

Influence of Political Forces on Procurement Performance in Nyandarua County Government in Kenya

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Abstract: *The extent to which procurement in public organizations achieves optimal performance depends on a great diversity of factors. This study sought to examine the influence of political forces on procurement performance of County government of Nyandarua, Kenya. The study was anchored on systems theory. Moreover, a descriptive survey research design was adopted on a target population of 44 procurement employees and Chief Officers in Nyandarua County government. A census was undertaken where the overall population was taken as the study respondents. The study utilized a structured questionnaire constructed on a Likert scale items as the primary data collection instrument. The collected data was cleaned and analyzed with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The findings of the study demonstrated that political forces had positive significant relationship with procurement performance in the county government of Nyandarua. Further, regression analysis demonstrated that political forces had significant effect on procurement performance. The study concluded that political forces have significant effect on procurement performance in Nyandarua county government. It was recommended that the county leadership should be in control of the political forces in procurement function.*

Keywords: Political Forces, Procurement, Performance, Tendering, Transparency

I. Introduction

Procurement has an important role in enhancing as well as promoting both efficiency and transparency in the sourcing of organizations goods and services [1]. Luketero [2] observed that analyzing enhancement of procurement practices would enable an organization to operate at an optimal level. This translates to noteworthy cost savings that in turn improves on organizational performance. The study of procurement performance at such a time is imperative. This is because many organizations have been accused of massive procurement irregularities that have led to adverse business results, for instance loss of shareholders money and procurement of inferior goods at high prices. This has led to serious compromise on quality of offered goods and services to end customers. As a result, customers are dissatisfied and market share lost. Modern day organizations therefore strive to attain more efficiency, cost effectiveness and accountability by undertaking to adopt vigorous and well-articulated procurement regimes [3]. The extent to which procurement in public organizations achieves optimal performance depends on a great diversity of factors. These factors drive or hinder performance and are exhibited in many studies of public procurement [4]. These factors could either be internal or external. Internal factors could be adopted levels of technology, available resources and procurement department level of expertise and experience. Vluggen, Gelderman, Semeijn and Van Pelt [5] present a roughly defined public procurement model with four external pressures: legal, political, market and social-economic. Some authors have suggested that external forces could be more important to sustainable public procurement compared to internal forces [5]. However, a comprehensive investigation into the influence of external actors and factors on the development of sustainable public procurement remains relatively under-investigated.

Internal and external forces are influencing the ability to recognize the procurement goal. Relations among different elements like professionalism, staffing levels and budget resources, organizational structure whether centralized or decentralized, procurement regulations, rules, guidelines, and internal control policies, all have impact on the performance of the procurement function and needs consideration [1]. For the development of African countries it is vital to have efficient public procurement system and tangible commitments should be exerted to make the best possible use of public resources [6].

The World Bank [7] report shows that about 50% of developing countries government budget is spent on procuring goods and services; while high income countries spend an estimated 29% of total general government expenditure on public procurement. In the European Union for example, public authorities spend approximately 14% of GDP on the purchase of goods, works and services. Globally, public procurement accounts for approximately one-fifth of global GDP [8].

In Australia, Procurement management provides a basis for effective control and stewardship of resources and demonstrates the value of the procurement function. Citing a report on the review of Purchasing and Logistics in the Queensland Government, Smeed [9] reports that 44% of state organizations in Australia reported that they had no performance measures in place for assessing

procurement efficiency and effectiveness. Of those that did have measures, many are qualitative statements rather than specific targets to achieve [10].

In South Africa, Oyebanjo and Tengeh [11] observed that there are still pockets of issues in the South African sustainable public procurement (SPP) despite the introduction of the constitution and development and adoption of the various policies to guide SPP, some of which has been identified to be; corrupt practices, non-compliance with policy and practices, tender irregularities and lack of knowledge. They observed that organizations seeking to improve sustainability in the environment must work with the suppliers to reduce material toxicity or the amount of package used on the products. The focusing on the environmental sustainability aspect of procurement may provide a transitional route toward complete sustainability [11].

In Uganda, a new law to regulate public procurement was introduced in the year 2002 [12]. The new procurement law was introduced to not only bring coherence and uniformity in public procurement but also to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability and value for money in procurements. It also eliminates corruption and allows for fair competition [13]. European Union [14] concurs with this statement by noting that the European Union public sector procurement should follow transparent open procedures ensuring fair conditions of competition for suppliers.

According to Public Procurement Oversight Authority (PPOA), politics interfering with the public procurement process is regarded a big issue during process implementation and public procurement reforms [15]. It is notable that impulsive procurement decisions are as a result of influence by politicians to procurement processes [16]. According to World Bank [17], personnel in procurement unit not only lack growth in their career path but also earn meagre wages that militate against procurement reforms implementation. Storing records poorly, and red tape leads to delayed pay of vendors, a critical issue that has been observed to be a challenge in the implementation of procurement reforms [16].

A report by Africa center for Open Governance (AfriCOG) [18] observed that the Kenyan government loses about one-third of the national budget annually to corruption. The report also asserts that 80 percent of all corruption cases before the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission have a procurement element. Taking a percentage of an awarded tender, or inflating project costs, is the commonest means of dipping into government coffers. A World Bank and IFC enterprise survey [19] indicated that in order to secure a government contract, a gift whose value represents 8 to 10 percent of the contract amount was expected. Similarly, according to the Institute for Development Studies (IDS), manufacturing firms in Kenya spend an average of 14 percent of the value of government contracts on kickbacks. The Public Procurement Oversight Authority (PPOA) in 2007 estimated that procuring entities were buying goods and services at an average of 60 percent above the prevailing market price.

II. Statement of the Problem

According to Joshua and Muturi [20], Kenya faces different challenges in public procurement that include lack of fair competition, lack of transparency and lack of professionalism. Moreover, Mutuku, Agusioma and Wambua [21] indicated that improper application of procurement standards has led to high operational costs, uncoordinated business activities, inability to achieve domestic policy goals and failure to attract and retain professionals. Various factors have been fronted as being the determinants of procurement performance both internal and external factors. A number of studies have been undertaken in regard to determinants of procurement performance. Onyimbo and Moronge [22] examined the effect of single sourcing on procurement performance in public entities in Kenya Railways. Okoth [23] examined the factors influencing performance of public procurement for independent public offices and commissions in Kenya. Kembero and Ombui [24] assessed the determinants of procurement performance in public entities in Kenya in Kenya school of law. A majority of these studies identified factors that were internal in nature as determinants for procurement performance. It's noteworthy that there is hardly sufficient research on external factors that may dictate or influence procurement performance. Therefore, this study sought to fill this gap by examining external factors affecting procurement performance in Nyandarua County government in Kenya.

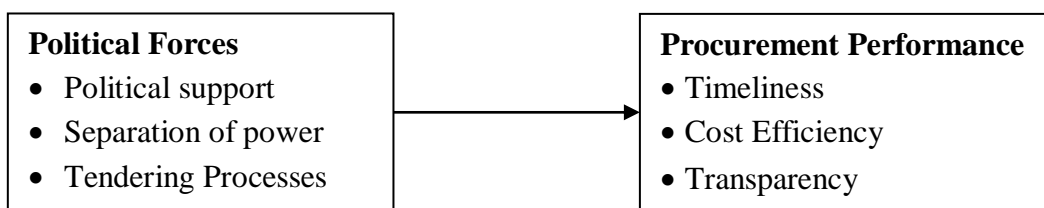
III. Purpose of the Study

The study sought to establish the influence of political forces on Procurement performance in Nyandarua Government in Kenya.

IV. Hypothesis of the Study

H₀: Political forces have no statistical significant influence on procurement performance in Nyandarua County government in Kenya.

V. Conceptual Framework



VI. Systems theory

The systems theory was propounded by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1936 [25]. Systems theory offers a gentle, but powerful, way of viewing organizations and their environments. According to this theory, systems are exposed to and intermingle with, their environments (both internal and external). Ju [26] describes the system as a composite of subsystems in which each subsystem (or part) affects the whole. Referring to the organization functions, all parts of the organization are connected and co-dependent. Indeed, interdependency and cause-effect are two major issues underlying the systems theory [27]. Based on this idea, interdependency and connection of organization parts (internal and external) should never be undermined. Thus, organization practitioners require being aware of the various factors of an organization and how each factor influences their performance. Therefore, external environmental factors referred to in the systems theory are those beyond the organization control namely, legal, market, political and social [28]. On the same basis, the current study relates systems theory and legal factors, political factors, and social factors. This proposes that linking an organization and its environment cannot be avoided for the best outcome of the organization operations; as such the organization must pay attention to the external environment [29]. Conversely, all systems move toward equilibrium in that a balance of various forces within and outside of a system [25]. This suggests that to attain the equilibrium the environmental factors need to be controlled.

The aforementioned discussion shows that the effectiveness of an organization can be influenced by both the internal and external environment. Since the effectiveness of an organisation is influenced by the environment in which it operates, paying attention to the environment (both internal and external) is one of the important aspects. By implication, effectiveness will be measured on the extent to which the organisation adjusts itself to accommodate the changes to remain competitive. This reinforces that the managers should ensure the organisation stays externally sensitive. Against the above backdrop, assessing an organisation using the internal environment alone will not yield the best results. Since previous studies in public procurement considered factors related to the internal environment, there is a gap to be filled specifically to the factors related to the external environment. Therefore, the present study intends to examine the extent to which political, legal, market and social and economic forces are perceived as influencing the procurement performance in county governments. Thai [28] developed external forces model as conceptualized in the systems theory.

VII. Political Forces

According to Wangwe [30], of the many leadership challenges faced by developing countries especially African countries is the political interference in administrations. In many African countries, the public becomes a platform and the politicians want to maintain their faction in it and try to extend their domain in every other section of the public administration. Thus because of the political activities in the administration and the undue influence of the politicians the public and administration institution gets politicized [31].

In their study, Mfuru et.al, [31] examined the impact of political interference in public administration in Kibaha Town Council in Tanzania. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches with mixed methods of data collection that involved the use of a questionnaire, interviews and document review. Their sample was drawn from public administration officers and ward executive officers. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data while correlation, regression and measures of central tendency were used to analyze quantitative data. The study established that political pressure was paramount due to inadequate power and responsibilities separation between politics (policy) and public administration (execution).

Okongo and Muturi [32] examined factors affecting procurement performance in public institutions in Kisii County Kenya. A descriptive research design was used in the study targeting employees in procurement department and suppliers of public institutions in Kisii County. A questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The study findings demonstrated that most of the public institutions develop procurement plans annually but the political class is generally not supportive of the procurement systems. The study recommended that procurement departments in public institutions should enhance and support independence of staff in the exercise of their mandate.

In his study, Masoud [33] examined the effects of political interference on procurement performance in the parastatal organizations in Dar-es-Salaam region in Tanzania. The study involved heads of department from 93 parastatal organizations in Dar-es-Salaam. Structured questionnaires were used for primary data collection. The findings demonstrated that political interference in contract award and legal framework implementation negatively influences procurement performance. The study recommended that the procuring entities should ensure that politicians are not involved in the procurement process and that only authorized officers are allowed to participate in procurement processes.

Ochieng [34] undertook an assessment of internal factors affecting efficiency of public procurement process in Kisumu county government in Kenya. The target population for this study included the top, middle and lower level management officers in procurement department. Descriptive research design was adopted while simple random sampling was adopted in sample selection for the study. The study established that political interference among other factors affect the efficiency of public procurement to a great extent.

VIII. Procurement Performance

Public procurement being a key economic activity, even though plays a central role in driving socio-economic development, is prone to risks and loss of public funds, especially where procurement procedures and systems are not efficient to support the process in implementing government programmes, projects and activities. The Kenyan procurement system is also considered a high risk area for investors. The Global Competitiveness Report of 2019 indicates that corruption remains prevalent in procurement processes with widespread practice of favouritism towards well connected firms and individuals when deciding upon contracts and policies being a main area of concern [35].

Shalle et al [36] deduced that procurement performance can be assessed by focusing on delivery, flexibility, quality, cost and technology. Optimal performance attainment is dependent on how current suppliers` relationships are managed so as to ensure constant availability of needed quality supplies at the organization. This will ensure that sourced materials are indeed procured during the right time and at a reasonable cost. Procurement performance strives to enable improvements in the procurement process at the organization so as to improve on quality delivery of firm products and services at least possible time and cost.

Mukuru and Moronge [37] conducted research on factors influencing procurement practices in government ministries in Kenya. The general objective of the study was to assess factors affecting procurement practices in the ministries in Kenya. This study concentrated on four variables listed below and utilized descriptive survey research design. The study findings implied that staff competency, ICT, quality management systems and top management support play a significant role on the procurement practices in the government ministries in Kenya. The study concludes that all variables (staff competency, ICT, quality management systems, and top management support) are important factors that affect procurement practices in the government ministries in Kenya.

Joshua and Muturi [20] did a study on Factors Affecting Procurement Performance in Public Institutions in Kenya: a survey of Public Institutions in Kisii County. The findings revealed that planning, political interference affected procurement performance in the public sector in Kenya to a great extent. The study, therefore recommended that all user departments prepare a procurement plan within the set timelines. Strict adherence to the procurement plan should be done. Procurement process should be free from political interference in public institutions. The procurement staff should be independent in the exercise of their mandate. The political class should not be given room to manipulate the process with a potential to contribute to the success of the public institution operations.

IX. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

9.1 Research Design

The study employed descriptive survey research design. According to Cooper and Schindler [38] a descriptive study is concerned with finding out the what, where and how of a phenomenon. The design enabled the researcher describe the characteristics of the variables under study in relation to the practices in the County government operations. The study targeted all the employees of Nyandarua county government who included Procurement officers and Chief Officers of the various departments. Given the small population, the study adopted a census approach where all the employees were taken as respondents.

9.2 Research Instruments

The study employed the use of a structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The instrument was preferred since it gave respondents freedom to express their views or opinions more objectively. The questionnaire consisted of statements constructed in form of a 5 point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree). The instrument was tested for validity and reliability before data collection.

X. Findings and Discussions

10.1 Response Rate

The researcher distributed 44 questionnaires to be filled by the respondents. 36 of the questionnaires were properly filled and returned. This represented a response rate of 81.82% which was characterized as very good [39].

10.2 Political Forces

The study sought to find out respondents perceptions in regard to the political influence on procurement operation in the county government. The means and standard deviations value were established in this regard. The results from the analysis were as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Political Forces

	N	Min	Max	M	Std. Dev
Politicians are supportive of the procurement process	36	1	5	2.69	1.546
Politicians politicize the procurement process	36	1	5	4.08	1.273
Members of the county executive play a controlling task in the procurement process	36	1	5	3.83	1.082
The committees for procurement functions operate independently	36	1	5	3.31	1.508

There is political interference in the implementation of the procurement projects	36	1	5	3.69	1.451
There is political interference in the award of tenders	36	1	5	3.72	1.256
Contracts are awarded based on the relationship with the politicians	36	1	5	3.00	1.331
Tenders are awarded based on the ambitions of the politicians	36	1	5	2.92	1.422
Valid N (listwise)	36				

The results indicated that the respondents agreed that politicians politicize the procurement process (M=4.05, SD=1.273) and that members of the county executive play a controlling task in the procurement process (M=3.83, SD=1.082). Moreover, they agreed that there is political interference in the implementation of the procurement projects (M=3.69, SD=1.451) and that there is political interference in the award of tenders (M=3.72, SD=1.256). However, respondents were indifferent on whether politicians are supportive of the procurement process (M=2.69, SD=1.546) and on whether the committees for procurement functions operate independently (M=3.31, SD=1.508). Conversely respondents were undecided on whether contracts are awarded based on the relationship with the politicians (M=3.00, SD=1.331) and on whether tenders are awarded based on the ambitions of the politicians (M=2.92, SD=1.422). The study noted that the respondents' views were not cohesive registering standard deviation values greater than one in all the aspects of political forces.

10.3 Procurement Performance

The study further sought to examine the views of the respondents in regard to procurement performance of the county government. The means and standard deviation values were established in this regard and presented as shown in Table 2

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Procurement Performance

	N	Min	Max	M	Std
There is timely delivery of goods and services	36	3	5	4.22	.681
The procured goods and services are of the right quality	36	3	5	4.61	.549
The procured goods are of the right price	36	2	5	4.36	.899
The exercise of procurement especially on tender evaluation is fair and just	36	1	5	4.11	1.116
Suppliers offer products that consistently conform to our specifications	36	4	5	4.56	.504
Purchase orders/contracts are sent electronically to suppliers resulting in reduced contract award leadtime	36	1	5	4.31	1.191
We have been able to reduce the cost of goods significantly	36	1	5	3.92	.996
Valid N (listwise)	36				

From the results in Table 2, respondents agreed with all aspects relating to procurement performance in the county government. They agreed that there is timely delivery of goods and services (M=4.22, SD=0.681) and that the procured goods and services are of the right quality (M=4.61, SD=0.549). Further, respondents were in agreement that the procured goods were of the right price (M=4.36, SD=0.899) and that the exercise of procurement especially on tender evaluation is fair and just (M=4.11, SD=1.116).

Conversely, respondents acknowledged that suppliers offer products that consistently conform to their specification (M=4.56, SD=0.504) and that purchase orders/contracts are sent electronically to suppliers resulting in reduced contract award leadtime (M=4.31, SD=1.191). Moreover, respondents agreed that they have been able to reduce the cost of goods significantly (M=3.92, SD=0.996). Respondents were more cohesive in their views in regard to procurement performance with all but two of the aspects recording standard deviation values less than one.

10.4 Political Forces and Procurement Performance

The study undertook correlation analysis to examine the relationship between political forces and procurement performance. The finding from the analysis were as presented in Table 3

Table 3 Relationship between Political Forces and Procurement Performance

	Political Forces
Procurement Performance	Pearson Correlation .282**
	Sig. (2-tailed) .006
	N 36

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 3 indicated the presence of a weak, positive but significant (r=0.282, p=.006) relationship between political forces and procurement performance. As such, political forces play a significant role in determining the procurement performance of the county government of Nyandarua. These findings were in line with Ochieng (2018) findings that established that political interference was among the factors that affected the efficiency of procurement performance. Moreover, Masoud (2023) established that political interference in contract award negatively influenced procurement performance contrary to this study finding. Based on

these findings, the hypothesis that political forces have no statistical significant influence on procurement performance in Nyandarua county government in Kenya was rejected. The study concluded that political forces have a significant influence on procurement performance of Nyandarua county government in Kenya.

XI. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, the study established that political forces were significant in determining procurement performance. The respondent also affirmed the role of political forces in the performance of the procurement function in the county government. As such, the study concluded that political forces are significant in determining procurement performance in the county government of Nyandarua. As such the study recommends that the leadership in the county governments should ensure they control the extent of political forces in the procurement function. This will be important to ensure that only the required political engagement is allowed and enhance procurement performance. This will ensure the county achieves the political goodwill to support procurement function and encourage collaboration with the political class whenever necessary.

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