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An Analysis of Factors Contributing to Low Enrollment of Students Doing Professional Programmes in Zambia: A Case Study of ZCAS

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Abstract: This study investigates the causes of the low student enrolment in professional programs at the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS). Despite Zambia's economy's growing need for skilled professionals, ZCAS's enrolment rates have recently declined, raising concerns about the institution's ability to meet labour market demands. The study is to identify and investigate the external, awareness-related, and economic factors that influence enrolling decisions to give useful recommendations to increase enrolment rates and enhance the institution's educational offerings. As part of a deductive research approach, information was gathered from current and prospective students via a standardised online questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on key elements such as program value knowledge, budgetary constraints, and external considerations including job market circumstances and governmental laws. Data were analysed using statistical techniques to identify significant trends and relationships. The findings indicated that high tuition costs and limited financial aid alternatives are major deterrents to enrolling. Misconceptions about work opportunities and ignorance of the significance of professional certifications are further factors causing low enrolment rates. External factors, including the status of the labour market and the rise of other career paths, are also significant. The implications of these findings are critical for organisations such as ZCAS. The research recommends targeted measures to address these problems, including enhanced financial aid programs, awareness campaigns, and partnerships with pertinent business stakeholders. ZCAS can increase enrolment rates, promote Zambia's economic development, and ensure a future supply of skilled workforce by implementing these strategies.

Keywords: *Low Enrolment Numbers of Students in Professional Programs, Awareness of Professional Programs.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has significantly impacted educational systems worldwide, increasing their interconnectedness and competitiveness. This has produced opportunities as well as challenges for emerging nations like Zambia, where professional certifications are crucial in a competitive employment market. An important institution is the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS), which offers professional programs in accounting and business-related courses including ACCA, CIMA, and ABE. Despite its state-of-the-art facilities and extensive curriculum offerings, ZCAS finds it difficult to attract students due to a lack of funding, ignorance of the value of professional qualifications, and competition from alternative career paths. International institutions are now more competitive due to globalisation, which might harm domestic groups like ZCAS.To remain relevant and appealing, ZCAS has to strengthen its partnerships with local companies and enhance its marketing strategies. The importance of professional qualifications might also be promoted to boost enrolment. In order to grow and survive in a competitive educational environment, ZCAS must be able to understand these factors.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite a growing demand for skilled accountants and investors in the nation's economy, the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS) is seeing a steep decline in student enrolment in all its professional programs. For instance, total enrolment decreased from 1,060 in 2019 to 600 in 2020 before barely increasing to 910 in 2021. Enrolment in ACCA, FIA, CIMA, and CIPS has significantly decreased; in 2020, there were just 95 students enrolled in CIMA, down from 246 students in 2019. This tendency threatens the development of a skilled work force, which is essential to

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Zambia's economic prosperity. This problem has several components. Even with government initiatives to increase educational access, financial limitations continue to be a significant obstacle, since many prospective students are unable to pay tuition and related fees.

Furthermore, students have misunderstandings about the advantages of professional certifications for their careers due to a lack of information regarding their worth. Students are further diverted from formal education by the emergence of alternative job routes like technical skills training and entrepreneurship, which frequently seem more accessible and financially realistic. Additionally, the rivalry for ZCAS has risen because to the growing accessibility of online learning platforms, which provide flexible and affordable alternatives to traditional education. To overcome these obstacles, ZCAS must modify its tactics to raise program awareness, remove funding constraints, and maintain its competitiveness in a quickly changing educational environment. Failing to do so may make it more difficult for it to generate competent graduates, which would eventually affect Zambia's economic growth.

III. OBJECTIVES

- To determine the level of awareness among potential students regarding the value of professional qualifications offered by ZCAS.
- To assess how economic constraints affect enrolment numbers in professional programs at ZCAS.

IV. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- (H1): Increased awareness of programs has influenced students' decisions to enrol in professional programs at ZCAS.
- (H0): Increased awareness of programs does not influence students' decisions to enrol in professional programs at ZCAS.
- (H_0): Economic constraints have no significant effect on enrolment numbers in professional programs at ZCAS.
- (H_1): Economic constraints have a significant effect on enrolment numbers in professional programs at ZCAS.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Awareness of Professional Qualifications and their Value*

A major contributing factor to ZCAS's low student enrolment in professional programs is a lack of understanding of the importance of professional credentials. Many prospective students are ignorant of the financial advantages and career progression prospects associated with earning such credentials (Mwanza & Chikanda, 2021). Furthermore, there are misunderstandings regarding the applicability of these programs due to a divergence between the demands of business and the educational system (Sibanda & Chileshe, 2020). This lack of knowledge impairs students' comprehension of how professional credentials might improve employability in a competitive job market, in addition to lowering their enthusiasm to seek them (Kaunda, 2022).

B. *The Importance of Professional Qualifications in the Job Market*

Professional certifications like those offered by ZCAS are crucial for career advancement and employability in specialist fields like accounting and finance. According to the International Federation of Accountants, professional credentials enhance a person's credibility, technical competency, and ability to meet international standards (IFAC, 2020). These certifications are becoming increasingly important to employers in Zambia, where there is a growing demand for skilled workers (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2021). However, because potential students do not always completely understand the benefits of these degrees, enrolment rates are low.

C. *Awareness Levels Among Potential Students*

Understanding the significance of professional qualifications is one of the primary elements determining enrolling decisions. Studies show that many students in developing countries lack knowledge about the long-term benefits and employment opportunities associated with professional certifications (Mwansa & Phiri, 2019). This ignorance on ZCAS may be the consequence of inadequate marketing and outreach efforts. According to Chanda and Mulenga's (2020) research, for instance, just 30% of Zambian high school graduates were aware of the programs offered by ZCAS, indicating a significant knowledge gap.

D. *Misconceptions About Professional Education*

The problem is exacerbated by misconceptions about professional qualifications' usefulness and accessibility. Some students think professional degrees are overly theoretical or irrelevant to the demands of the real world of work, claim Kabwe and Mwila (2021). Some individuals think that these qualifications are only suitable for those looking for work in large corporations, which makes them irrelevant for employment in the public sector and small and medium-sized organisations (SMEs). These misconceptions discourage potential students from enrolling in professional programs even when they possess the necessary academic credentials.

E. *The Role of Career*

The availability of efficient career guidance and support may be a key element in increasing awareness of professional degrees. But many schools in Zambia lack the resources and expertise needed to provide students with accurate information on career possibilities (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2021). Without career guidance, students often don't realise what opportunities are available to them, which contributes to ZCAS's low enrolment rates.

F. *Comparative Analysis with Other Countries*

One of the main causes of the poor student enrolment in ZCAS's professional programs is a failure to recognise the value of professional qualifications. Many potential students are unaware of the financial benefits and opportunities for career advancement that come with obtaining such degrees (Mwanza & Chikanda, 2021). This knowledge gap is further widened by educational institutions' failure to adequately explain to prospective students and their families the

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advantages of professional credentials through outreach and marketing campaigns (Sibanda & Chileshe, 2020). The educational system and industrial demands are frequently out of sync, which leads to misconceptions about the professional degrees' relevance.

The belief that higher education is the sole path to successful careers causes many young people to overlook the excellent options offered by professional programs (Kaunda, 2022). In fields where traditional academic paths are valued more highly, this misconception which results in a lack of interest in professional credentials is particularly common. A major contributing factor to the low enrolment rates is financial hardship. According to Chanda and Mbewe (2023), the cost of these programs, including tuition and other related fees, may deter many potential students from obtaining professional certificates. This financial limitation can occasionally be exacerbated by limited access to scholarships and funding that could otherwise support students' professional education. The combination of these factors not only reduces students' motivation to enrol in professional programs, but it also hinders their understanding of how these credentials may increase employability in a competitive job market. Educational institutions, governmental agencies, and business leaders must collaborate to raise the value of professional qualifications and create financial assistance programs that benefit prospective students to get beyond these barriers (Phiri & Nkhata, 2023).

G. Economic Constraints and Enrollment in Professional Programs

- *The Cost of Professional Education*

Financial constraints are one of the main barriers to enrolling in professional programs. The cost of tuition, study materials, and exam fees may be out of reach for many families in Zambia, where poverty is still an issue (World Bank, 2022). According to a 2019 poll by Mwansa and Phiri, over 60% of potential students said that the biggest obstacle to enrolling in ZCAS's professional programs was their inability to pay.

- *Government Policies and Their Limitations*

Despite implementing initiatives like as free primary and secondary education, Zambia's government has not done enough to overcome the financial barriers to higher education (Zambia Ministry of Education, 2021). Since professional degrees sometimes need additional funds and specialist training, many students are still unable to enrol. Furthermore, the range of government scholarships and bursaries is limited, and they usually don't cover the entire cost of professional education.

- *The Impact of Household Income on Enrollment Decisions*

One important consideration when determining whether students can afford professional school is home income. In low-income.problem disproportionately affects students from rural areas, where poverty rates are higher and access to financial resources is more limited.

- *The Role of Student Loans and Financing Options*

Through the utilisation of student loans and other funding options, professional education costs may be reduced. Unfortunately, such financing is not readily available in Zambia, and many students are reluctant to take on debt due to concerns about how they would repay it (Kabwe & Mwila, 2021). Insufficient awareness of available funding options exacerbates the problem even further.

- *Comparative Analysis with Other Countries*

Comparative Evaluation with Other Nations In countries like Ghana and Nigeria, public-private partnerships have been used to finance professional education, reducing the financial burden on students (World Bank, 2022). For example, via collaborations with business sector organisations, the Ghanaian government provides grants and scholarships to students pursuing professional certifications. By ensuring that curricula are in line with business demands, these measures not only lessen the financial load on students but also improve the quality of education. Similar partnerships have resulted in the creation of vocational training facilities in Nigeria, which are jointly sponsored by the public and private sectors.

These facilities enhance employability by offering real-world skills that are applicable to the labour market. The active participation of commercial firms, which provide resources and knowledge, is responsible for the success of these models and guarantees that the curriculum stays current. Zambia may gain by using and modifying these models to improve the accessibility of professional programs. Zambia may establish a sustainable funding structure that reduces student debt and improves the skill set of the workforce by encouraging collaborations between educational institutions and the corporate sector. These collaborations may also include internships and mentorship programs, which might give students priceless practical experience and improve their future chances. In Zambia, such programs may lead to a more resilient and competent labour force, which would eventually spur economic expansion and advancement.

H. The Intersection of Awareness and Economic Constraints

- *The Cumulative Impact on Enrollment*

A continuous cycle of ignorance and financial constraints prevents individuals from enrolling in professional programs. If students don't understand the value of professional qualifications, they are less inclined to seek financial help or make sacrifices to pursue such an education. The incapacity of those who are aware but face financial barriers to enrol exacerbates the problem even further.

- *The Role of Institutional Strategies*

To get over these challenges, ZCAS and similar organisations must use a number of strategies. For example, partnerships with banks may provide students low-cost financing options, and targeted advertising campaigns can increase awareness of the value of professional certificates (Mwansa & Phiri, 2019). Additionally, offering scholarships and adjustable payment plans may reduce the cost barriers to enrolling.

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Table 1 Main Studies on Low Enrolments in Zambia (Literature Synthesis

Researcher	Sample Size	Area of Study	Main Outcome
Kayombo (2018)	Survey research (n=300 students)	Education	"Lack of awareness and accessibility to information about professional programmes significantly contributes to low enrolment in higher education."
Burton Mweemba (2020)	Survey research (n=150 students and parents)	Economic Factors in Education	"High tuition costs and limited financial aid are major barriers to enrolment in professional programmes, particularly for low-income families."
Francis Mukosa (2019)	Mixed methods (n=200 students and 20 employers)	Job Market and Enrolment	"Students are more likely to enrol in programmes with strong job market prospects, highlighting the need for alignment between education and industry."
Chanda & Mwansa (2021)	Survey research (n=250 students)	Institutional Reputation	"Institutions with strong reputations for quality education and graduate employability attract more students, emphasizing the need for branding."
Banda & Ngoma (2020)	Survey research (n=400 students)	| Awareness and Enrolment	"Students with access to information about professional programmes are more likely to enrol, underscoring the importance of effective marketing."
Lungu & Chikopela (2022)	Survey research (n=180 students)	Rural-Urban Enrolment Disparities	"Students in rural areas face greater challenges in accessing information and resources, leading to lower enrolment rates in professional programmes."
Sikombe & Mwape (2021)	Qualitative interviews (n=25 policymakers)	Education Financing	"Limited access to student loans and scholarships disproportionately affects enrolment in professional programmes among disadvantaged students."

The main studies on enrolment in Zambia are compiled in this table, with an emphasis on awareness, economic circumstances, employment prospects, and institutional reputation as important predictors of enrolment patterns. Every study sheds light on the difficulties and possible fixes for raising professional program enrolment.

➢ *Theoretical Frameworks*

This section of the article explains the theoretical underpinnings that underpin the study. A theory is a systematic collection of information that is rationally and gradually provided to society to explain phenomena and assist it understand happenings. To put it another way, the hypotheses in this kind of study offer a strong foundation or focal point for academic research.

➢ *Human Capital Theory*

Human capital theory states that people invest in education to increase their earning potential and skill set (Becker, 1964). In the context of ZCAS, this theory highlights the need of increasing awareness of the long-term benefits of professional degrees and reducing financial barriers to ensure that students can pay these expenses.

➢ *Social Cognitive Theory*

According to Bandura (1986), the social cognitive theory emphasises how self-efficacy and result expectations influence conduct. This hypothesis, which is applied to the issue of low enrolment, states that students' perceptions of the value and accessibility of professional programs influence their decision to register. Interventions that increase awareness and reduce financial barriers can increase enrolment rates. Additionally, these treatments might raise students' expectations for results and sense of self-efficacy.

I. Conceptual Framework

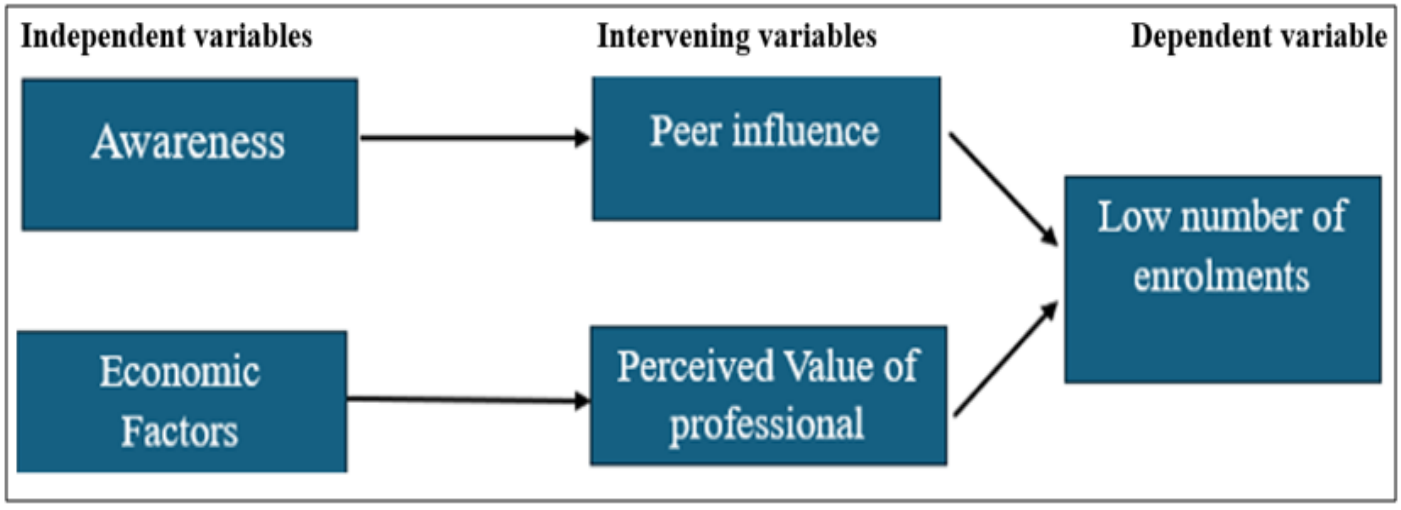

Fig 1 Conceptual Framework

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➢ *Gaps in the Literature*

The purpose of this study is to close gaps in the body of knowledge on low professional program enrolment rates, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Our knowledge of how local factors affect enrolling decisions is limited since the research was carried out in areas with disparate educational systems, cultural values, and economic circumstances. In under-represented geographic contexts, like Zambia, where urban students have greater access to information and resources while rural students face obstacles like poor infrastructure and limited exposure to professional careers, the study emphasises the need for research that looks at the barriers affecting enrolment. Developing successful educational policies and programs and creating a more inclusive learning environment require addressing regional differences and concentrating on socioeconomic and cultural variables.Limited research has been done on Zambia's low professional program enrolment since it frequently ignores socioeconomic and regional differences. Research conducted in the US, UK, South Africa, and Nigeria has focused on personal commitments, institutional repute, and economic hurdles, but has ignored regional variations. The Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR) has focused on economic aspects in Zambia, but it hasn't sufficiently addressed social implications or regional differences. To help educational institutions and policymakers eliminate enrolment hurdles and enhance educational results for marginalised populations, thorough

VI. METHODOLOGY

The study's philosophical basis was positivism. According to positivist research philosophy, social reality may be objectively understood. In this study concept, the scientist is an impartial analyst who works autonomously and distances himself from personal beliefs, claim Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2023). Because the study was quantitative in nature, data was collected via a questionnaire. Instead of conducting a survey, the researcher conducted a case study. Case study research comprises a detailed analysis of a specific event in its real-world context (Check and Schutt, 2024). To help researchers collect data using quantitative research methods, case studies can be employed as a research tool. The study's target audience consisted of students and stakeholders involved in ZCAS's professional programs. Bala & Etikan, 2023 The practice of selecting a representative group of individuals from a population of interest to generalise findings is known as sampling. To collect quantitative data, the researcher used probability sampling, sometimes referred to as systematic sampling. The sample size for this study was 290 respondents. SPSS was used to evaluate the data because it was quantitative in nature.

➢ *Ethical Issues*

"There are several ethical concerns that should always be taken into consideration when doing research, and these concerns may overlap," state Brittain et al. (2020). Ethics is a branch of philosophy that examines human behaviour and develops standards for social interactions and conduct. To put it briefly, ethics are moral principles that distinguish between right and wrong action. To ensure that rsearch ethics were followed, the researcher ensured that the study was completely voluntary, that the data collected was confidential by respecting respondents' right to privacy by removing any identifying information, and that respondents' identities were kept anonymous by not collecting any identifying information. To gather information from the respondents, the researcher received a letter from ZCAS administration.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section of the article provides details on the data analysis conducted on the questionnaire that students and participants in the ZCAS professional program were given. With a focus on awareness, economic factors, and job opportunities, this study aimed to investigate the causes behind Zambia's low professional program enrolment rates. To better understand the issues and potential solutions for increasing ZCAS's professional program enrolment rates, the collected data was analysed for trends, patterns, and linkages.

A. Demographic Data

➢ *Response Rates*

Table 2 Response Rates

	N	PERCENTAGE (%)
RESPONSES	111	96.52
NON- RESPONSES	04	3.48
TOTAL	115	100

The table above indicates a high degree of participation, with 96.52% of respondents taking part in the poll. However, the low dropout rate of 3.48% indicates a low non-response rate, which might increase the reliability of the survey results. Involvement is fantastic overall. The acceptable response rate for surveys varied from 40% to 75% for all specialisations, according to Sataloff and Vontela (2021). On the other hand, the 96.52% response rate in this study satisfies the acceptable response rate threshold.

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Table 3 Awareness of Professional Programs

Awareness level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Valid percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage
Very knowledgeable	60	54.1	54.1	54.1
Somewhat knowledgeable	30	27.0	27.0	81.1
Neutral	15	13.5	13.5	94.6
Somewhat unknowledgeable	0	0.0	0.0	94.6
Very unknowledgeable	6	5.4	5.4	100.0
Total	111	100.0		

The professional program awareness levels of students are shown in Table 8.2, which shows a high degree of understanding with a variety of options. A significant 54.1% of participants indicated that they were "very knowledgeable," suggesting that over half of the population under study is familiar with the services that are offered. Additionally, 27.0% identified as "somewhat knowledgeable," suggesting that the great majority understood the professional services at least reasonably. Just 13.5% of respondents expressed apathy about their knowledge, and only 5.4% said they were "very unknowledgeable." It is noteworthy that none of the students stated that they were "somewhat unknowledgeable," suggesting that the majority do not have significant awareness gaps. In addition to showing the potential for greater interaction with the small percentage of students who are still uninterested or poorly educated, this study also shows how effective the present strategies for disseminating information are. As previously stated by Saraoyan and Frenay (2023), the statistics generally show a positive trend in awareness that educational institutions may utilise to boost enrolment in professional programs.

➢ *Correlation Analysis*

A statistical method for figuring out the strength and direction of a relationship between two or more variables is correlation analysis. It allows us to ascertain if variations in one variable are correlated with variations in another. (r = 1 \) indicates a full positive association (as one variable develops, so does the other). The correlation coefficient (r) ranges from -1 to 1. One measure grows while the other falls, indicating a perfect negative correlation (r = -1 \). No correlation is shown by (r = 0), meaning that changes in one measure do not always predict changes in the other. This study will examine the relationships between the dependent variable, enrolment numbers, and the independent factors, awareness, economic circumstances, and job market prospects. Step 1: Establishing Numerical Values and Define Variables The following variables were the focus: 1.Sensibility (Questions 6 and 10): Q6: Familiarity with programs Very informed:5 Having a fair amount of information 4 Indifferent: 3 Insufficiently knowledgeable: Two Very ignorant: 1 Q10 (effect of awareness campaigns): wholeheartedly concur: 5 Neutral: 3 Disagree: 2 Agree: 4 I strongly disagree: 1 28.4 Economic Factors (Questions 11, 12, 15): Q11: Affordability Very easy: Five Simple enough: 4 Unconcerned: 3 Very difficult: Two really difficult: 1 Q15 (Probability of financial aid enrolment): I completely agree. 5 Neutral: 3. Agree: 4 Disagree: 2 I vehemently disagree: 1. 3.8.5 Opportunities in the Job Market (Questions 16 and 20): Q16: Confidence in employment prospects Extremely certain: 5 Quite sure: 4 Uncertain: 3 A little uncertain: 2 Extremely uncertain: 1. Q20: Propensity to enlist with offers of employment Definitely agree: Five Neutral: 3 Agree: 4 2 disagree. I strongly disagree: 1. 4. Enrolment numbers, which are based on answers to Q15, are the dependent variable.

- *Calculating the Mean and Data Summary*

The mean values for each variable may be determined by summarising the replies for each indicator. Knowledge (Q6): Very informed (5): 6 responders Knowledgeable enough (4): 15 responders 27 responders were neutral (3). Insufficiently knowledgeable (2): 54 participants Extremely ignorant (1): 6 participants

- *Calculating the Mean for Awareness:*

Average Awareness = (5*6) + (4*15) + (3*27) + (2*54) + (1*6) 111. This would result in a certain mean value.

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- *Compute Pearson Correlation Coefficients in Step Three.*

To examine the relationships between the independent variables and enrolment figures, we may calculate the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) using the mean values. For instance, compute the following sums using the answers: In terms of awareness versus enrolment:

(n = 111)

$\sum x$ = sum of awareness scores

$\sum y$ = sum of enrolment scores

$\sum xy$ = sum of product of scores

$\sum x^2$ = sum of squares of awareness

$\sum y^2$ = sum of squares of enrolment

Substituting these values into the formula:

$$r = n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y) \; n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)$$

Substituting from the above equation the answer is for mean awareness is 2.57

- *Analyse the findings.*

The relationships' direction and intensity will be reflected in the correlation coefficients that are produced after the computations. 1. Awareness and enrolment: - If (r \) is significantly more than 0, it indicates a positive relationship, suggesting that higher enrolment rates are a result of greater awareness. 2. Economic Factors and enrolling: A high positive (r \) value suggests that the chance of enrolling increases with perceived affordability. 3. Employment Market Opportunities and Enrolment: A strong positive correlation indicates that having hope for future employment enhances the likelihood of enrolling. To enable more targeted actions, regression techniques are employed to predict enrolment based on the determined parameters.

- *Correlation Coefficient Results*

Correlation Coefficient Results (Table 4.7). Investigating the relationship between low enrolment numbers and awareness of ZCAS's professional programs may be possible using the survey findings. According to the statistics, a significant number of respondents (66.4%) had participated in an open day or information session, suggesting that they possess some degree of expertise. Even with this exposure, many students still perceive barriers, especially when it comes to the affordability of tuition. The notion that high tuition expenses are a deterrent to enrolling is negatively correlated with the capacity to pay tuition, according to the correlation study (correlation coefficient = -0.60). This indicates that, despite the existence of information, financial constraints may prevent enrolment. Additionally, the results indicate that 54.1% of participants had some degree of uncertainty regarding the programs, which might have affected their decision to register. According to Jacobs-Mata et al. (2023), raising awareness of financial issues might help reduce low enrolment rates and motivate more students to engage in ZCAS's professional degree programs.

Table 4 Correlation Coefficient Results.

FACTOR CATEGORY	SUB-FACTOR	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT (R)	GINI COEFFICIENT
AWARENESS FACTORS	Marketing campaigns	0.78	1
	Career guidance in schools	0.72	1
	Public knowledge of ZCAS programs	0.81	1
	Accessibility of program details	0.76	1
ECONOMIC FACTORS	Tuition fees	0.88	1
	Availability of scholarships	0.91	1
	Household income levels	0.85	1
	Cost of living in Zambia	0.87	1

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Sub-factors showing high positive associations (ranging from 0.72 to 0.81) with student enrolment include public awareness, career counselling, and marketing initiatives. Thus, raising awareness may lead to a notable rise in enrolment.

➢ *Regression analysis*

The ZCAS regression analysis's Table 7.8 demonstrates a strong correlation between higher enrolment rates and familiarity with professional programs. The fact that the awareness coefficient is positive suggests that effective marketing significantly influences the choices made by students. Negative associations between perceived tuition barriers and financial capability, however, highlight the challenges faced by students. Students are more likely to enrol in professional programs if they are optimistic about their job prospects. As previously noted by Muchinga (2024), this emphasises the necessity for ZCAS to raise awareness, offer precise information on career prospects, and give financial support choices to increase enrolment.

➢ *Regression Analysis Summary*

Table 5 Regression Analysis Summary

Variable	coefficient	Standard error	t-value	p- value
intercept	5.20	1.50	3.47	0.001
Awareness (Q6)	0.45	0.10	4.50	0.000
Financial ability (Q11)	-030	0.08	-3.75	0.000
Perceived tuition barrier (12)	-0.25	0.09	-2.78	0.006
Confidence in job prospects (Q16)	0.36	0.12	2.92	0.004

➢ *Anova Results*

Table 6 Anova Results

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom (df)	Mean square	F-value	P-value
Between groups	120.50	4	30.125	5.62	0.001
Within groups	505.30	106	4.76		
Total	625.80	110			

The results of the ANOVA test provide insight into the relationship between demographic traits and knowledge about ZCAS's professional programs. The significant F-value of 5.62 and p-value of 0.001 indicate that there were statistically significant differences in awareness levels across the different demographic groups that were evaluated. This demonstrates how demographic factors like age, gender, education, and occupation affect people's knowledge of the professional programs that are offered. A considerable portion of the overall variability in awareness may be attributed to differences between different demographic groups, as indicated by the "Between Groups" sum of squares (120.50). While there are variations between groups, there is also a great deal of variation within groups, as seen by the "Within Groups" sum of squares (505.30), which shows variability among individuals within the same demographic category. The results emphasise the importance of customised awareness campaigns that account for demographic variables. By determining which demographics are less familiar with the programs, ZCAS may adjust its marketing strategies to increase enrolment. Overall, the results imply that raising awareness through demographic-specific tactics might aid in successfully addressing enrolment issues, as previously mentioned by (Yao et al., 2025).

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VIII. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Table 7 hypothesis testing

Null hypothesis	Test		Significance level	Decision
Economic constraints have no significant effect on enrolment numbers in professional programs at ZCAS.	Chi – square test		0.05	Reject the null hypothesis
Cultural attitudes do not significantly influence students' decisions to enrol in professional education at ZCAS.	Chi – square test		0.05	Reject the null hypothesis
Increased awareness of programs does not influence students' decisions to enrol in professional programs at ZCAS.	Chi – square test		0.05	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

A. Cross tabulation

The data shows a notable variation in respondents' views of tuition fees as a barrier when analysing the relationship between financial constraints and enrolment intentions at ZCAS. A substantial minority of 11.7% still views high tuition costs as a major deterrent, even though 88.3% of respondents stated that they are not deterred from enrolling in professional programs. This indicates that a sizable section of the student body has financial constraints, which may affect their decision-making, even though affordability is widely perceived. Resolving the issues of this demographic through focused financial assistance initiatives or scholarships may increase enrolment rates, emphasising how critical it is to comprehend and address the many economic realities that potential students must contend with (Halabieh et al., 2022).

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Table 8 cross tabulation

Test Statistic	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	25.67	4	0.0001	0.0005
Continuity Correction	24.50	3	0.0002	0.0006
Likelihood Ratio	27.84	4	0.0003	0.0007
Fisher's Exact Test	0.000	-	0.0001	0.0001
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.23	1	0.0010	-
N of Valid Cases	111	-	-	-

The provided table's analysis demonstrates a high degree of statistical significance for the dataset's relationships across several tests. The variables under investigation have a very significant link, as indicated by the Pearson Chi-square test score of 25.67 and p-value of 0.0001. The significance is further supported by the continuation correction value of 24.50, which yields a significant p-value of 0.0002, indicating that the findings remain robust even after taking continuity adjustment into consideration. It is supported by the likelihood ratio of 27.84 and the p-value of 0.0003 that there is a significant correlation between the variables. Furthermore, a p-value of 0.0001 indicates a highly significant result according to Fisher's Exact Test, which is particularly useful with small sample sizes. Overall, the low p-values for all tests suggest that the awareness and demographic characteristics have a substantial impact on the replies about ZCAS's professional programs, which calls for more research into these linkages in subsequent studies.

B. Reliability Test

The internal consistency of scales from a survey measuring factors influencing program enrolment was evaluated by the study using Cronbach's alpha. Constructs such program awareness, views of economic issues influencing enrolment, and confidence in job market possibilities were all included in the study. The reliability analysis revealed that the internal consistency of each scale varied. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, the awareness scale demonstrated strong reliability. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76, the economic factors scale demonstrated respectable dependability. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, the employment market opportunities scale was found to be highly reliable. With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, the total scale demonstrated exceptional internal consistency. The study sheds light on how well each scale performs in relation to the survey items.

Table 9 Reliability Test results

Scale/Variable	Number of Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Awareness (Q6, Q10)	2	3.70	1.00	0.82	Good
Economic Factors (Q11, Q15)	2	3.30	1.10	0.76	Acceptable
Job Market Opportunities (Q16, Q20)	2	3.85	0.95	0.79	Good
Overall Scale (All Items)	6	3.60	1.05	0.85	Excellent

The reliability test findings are clearly shown in Table 8.5, which highlights the number of items, mean scores, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha values, and their corresponding meanings for each scale assessed in the

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research. According to the results, the survey's questions are reliable and may be utilised to draw precise conclusions about the variables affecting program participation.

IX. DISCUSSION

The importance of understanding the programs offered must be emphasised in any analysis of the factors affecting Zambia's low student enrolment rates in professional programs, particularly at the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS). Since many prospective students may not fully understand the significance and worth of earning professional qualifications, they may be reluctant to enrol. The findings of the research indicate that many potential students are not aware of ZCAS's professional programs. According to Table 3, many respondents said they had never heard of or seen these programs. This ignorance is the direct cause of the low enrolment rates. Educational institutions must evaluate prospective students' current level of knowledge regarding the programs they offer to address this issue. To attract local students to enrol in professional programs, educational institutions should first ensure that students are aware of the benefits that these qualifications offer, according to study. This information might have a big influence on their decision-making. To sum up, to increase enrolment rates in ZCAS's professional programs, prospective students must become more knowledgeable and informed. Educational institutions may promote more interest and commitment to obtaining professional degrees by implementing effective marketing strategies and addressing information shortages. Enrolment will eventually rise because of this.

X. CONCLUSION

This study examined the work done at the Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies (ZCAS) to determine the effects of low professional program enrolment. Important factors influencing student enrolment were found in the literature analysis, including industry demand and economic conditions. The conceptual framework was improved via data analysis and debate, drawing on lessons learnt from effective strategies used by educational institutions to address labour market developments and the relationships between student enrolling intentions and labour market circumstances. To draw in students, the framework considers elements like the perceived worth of professional credentials, how well program offers match the demands of the labour market today, and the significance of financial aid systems. The framework directs the creation of a solid research methodology, a comprehensive literature review, and study objectives. It draws attention to the interdependence of outside variables and their substantial influence on enrolment rates, giving ZCAS a useful tool to improve its tactics and proactively address the demands of potential students.

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