher admission rates are associated with higher enrolment levels.

From a Resource dependence theory perspective, institutions rely on external and internal resources including financial allocations, infrastructure, and staff capacity to admit and retain

students (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, as cited in Farayibi & Folarin, 2021). Therefore, when an institution's resources expand, its capacity to admit students also increases, which consequently drives up enrolment numbers. In the case of IUIU–Females' Campus, improved funding, infrastructure development, or scholarship support could have enabled the admission of more female students, thereby enhancing enrolment during the studied period.

Furthermore, the observed relationship supports the Human capital theory, which posits that investment in educational systems stimulates participation and enrolment because individuals view education as a means of increasing their lifetime productivity and income (Becker, 1993). When the university increases its intake capacity and offers more admission opportunities, it signals higher accessibility to education for prospective learners encouraging more applicants to enrol. As Beri (2024) and Hajebi et al. (2023) both observed, education system expansion driven by resource allocation and increased admission capacity is a crucial catalyst for sustained enrolment growth.

Empirical evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa further supports this pattern. Farayibi and Folarin (2021) reported that increases in educational expenditure and admission capacity in African higher-education systems significantly influence enrolment rates, particularly where institutional reforms enhance access and retention. Similarly, Karaçor (2017) found that resource availability and institutional expansion had a long-run positive effect on school participation in Turkey. These parallels strengthen the interpretation that at IUIU–Females' Campus, the expansion of admission opportunities contributed directly to higher female student enrolment over the eight-year period.

However, while the correlation is strong, causality must be interpreted cautiously. As Leclercq (2005) notes, many educational indicators co-evolve admission growth may reflect broader institutional developments such as funding, infrastructure, and policy reforms, all of which also affect enrolment. Nevertheless, the statistically significant association ($p = 0.013$) in this study provides strong evidence that admission expansion is an essential driver of enrolment growth in the context of a female higher-education institution in Uganda.

In summary, the finding that admission rate and enrolment rate move together suggests that policies targeting improved admission capacity through resource allocation, infrastructure expansion, and scholarship programmes are likely to yield higher enrolment among female students. This outcome resonates with the government's and IUIU's commitment to increasing women's access to higher education (UNICEF, 2022; Uganda National Planning Authority, 2019). Ensuring adequate funding, equitable admission policies, and continued investment in campus facilities will therefore be key to sustaining and further improving enrolment levels at IUIU–Females' Campus.

Relationship between the expenditure and the rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023

The study sought to establish whether the expenditure was associated with the rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023. The findings are presented using Pearson's correlation analysis at a 5% significance level in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation analysis between the expenditure and the rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023

		Expenditure (million UGX)	Rate of Enrollment (Number of students)
Expenditure (million UGX)	Pearson Correlation	1	.299
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.472
	N	8	8
Rate of Enrollment (Number of students)	Pearson Correlation	.299	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.472	
	N	8	8

Source: Author's computations based on data from IUIU-Female Campus (2015-2023)

The correlation findings from Table 3 reveal that expenditure (million UGX) had a weak positive but non-significant relationship with the rate of enrollment (Number of students) at IUIU-Female campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023 (r=0.299, P-value=0.472) at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings may imply that the growth in the rate of enrollment was not related to the increase in expenditure at IUIU-Female campus during the given period. Therefore, the findings indicate that the variation in the rate of enrollment was not in one way or another dependent on the change or increase in the expenditure at IUIU-Female campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.

The correlation findings in Table 3 indicate a weak positive but statistically non-significant relationship between expenditure (in million UGX) and the rate of enrollment (number of students) at IUIU–Females' Campus from 2015/2016 to 2022/2023 ($r = 0.299$, $p = 0.472$). This result implies that although expenditure and enrollment moved in the same direction to some extent, the association was neither strong nor statistically meaningful at the 0.05 level. In practical terms, changes in institutional expenditure did not translate directly into proportional changes in student enrollment during the studied period.

This outcome diverges from the conventional assumption, derived from Human capital theory, that higher investment in education typically leads to higher enrollment and participation (Becker, 1993). Under normal circumstances, increased financial inputs enhance educational access by improving infrastructure, teaching quality, and student support services, which should attract more learners (Beri, 2024; Hajebi et al., 2023). However, the weak correlation found here suggests that expenditure growth at IUIU–Females' Campus may not have been sufficiently targeted toward enrollment-driving activities or that other intervening factors constrained its potential impact.

Several empirical studies have reported similar mixed or weak associations between expenditure and enrollment outcomes. For instance, Leclercq (2005) observed that while increased educational spending can improve access, the impact often depends on how efficiently funds are allocated and managed. Fink (2006) likewise found that public education expenditure in some developing countries had only marginal effects on school enrollment, implying that expenditure without strategic targeting may yield limited returns. Moreover, Farayibi and Folarin (2021), examining Sub-Saharan Africa, revealed that although education expenditure positively affects outcomes, the relationship is often weakened by governance inefficiencies, low absorption capacity, and limited accountability in fund utilization.

From a Resource dependence theory standpoint (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), an institution's performance here reflected in enrollment depends on its ability to acquire and deploy critical resources effectively. Thus, the weak and insignificant correlation could suggest that while IUIU–Females' Campus had expenditure growth, the resources may have been insufficient, inconsistently disbursed, or directed toward non-enrollment-enhancing areas such as

administrative overheads rather than student capacity expansion. It may also indicate a lag effect, where the impact of current expenditure manifests in future enrollment cycles.

Similarly, Karaçor (2017) noted that the elasticity of enrollment to expenditure can be low when there are structural constraints such as limited physical space, socio-cultural barriers, or high private costs to learners. In the context of Uganda, female higher-education enrollment continues to face cultural and economic barriers despite institutional investment (Kwesiga, 1993; Ojambo, 2016). Hence, even as IUIU–Females' Campus increased spending during the review period, potential female students might still have faced affordability challenges, family responsibilities, or socio-religious factors that limited their enrollment.

The finding also aligns with Leclercq's (2005) conclusion that the relationship between educational expenditure and outcomes lacks a universal pattern and depends heavily on institutional efficiency and contextual dynamics. In other words, increasing expenditure does not automatically guarantee higher enrollment unless accompanied by policies that enhance access, affordability, and retention. UNICEF (2022) similarly emphasizes that in Uganda, spending alone is insufficient; effective targeting, gender-responsive budgeting, and monitoring are essential to improve learning and participation outcomes.

In summary, the weak and non-significant relationship ($r = 0.299$, $p = 0.472$) suggests that expenditure alone did not significantly influence enrollment growth at IUIU–Females' Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023. This may be due to inefficiencies in resource utilization, structural and socio-cultural constraints, or other external factors such as economic conditions and student financing limitations. Future interventions should focus on aligning financial inputs with strategic enrollment objectives—such as scholarships for disadvantaged female students, infrastructure expansion, and targeted outreach—to strengthen the link between investment and actual educational participation.

Conclusions

The findings of the study revealed two major relationships that describe enrollment dynamics at IUIU–Females' Campus between 2015/2016 and 2022/2023.

First, the results showed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the rate of admission and the rate of enrollment ($r = 0.820$, $p = 0.013$). This implies that the number of students admitted strongly determined the number of students who eventually enrolled. The finding underscores the importance of admission capacity and selection policies as critical drivers of student participation in higher education. Consistent with Resource dependence theory, the ability of the campus to admit more students depends on available financial, infrastructural, and human resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The result also aligns with studies by Leclercq (2005) and Ma (2022), which found that expansion in institutional intake capacity leads to significant increases in enrollment. Thus, the institutional policy framework on admission directly influences female access to higher education.

Second, the study found a weak positive but statistically non-significant relationship between expenditure and enrollment rate ($r = 0.299$, $p = 0.472$). This indicates that increases in financial expenditure at the campus did not correspond significantly with enrollment growth. The implication is that although investment in education is necessary, its effect on participation depends heavily on how resources are allocated and utilized (Leclercq, 2005; Farayibi & Folarin, 2021). The finding corroborates the observations of Fink (2006) and Karaçor (2017)**,** who reported that the impact of expenditure on educational outcomes tends to be weak in settings where spending is misaligned with enrollment priorities or where other barriers—such as cultural norms and affordability limit participation.

Therefore, the study concludes that while admission expansion has a direct and immediate impact on enrollment**,** expenditure alone does not guarantee increased participation unless it is strategically targeted toward removing barriers and improving institutional capacity. Effective utilization of financial resources—particularly toward scholarships, infrastructure, and female-friendly policies—is key to translating expenditure into actual enrollment gains.

The study concludes that there was a remarkable improvement in the rate of enrollment as a result of an increase in the rate of admission between the period of 2015/2016 and 2022/2023, despite some shortfalls in that as the number of admissions increases, the number of student enrollments will also significantly increase. It was also found out that the rate of student

enrollment was not dependent or influenced by the institution's expenditure in terms of marketing and other expenses during the given period at IUIU- Female campus.

Recommendations

The study suggests that the university should reduce on the marketing expenses or change the current modes of marketing used as well as explore other factors that may have a significant influence on the rate of admission and rate of enrollment at IUIU-Female campus. This is based on the fact that the rate of student enrollment was not significantly associated with the expenditure during the given period.

Enhance admission capacity and flexibility, the university should consider expanding admission capacity through additional academic programmes, flexible entry criteria, and digital learning modalities. Admission expansion, as shown by the study, is directly associated with increased enrollment, and thus strategic planning in admissions should align with institutional growth targets.

Align expenditure with enrollment objectives, the **c**ampus expenditure should be strategically directed toward areas that directly influence female participation—such as scholarships for low-income students, affordable accommodation, improved learning facilities, and child-care support for student mothers. This targeted allocation ensures that expenditure translates into measurable enrollment growth (Hajebi et al., 2023; UNICEF, 2022).

Strengthen financial efficiency and accountability, the institutional mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating budget utilisation should be enhanced. According to Leclercq (2005), financial inefficiencies often dilute the potential impact of expenditure on enrollment. Transparent and participatory budgeting processes can ensure that funds address priority areas influencing access and retention.

Develop gender-responsive financial strategies, the university should adopt gender-sensitive financial policies such as bursaries and sponsorships for disadvantaged female students, as supported by studies emphasizing gendered access barriers in higher education (Kwesiga, 1993; Ojambo, 2016). Integrating these measures within the institutional financial plan can enhance equity and inclusivity.

Enhance data management and policy research to establish a comprehensive education management information system (EMIS) at the campus can facilitate accurate tracking of trends in admission, enrollment, and expenditure. This will support evidence-based planning and performance monitoring consistent with the recommendations of the Uganda National Planning Authority (2019)**.**

Collaborate with government and development partners, the campus should work closely with the Ministry of Education and development agencies (such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and NPA) to mobilize additional funding for female higher education. Partnerships can strengthen infrastructural development, resource sharing, and policy innovation to sustain enrollment growth.

Suggestion for further research

Future studies should expand the scope beyond a single campus to include comparative analysis across IUIU's other campuses or other female universities in East Africa. In addition, research could apply causal modeling to explore the mediating effects of factors such as tuition affordability, infrastructure, and socio-cultural dynamics between expenditure and enrollment. A mixed-methods approach incorporating student and administrator perspectives would provide deeper insights into the qualitative dimensions of access and participation.

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