
**STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCE
MOBILIZATION PRACTICES ON THE PERFORMANCE
OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA**

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Publication Date: December 2025

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The study examined how strategic resource mobilization practices such as funding diversification, grant acquisition, endowment mobilization, and asset commercialization affect the performance of public universities in Kenya.

Problem Statement: Public universities in Kenya face persistent financial constraints due to declining government funding, rising enrolments, and inadequate resource mobilization structures. Weak implementation of diversification strategies, limited grant-writing capacity, and underdeveloped endowment systems hinder institutional performance.

Research Methodology: A cross-sectional descriptive research design was used, targeting 36 public universities and collecting data from 154 senior management staff. Structured Likert-scale questionnaires captured information on resource mobilization practices and university performance. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and chi-square tests with SPSS version 27.

Results of the Study: The study found low implementation of resource mobilization practices and correspondingly low institutional performance. Strong positive correlations were observed

between all strategic practices and performance, particularly funding diversification and grant capacity. Chi-square analysis showed endowment fund mobilization had a significant association with performance.

Conclusion: Strategic resource mobilization practices are crucial for improving university performance but remain insufficiently adopted.

Recommendations: Universities should enhance revenue diversification, build grant acquisition capabilities, and establish structured endowment models. Policymakers should create supportive national frameworks to strengthen financial sustainability across public universities.

Keywords: *Resource mobilization, university performance, funding diversification, endowment funds, grant acquisition, asset commercialization*

INTRODUCTION

Public universities in Kenya are under increasing pressure to maintain quality education, research output, and operational efficiency amidst declining financial support. Historically dependent on government funding, these institutions now face reduced state allocations, swelling student enrolments, rising operational costs, and heightened expectations for globally competitive academic outcomes (Munene, 2022). These challenges have created significant financial and administrative constraints that affect teaching quality, infrastructure development, faculty retention, and overall institutional competitiveness. To address these pressures, many universities have begun implementing strategic organizational resource mobilization practices aimed at enhancing performance and long-term sustainability. This study assesses four critical strategies: diversification of funding sources, capacity for grant acquisition, endowment fund mobilization, and commercialization of university assets—factors increasingly linked to financial sustainability, research productivity, and improved service delivery (Mutula & Waema, 2021).

Globally, the performance of public universities is central to strengthening knowledge-based economies and fostering innovation. However, universities worldwide continue to grapple with reduced state funding, rising operational expenditures, and expanding student populations. These constraints undermine their ability to maintain academic quality, invest in modern infrastructure, support impactful research, and attract qualified faculty (Johnstone, 2020).

Consequently, higher education institutions have increasingly adopted strategic resource mobilization models such as diversified revenue streams, institutional endowments, commercialization of research outputs, and partnerships with industry. These initiatives aim to improve financial resilience and enhance performance indicators such as research visibility, student satisfaction, and infrastructural growth (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Although such strategies are widely practiced in developed economies, there remains a limited understanding of their effectiveness in regions characterized by volatile economic conditions, weak governance systems, and underdeveloped funding policies.

In Africa, the financial crises facing public universities are even more pronounced due to unstable national economies, overreliance on donor funding, and inconsistent government priorities. Underfunded research programs, dilapidated infrastructure, and high faculty turnover have increasingly become the norm (Materu, 2020). While universities have adopted resource mobilization strategies such as fee-paying programs, consultancy services, commercialization of intellectual property, and public-private partnerships (Abukari et al., 2021), implementation has often been inconsistent due to bureaucratic rigidities, inadequate institutional autonomy, and limited grant-writing capacity. The absence of structured endowment mechanisms and the underutilization of university assets further constrain financial sustainability and institutional performance (Nyangau, 2022). Thus, understanding how strategic resource mobilization affects measurable performance outcomes—such as institutional ranking, student retention, and research productivity—remains a pressing research need.

In the Kenyan context, public universities face escalating financial distress due to substantial cuts in government capitation, increased enrolment driven by the 100% transition policy, and rising operational costs. Government funding has fallen from approximately 80% to below 50% of institutional budgets over the past decade, leading to salary delays, debt accumulation, reduced research activity, and declining global rankings (Munene, 2022; Waithaka & Gudo, 2021). In response, universities have attempted to diversify revenue through parallel programs, rental of facilities, industry partnerships, commercialization of idle assets, and efforts to attract local and international research grants (Mutula & Waema, 2021). However, implementation remains fragmented, uncoordinated, and often ineffective. Some universities have successfully leveraged these strategies to improve performance, while others continue to struggle,

highlighting the need for empirical evidence on how strategic resource mobilization influences institutional performance in the Kenyan higher education sector.

Public universities play a vital role in Kenya's national development agenda by producing skilled labor, generating research, fostering innovation, and supporting socio-economic growth. With over 30 chartered public universities serving thousands of government-sponsored and self-sponsored students annually (CUE, 2024), these institutions are critical national assets. Nonetheless, declining state funding, overstretched facilities, and performance-based financing policies have heightened the urgency for sustainable financing models. As universities seek to navigate these challenges, strategic resource mobilization emerges as a central pillar for institutional resilience and improved performance, warranting rigorous investigation and evidence-based policy guidance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public universities in Kenya are facing severe financial instability, deteriorating academic performance, and weakened service delivery due to declining government funding, rapidly growing student populations, and limited internal revenue capacity (Munene, 2022). Although strategic organizational resource mobilization practices such as funding diversification, grant acquisition, endowment fund development, and asset commercialization are recognized globally as essential for institutional sustainability, their implementation within Kenyan public universities remains inconsistent, fragmented, and poorly coordinated. Conceptually, while these practices are highlighted in national policy frameworks and university strategic plans, there is limited clarity on how they collectively influence critical performance dimensions such as financial stability, research output, staff productivity, and student satisfaction (Mutula & Waema, 2021).

Contextually, few empirical studies have focused specifically on Kenyan public universities despite their unique governance structures, regulatory environments, and funding mechanisms. Methodologically, previous studies primarily relied on descriptive or qualitative analyses, lacking the empirical rigor needed to establish causal or correlational relationships between mobilization practices and performance outcomes (Waithaka & Gudo, 2021). Empirically, there is insufficient data evaluating the effectiveness and implementation gaps of these practices across institutions. Geographically, much of the available literature generalizes findings from other African countries, failing to capture Kenya's specific higher education

dynamics. These gaps underscore the need for a focused, data-driven assessment of how strategic resource mobilization practices influence the performance of public universities in Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To assess the influence of diversification of funding sources on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- ii. To evaluate the effect of capacity for grant acquisition on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- iii. To determine the influence of endowment fund mobilization on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- iv. To examine the effect of commercialization of university assets on the performance of public universities in Kenya.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- i. H₀₁: Diversification of funding sources has no significant influence on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- ii. H₀₂: Capacity for grant acquisition has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- iii. H₀₃: Endowment fund mobilization has no significant influence on the performance of public universities in Kenya.
- iv. H₀₄: Commercialization of university assets has no significant effect on the performance of public universities in Kenya.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, introduced by Wernerfelt (1984) and refined by Barney (1991), emphasizes that an organization's sustained competitive advantage stems from the strategic management of internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). These resources include physical assets, human capital, technological capabilities, and organizational processes. RBV posits that firms capable of efficiently leveraging their unique resources outperform competitors over time, offering a long-term strategic lens that aligns resource development with institutional goals. In the context of Kenyan public universities, RBV explains why institutions that strategically mobilize internal

resources through funding diversification, grants, endowments, and asset commercialization demonstrate higher resilience and performance, even amid reduced government funding and increasing competition.

Institutional Theory, originating from Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), complements RBV by highlighting how organizations conform to external pressures such as government regulations, accreditation standards, and societal expectations to gain legitimacy. In higher education, public universities often adopt similar resource-mobilization strategies not solely for performance gains but to comply with regulatory frameworks and sector-wide norms. While Institutional Theory has been criticized for overemphasizing conformity and lacking predictive power, it remains relevant in explaining homogeneity in practices across Kenyan public universities. Together, RBV and Institutional Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how internal capabilities and external institutional pressures jointly influence the adoption of strategic resource mobilization practices and drive university performance.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

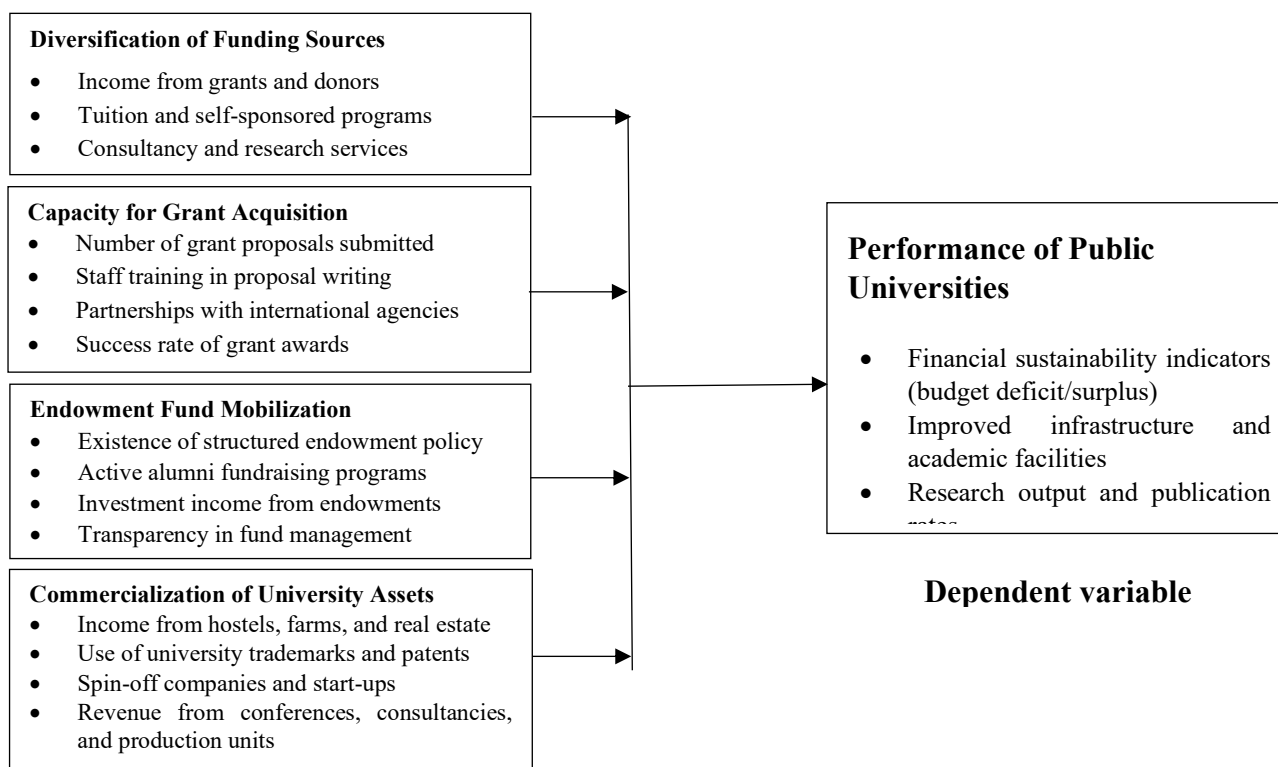
Empirical evidence highlights that strategic organizational resource mobilization practices significantly influence the performance of public universities. Studies on diversification of funding sources show that universities engaging in multiple income streams such as fee-paying programs, consultancy services, short courses, facility rentals, alumni contributions, and donor partnerships experience greater financial resilience, operational autonomy, and sustainability (Abukari et al., 2021; Waithaka & Gudo, 2021; Jowi et al., 2022; Teferra & Altbach, 2020). Successful diversification is linked to leadership commitment, institutional innovation, and flexible governance structures. However, most studies either focus on regional contexts outside Kenya or lack detailed analysis of specific implementation practices, creating a need for institution-specific empirical assessments that connect funding diversity to measurable performance outcomes in Kenyan public universities.

Research on grant acquisition, endowment mobilization, and asset commercialization further underscores the role of internal institutional capacity in driving university performance. Grant acquisition studies reveal that dedicated research offices, collaborative networks, and staff training improve funding success, but gaps remain in linking grants to tangible performance indicators such as research output or infrastructure development (Owusu et al., 2021; Njeje &

Matanda, 2022; Bolo & Odhiambo, 2020; Chigona & Mokiwa, 2021). Similarly, endowment fund studies emphasize alumni engagement, governance, and investment practices as key drivers of fund growth, though their impact on broader institutional outcomes is less explored (Kamau & Kinyua, 2021; Mwinzi & Maina, 2022; Adu & Opoku, 2020; Ndonye & Gichuhi, 2023). Evidence on commercialization of university assets shows that monetizing land, facilities, and intellectual property enhances financial sustainability and competitive positioning, yet prior research often lacks quantitative analysis linking commercialization to comprehensive performance metrics (Mugambi & Murungi, 2021; Musau & Odinga, 2022; Ngugi & Ochieng, 2020; Awuor & Mokaya, 2023). Collectively, these studies provide a strong foundation for examining how strategic resource mobilization practices drive measurable performance improvements in Kenyan public universities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Independent variable

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design. The target population comprised officials from all 36 chartered public universities, including Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors

(Finance and Administration), Directors of Research and Innovation, Finance Officers, Planning Officers, and Managers of Income-Generating Units. The sample size was 216 respondents collected using census approach and purposive sampling. Data was collected through a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, whose validity was ensured through expert review and pilot testing, and reliability assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A hybrid data collection approach-paper and electronic questionnaires-was used, with strict ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality. Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, chi-square tests and multiple linear regression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results and discussions are presented in sections.

Response Rate and Background Characteristics

Out of 216 targeted respondents, 154 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 71%, which was satisfactory for analysis. The demographic data showed that 60% of respondents were male and 40% female, reflecting a male-dominated workforce but an increasing representation of female professionals in Kenyan public universities. Age distribution indicated that 72% of respondents were aged between 30 and 49 years, suggesting a mature, productive workforce. In terms of academic qualifications, the majority held postgraduate degrees, with 51% holding master's and 13% PhDs, underscoring a highly educated staff base. Regarding length of service, most respondents (67%) had 5–15 years of experience, indicating a workforce with considerable institutional knowledge, which is crucial for effective resource mobilization and institutional performance.

Descriptive Findings and Discussion

The reliability of the data collection instrument was confirmed with high Cronbach's alpha values for resource mobilization ($\alpha=0.919$) and performance ($\alpha=0.947$), indicating internal consistency. Analysis of strategic resource mobilization showed that the overall practice was moderate ($M=2.47$, $SD=0.51$), with capacity for grant acquisition ($M=3.06$) and asset commercialization ($M=2.94$) moderately implemented. However, diversification of funding sources ($M=1.97$) and endowment fund mobilization ($M=1.92$) were low, indicating underutilized avenues for generating income. University performance was also moderate

(M=2.49), with infrastructure and student facilities (M=2.97) and research output (M=2.89) being the relatively better-performing areas. These results highlight that while some resource mobilization strategies are in place, there remains significant room for enhancing financial sustainability and institutional performance.

Inferential Findings and Discussion

Diversification of funding sources was low, with limited engagement in consultancy, strategic partnerships, and investment ventures, suggesting underutilized potential for generating alternative revenue. Capacity for grant acquisition was moderate, with universities having dedicated units and external collaborations, yet staff training and institutional support required strengthening. Endowment fund mobilization was weak, with minimal alumni engagement, poor investment income, and lack of functional policies, pointing to governance and capacity gaps. Asset commercialization showed moderate implementation, particularly in generating revenue from physical assets and formal policies, though monetization of intellectual property and reinvestment of commercial revenue were limited. Overall, the inferential findings indicate that specific strategic resource mobilization practices, particularly grant acquisition and asset commercialization, positively contribute to university performance, whereas low diversification and endowment mobilization constrain financial sustainability and institutional growth.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that strategic resource mobilization practices significantly influence the performance of public universities in Kenya. Focusing on diversification of funding sources, grant acquisition capacity, endowment fund mobilization, and asset commercialization, the study found that these practices are implemented at moderate levels, with overall resource mobilization scores ranging from 1.5 to 3.75 and performance scores from 1.75 to 3.5. Correlation analysis revealed very strong positive relationships ($r = 0.905$ to $r = 0.954$, $p < 0.001$) between each resource mobilization strategy and university performance, demonstrating that improvements in these areas directly enhance financial sustainability, infrastructure development, research output, and service delivery. Endowment mobilization and alumni engagement were identified as particularly critical, while asset commercialization, despite strong correlations, had limited independent impact due to operational inefficiencies. The findings underscore that the effective utilization of financial, human, and physical resources is

central to institutional success, consistent with the Resource-Based View, which posits that internal capabilities drive performance, while Institutional Theory emphasizes that responding to environmental pressures enhances legitimacy and organizational effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that public universities adopt structured and professional approaches to resource mobilization. Universities should establish specialized units for income generation, grant acquisition, and endowment management, ensuring staff are trained in proposal writing, fundraising, and asset management. Digitizing and professionalizing asset management will optimize revenue from physical and intellectual assets. University authorities should formalize performance targets, incentive schemes, and monitoring mechanisms for diversification, grants, and commercialization, while ensuring that revenues are reinvested in research, infrastructure, and student services. Policymakers, including the Ministry of Education and the National Research Foundation, should develop national frameworks for diversification, capacity-building programs, endowment regulations, and guidelines for asset commercialization, promoting sustainable financial performance.

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