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**The Nexus between Supplier Selection Practices and Procurement Function
Performance: A Kenyan Public Universities Perspective**


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The Nexus between Supplier Selection Practices and Procurement Function Performance: A Kenyan Public Universities Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to unveil how supplier assessment and governance influenced procurement function performance.

Methodology: The study employed a post-positivist research philosophy and a causal-comparative design. The study used multi-stage sampling to arrive at the sample of respondents of 93 procurement officers. Quantitative data was collected through self-designed structured questionnaires and analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27). Demographically, the study included predominantly experienced, educated male and female professionals.

Findings: The findings of the study revealed that supplier selection significantly and positively impacted procurement function performance. Specifically, supplier assessment exhibited a noteworthy positive effect on procurement function performance ($\beta = .517, p < .001$), underlining the critical role of due diligence, evaluations, and appraisals among suppliers. Similarly, supplier governance demonstrated a substantial positive effect on procurement function performance ($\beta = .310, p = .001$), highlighting the significant roles of supplier selection transparency and conflict resolution mechanisms in procurement processes.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: This study unveiled how supplier assessment and governance influenced procurement function performance anchored in the Resource Dependence Theory (RDT). The study's results confirmed that robust supplier selection practices, grounded in supplier assessment and governance, significantly improved procurement function performance in Kenyan public universities. Strengthening supplier assessment protocols and governance mechanisms emerged as imperative for optimizing outcomes in procurement functions.

Keywords: *Global Procurement, Strategic Supplier Selection, Organizational Reputation, Supplier Assessment, Governance, Procurement Function Performance*

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INTRODUCTION

The evolving global procurement environment demands more careful supplier selection to enhance organizational reputation (Salam & Ali, 2020). Within Kenyan public universities, the effectiveness of procurement functions relies heavily on the processes of supplier selection (Ojijo, 2023). The discerning practices, including supplier assessment and governance, impact not only immediate goods and services acquisition but also significantly affect the overall efficiency and sustainability of procurement operations in these academic institutions (Leal Filho et al., 2019).

Supplier assessment, serving as a critical phase in the procurement cycle, acts as a means for a comprehensive evaluation and qualification of potential suppliers (Taherdoost & Brard, 2019). In Kenya, supplier assessment in public universities is guided by standards that encompass due diligence, technical evaluation, and continuous monitoring of prequalified suppliers to align with the stringent criteria of the Kenyan public sector (Kitheka et al., 2017). Concurrently, supplier governance functions as the guiding framework involving transparent practices, effective communication, and robust conflict resolution mechanisms (Brun et al., 2020). These governance principles within supplier selection aim to cultivate an environment characterized by fairness, openness, and ethical conduct, ultimately contributing to the integrity and reliability of procurement processes (OECD, 2009).

Public Universities in Kenya are not fully leveraging on supplier performance enables such as structured supplier selection to enhance their performance. Therefore, to contribute empirical evidence and valuable insights aimed at improving supplier selection practices and subsequently enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of procurement functions within Kenyan public universities, this study conducted a comprehensive exploration of supplier selection across the dimensions of supplier assessment and supplier governance. The study's objectives centered on unraveling the complex relationship between supplier assessment, supplier governance, and procurement function performance in public universities in Kenya. Thus, the study aimed to achieve two primary objectives:

1. Establishing the impact of supplier assessment on the performance of procurement functions within Kenyan public universities.
2. Analyzing the influence of supplier governance on the performance of procurement functions within Kenyan public universities.

Problem Statement

Public universities spend over a third of their total revenues on their stocks as well as a range of services they get from their suppliers (Mutunga, 2020). However, suppliers in Public Universities are not meeting the procuring entities expectations. The crux of the issue lies in the consistent underperformance of suppliers engaged by public universities in Kenya. This problem has far-reaching consequences for these institutions and the nation (Ochieng, 2020). Despite the paramount importance of higher education in driving socio-economic development, public universities grapple with substantial challenges in their procurement functions.

As highlighted by Mutunga (2020), these challenges encompass a spectrum of issues, including missed deadlines, extended lead times, substandard product deliveries, contract breaches, deviations from specifications, lack of transparency, and accountability deficits. Such

deficiencies result in costly litigations and significant financial losses, ultimately compromising the institutions' ability to fulfill their crucial educational mandates.

Audits conducted on the procurement performance of public universities in Kenya have revealed glaring shortcomings in supplier performance, as identified by the Auditor General's reports for multiple years (2018/19, 2019/20, and 2020/2021). Despite the wealth of research on the influence of supplier performance on organizational outcomes, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the specific impact of supplier engagement on the procurement functions of public universities in Kenya. Existing studies, including those by Baily (2013), Tuikong and Kurgat (2012), Musau and Namusonge (2017), Jabbour (2009), and Nyamoko (2013), have explored various aspects of supplier engagement.

None have focused on the unique challenges and dynamics within the context of public universities. This research void hampers efforts to comprehensively understand and rectify the underlying issues contributing to supplier underperformance within these institutions. Consequently, addressing this problem is imperative for enhancing the efficiency of procurement processes within public universities and safeguarding the crucial role of higher education in driving socio-economic development in Kenya. A holistic approach is needed to bridge this critical gap in the literature and elucidate the intricate relationship between supplier engagement and the performance of procurement functions in public universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)

The Resource Dependence Theory, originally proposed by Pfeffer and Salancik in the 1970s (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2015), highlights organizations' interdependence on their external environment to acquire necessary resources for survival and prosperity. It posits that organizations strategically manage relationships with external entities, such as suppliers, to gain access to crucial resources and reduce dependency vulnerabilities. For this study, the theory was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, it recognizes the reliance of organizations, particularly universities, on external sources like suppliers to acquire essential resources (Tehseen & Sajilan, 2016), emphasizing the importance of managing supplier relationships to secure vital resources.

Secondly, given the constrained resource allocation in public universities (Oringo & Muia, 2016), the theory's focus on managing external dependencies aligns well with the imperative to effectively utilize available resources. Additionally, the theory's emphasis on navigating external relationships for survival and success correlates with this study's aim to assess how supplier selection practices impact procurement function performance within these academic institutions. In essence, this theoretical framework provides a valuable perspective for comprehending the dynamics and implications of supplier selection practices on organizational performance within the context of resource dependency and management.

Procurement Function Performance

The procurement function's performance is a pivotal element crucial to organizational success, influencing cost-efficiency, quality, risk management, and overall competitiveness. A wealth of literature underscores the multifaceted nature of procurement, emphasizing the significance of assessing and optimizing its performance to attain strategic objectives (Alhammadi et al., 2023; Philippart, 2016). Studies emphasize that effective procurement practices should minimize costs while ensuring high-quality outcomes (Wanja & Achuora, 2020). Furthermore,

research indicates that evaluating suppliers' consistency, reliability, and adherence to quality standards is fundamental in measuring performance (Dey et al., 2015).

Procurement's multifaceted nature includes inherent risks such as market volatility. Considering these inherent risks, literature stresses the importance of risk assessment, mitigation strategies, and contingency planning within procurement operations to achieve optimal procurement function performance (Rajagopal et al., 2017). Hence, effective procurement function performance relies on strategic alignment with organizational goals, efficient management of supplier relationships, risk mitigation strategies, innovation, compliance, and continuous improvement efforts (Bals & Turkulainen, 2017). These various dimensions and factors highlight the intricacy involved in evaluating and improving procurement function performance within organizational contexts.

Supplier Selection

Identifying decision-making criteria and implementing suitable supplier selection methods significantly impact a firm's procurement function performance. The criteria utilized in supplier selection wield substantial influence, guiding an organization's path towards success. Initially, supplier selection primarily revolved around price as the dominant criterion. However, focusing solely on price proved inadequate and inefficient for comprehensive supplier selection. Consequently, businesses transitioned to a multifaceted approach incorporating multiple criteria (Pal et al., 2013).

In recent times, the supplier selection criteria have expanded into a more intricate and multidimensional landscape (Colapinto et al., 2020). Contemporary factors like quality, delivery, cost, and service have merged with considerations of environmental, social, political, and customer satisfaction aspects. This realization originates from the understanding that a well-chosen set of suppliers plays a strategic role in consistently enhancing customer satisfaction, thereby prompting organizations to adopt innovative approaches for supplier evaluation and selection (Colapinto et al., 2020).

Organizational flexibility broadens the spectrum of overall requirements, leading to diversification in supplier selection. This diversification fosters a competitive environment among various suppliers (Pal et al., 2013). Consequently, it necessitates robust supplier governance to alleviate transparency concerns. Presently, the focus lies on explicit evaluation of pertinent criteria before decision-making. Various methodologies have emerged to tackle multi-criteria problems, often involving breaking down alternative evaluations across relevant criteria. As a result, supplier criteria are categorized not only by quantitative and qualitative attributes but also by considering the unique purchasing situation at hand. This understanding underscores the need for a tailored and contextualized approach to supplier selection, considering both quantitative and qualitative factors to optimize decision-making (Lima-Junior & Carpinetti, 2016).

Empirical Review and Hypothesis Formulation

Supplier Assessment and Procurement Function Performance

The first section of the empirical literature review focused on supplier assessment and procurement function performance. Mulongo et al. (2021) delved into the influence of supplier selection practices on procurement performance within Kenyan county governments. They emphasized the complexities faced in supplier selection amid global market expansion and investigated the impact on procurement performance in The Lake Region Economic Bloc

(LREB) county governments. Despite revealing a significant correlation between supplier selection adoption and procurement performance, the study found supplier evaluation to be an insignificant predictor. However, its exclusive focus on county governments raised questions about its applicability in other sectors.

Wachiuri (2019) examined the impact of supplier evaluation criteria on the performance of state corporations in Kenya. Although the study uncovered positive associations between supplier quality commitment, competence, financial viability, and the performance of state corporations, its generalizability to public universities remained uncertain. It highlighted the need to explore how practices like supplier assessment and governance could replicate this positive influence.

Lekakimon and Duncan (2023) scrutinized procurement practices within Nakuru County Government and assessed the impact of supplier evaluation on procurement performance. Contrary to expectations, they found an insignificant negative relationship between supplier evaluation and procurement performance. The study's limited focus on supplier evaluation prompted inquiries into whether a broader scope of supplier assessment, encompassing both prequalification and evaluation, in public universities could yield positive results.

Mutiso and Ochiri (2019) evaluated the impact of supplier evaluation criteria on procurement performance in Kenyan NGOs. Their findings displayed a robust relationship between various supplier evaluation criteria and enhanced procurement performance among NGOs. Yet, questions persisted about generalizing these findings to the higher education sector and the efficacy of supplier selection practices, specifically assessment and governance, in explaining procurement function performance.

Mbeche and Gichanga (2021) explored the impact of supplier selection on procurement performance among Tea Buyers in Mombasa. Their study revealed a positive correlation between supplier competency, control, collaboration, quality management, and procurement performance. However, the study did not establish causality, raising questions about the causative relationship between these variables and whether findings from tea buyers could be extrapolated to academia.

Although recent studies have made strides in exploring supplier selection's impact in various Kenyan organizational contexts, gaps in context, variables, and methodology concerning supplier assessment and procurement function performance persist. Hence, this study seeks to address these gaps.

H₀₁: Supplier assessment as a supplier selection practice has no significant influence on procurement function performance in public universities in Kenya

Supplier Governance and Procurement Function Performance

A multitude of studies have delved into various facets of supplier governance, examining transparency, communication, and conflict of interest. For instance, Beer et al. (2021) conducted a study exploring the impact of enhanced transparency in procurement governance on employee-driven purchasing decisions within an organizational context. Through a laboratory experiment, they observed how disclosing information about previous purchases influenced employees' supplier choices. Unexpectedly, the study found that peer observation led employees to opt for less expensive suppliers, contrary to initial expectations. While shedding light on transparency's impact, the controlled experimental setting might not fully mirror the dynamics within open higher education institutions.

Quiroga et al. (2020) investigated the influence of transparency on procurement auctions, focusing on scoring rule disclosure in auctions. Their study revealed that transparently communicating scoring rules improved outcomes for buyers but differed significantly from concealed scoring, impacting buyer surplus and seller profits. However, the Chilean context of their research might not align entirely with the setting of Kenyan public universities, warranting a localized study.

Cheptora et al. (2018) examined factors influencing procurement performance in manufacturing firms in Kenya, highlighting deficiencies in ICT infrastructure, managerial approach, and procurement policy adherence at Nzoia Sugar Company Ltd. Though pertinent to procurement governance, their study did not directly assess variables such as transparency, communication, and conflict resolution, creating a gap in understanding their impact on procurement function performance. Additionally, its focus on the manufacturing sector raises questions about its applicability in higher learning institutions.

Waichahi and Machoka (2019) aimed to determine factors affecting procurement function performance in Kenyan parastatals, emphasizing employee training, communication, finance, and supplier-buyer relationships. While revealing positive relationships between these factors and procurement performance, the study's context in parastatals might not entirely reflect the dynamics within higher education institutions.

These studies demonstrate scholars' interest in unraveling the effects of supplier governance proxies on procurement performance. However, the variability in variable usage, contextual differences, and applicability gaps raise concerns about replicating findings in Kenyan public universities, prompting further investigation.

H₀₂: Supplier governance has no significant influence on procurement function performance in public universities in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a post-positivist research philosophy to explore the nexus between supplier selection and procurement function performance in Kenyan public universities. Rooted in critical realism, this philosophy acknowledges an objective reality while acknowledging the limitations of comprehending it fully due to human subjectivity and contextual perspectives. Embracing this perspective enabled the researchers to navigate the intricate views present in the research context, recognizing the mutual construction of knowledge between the researcher and the subject. This approach was well-suited for studying phenomena in dynamic socio-economic environments such as Kenyan public universities, where diverse cultural, economic, and organizational factors intricately shape supply chain dynamics (Patel et al., 2020).

The research employed a causal-comparative design, also known as an ex-post facto design, which investigates causality by analyzing pre-existing differences between groups in a non-experimental setting (Azalea, 2022). The study focused on 93 individuals engaged in procurement functions in public universities in Kenya, including finance officers, central stores managers, and senior procurement officers. The selection of this target population was guided by their central involvement in procurement transactions within public universities. The study used multi-stage sampling to arrive at a sample of 93 procurement officers working in procurement functions within the universities, using a census approach.

Structured questionnaires were utilized to collect quantitative data from the sampled officers involved in procurement activities within Kenyan public universities. These questionnaires were designed to capture quantifiable aspects related to supplier selection practices (assessment and governance) and procurement function performance. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27). The collected quantitative data underwent regression analysis to identify predictive factors between supplier selection practices and the performance of the procurement function.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile

The demographics of the participants (Table 1) highlight a noticeable skew toward male representation (65%), suggesting a potential gender imbalance or selection bias in the sample. Regarding age distribution, a considerable majority (67.5%) were aged over 45 years, indicating a cohort with extensive experience, potentially leading to a higher retention rate in the field. A majority of participants held Bachelor's degrees (63.8%), followed by Postgraduate qualifications (25%), indicating a reasonably educated group meeting academic requirements for relevant roles. Additionally, a substantial portion (70%) possessed more than 5 years of work experience, indicating a seasoned pool likely contributing significant practical insights to the study. Collectively, these demographic observations suggest a group with substantial experience, education, and predominantly male representation, potentially impacting the outcomes and interpretations of the study.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Profile

Demography	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	52	65.0
	Female	28	35.0
Age	26-35 years	4	5.0
	36-45 years	22	27.5
	over 45 years	54	67.5
Education	Secondary	9	11.3
	Bachelors	51	63.8
	Postgraduate	20	25.0
Experience	1-3 years	5	6.3
	4-5 years	19	23.8
	over 5 years	56	70.0

Descriptive Results

Supplier Assessment

The evaluation of supplier practices in Kenyan public universities (Table 2) uncovered predominantly positive perceptions across various criteria. The respondents generally concurred (mean score = 4.10) that due diligence was routinely carried out before prequalifying suppliers, with 45% expressing agreement and 40% strongly agreeing. Similarly, comprehensive preliminary and technical evaluations for potential suppliers received high commendation (mean score = 4.30), with 92.6% collectively in agreement. Although there was positive feedback (mean score = 4.03) regarding the maintenance of an up-to-date list of registered suppliers, a significant portion (32.5%) expressed only agreement, while (46.3%)

strongly agreed, indicating potential areas for improvement. Additionally, there was notable approval (mean score = 4.21) for periodic supplier re-evaluation, with 86.3% in agreement. The highest rating (mean = 4.43) was related to conducting regular supplier appraisals, indicating robust positive perceptions (92.5%).

Table 2: Perception of Supplier Assessment

Supplier assessment statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev
	%	%	%	%	%		
1. We conduct due diligence before prequalification of suppliers	1.3	12.5	1.3	45.0	40.0	4.10	1.014
2. We conduct preliminary and technical evaluation of all prospective suppliers	0.0	3.8	3.8	51.3	41.3	4.30	.719
3. We maintain an up to date list of registered suppliers	3.8	15.0	2.5	32.5	46.3	4.03	1.201
4. We undertake periodic supplier re-evaluation to ascertain performance of suppliers	1.3	12.5	0.0	36.3	50.0	4.21	1.040
5. We conduct regular supplier appraisal of our registered suppliers	1.3	5.0	1.3	35.0	57.5	4.43	.854

These findings indicate a generally positive attitude towards due diligence, technical evaluations, supplier re-evaluations, and regular appraisals. However, maintaining an up-to-date list of registered suppliers may require additional attention to ensure continuous improvement. Overall, these positive perceptions suggest a solid foundation for robust supplier assessment practices. Ongoing efforts to improve and update supplier information could further enhance and optimize procurement processes within these academic institutions.

Supplier Governance

The evaluation of supplier governance practices within Kenyan public universities revealed moderate perceptions concerning supplier selection transparency (Table 3), with a mean score of 3.92. The majority (82.6%) acknowledged a transparent and inclusive supplier selection process, while a notable proportion (16.3%) remained neutral or disagreed, highlighting areas for potential improvement. Regarding complaints from suppliers about the selection process, the assessment showed a positive outlook (mean score = 4.30). It indicated minimal grievances from suppliers, with the overwhelming majority (85%) acknowledging few complaints, signifying a favorable perception of the selection process. Moreover, the existence of a structured conflict resolution mechanism for suppliers was generally perceived positively (mean score = 4.15). While most respondents (83.8%) agreed that such a system was in place, a minority (12.6%) expressed neutrality or disagreement, indicating potential room for enhancement in this mechanism.

Table 3: Perception of Supplier Governance

Supplier Governance Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
	%	%	%	%	%		
1. We undertake Supplier Selection in a transparent and inclusive manner.	5.0	11.3	1.3	51.3	31.3	3.92	1.111
2. We have received complaints from your suppliers in regard to supplier selection process	2.5	7.5	5.0	27.5	57.5	4.30	1.036
3. We have a structured conflict resolution mechanism for our suppliers	3.8	8.8	3.8	36.3	47.5	4.15	1.092

The implications of these findings underscore an overall positive perception of supplier governance practices within Kenyan public universities. Addressing neutral or disagreement responses by enhancing supplier selection transparency could prove beneficial. Despite the relatively low level of supplier complaints, ongoing efforts to minimize grievances may further strengthen supplier relationships. Moreover, refining and clarifying the structured conflict resolution mechanism could alleviate any uncertainties among respondents. These insights emphasize the significance of enhancing supplier governance mechanisms to ensure transparency, fairness, and effective conflict resolution within the procurement processes of Kenyan public universities.

Model Findings

The regression analysis model (Table 4) employed to predict procurement function performance based on supplier selection, as measured through supplier assessment and supplier governance, revealed a moderately good fit ($R = .578$). The model accounted for approximately 33.4% of the variance in procurement function performance. When considering both supplier assessment and supplier governance as predictors, the adjusted R Square indicated a variance of 31.7%, suggesting that these variables collectively contribute to understanding and predicting procurement function performance. The standard error of the estimate was found to be .47378, indicating the average distance between the actual and predicted procurement function performance scores.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.578 ^a	.334	.317	.47378

a. Predictors: (Constant), Supplier Governance, Supplier Assessment

These results suggest that supplier selection measured via supplier assessment and supplier governance, significantly contributes to explaining variations in procurement function performance within the studied context. However, there may be other unaccounted factors or variables beyond supplier selection that influence procurement function performance, warranting further investigation for a more comprehensive understanding.

The coefficient analysis results (Table 5) indicated that supplier selection through supplier assessment and supplier governance significantly contributed to predicting procurement function performance. Supplier assessment demonstrated a notable impact ($\beta = .517$, $p < .001$), showing that for each unit increase in supplier assessment, there was a corresponding 0.517 unit increase in the procurement function performance. Similarly, supplier governance also

exhibited a significant effect ($\beta = .310$, $p = .001$), indicating that for every unit increase in supplier governance, there was a corresponding 0.310 unit increase in the procurement function performance.

The constant term in the model was not statistically significant ($B = .414$, $p = .511$), suggesting that when supplier selection is zero, the procurement function performance is predicted to be at this constant value. These findings highlight the considerable influence of supplier selection on the procurement function performance within the examined context.

Table 5 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.414	.626		.661	.511
	Supplier Assessment	.644	.116	.517	5.538	.000
	Supplier Governance	.256	.077	.310	3.315	.001

Dependent Variable: Procurement Function Performance

Discussions

The coefficient analysis conducted in this study has unveiled essential insights into the nexus between supplier selection practices, measured through supplier assessment and supplier governance, and the performance of the procurement function within public universities. Both supplier assessment and supplier governance emerged as significant predictors of procurement function performance. These results suggest a concrete and positive influence of robust supplier selection practices on improving outcomes in procurement functions within higher education institutions, addressing notable gaps prevalent in the current body of literature.

By empirically establishing a link between supplier assessment and governance with procurement function performance in public universities, this study offers tangible real-world evidence supporting the pivotal role of supplier selection mechanisms in enhancing performance. This contributes to addressing gaps identified in a study by Beer et al. (2021), which relied on outcomes from controlled laboratory experiments that may not fully represent the complexities of open higher institution environments. Additionally, this study mitigates diverse results seen in various environments, as illustrated by Quiroga et al.'s (2020) study, by presenting direct evidence of how supplier governance practices impact procurement function performance, specifically within Kenya's public universities.

Previous research often overlooked the influence of transparency, communication, or conflict resolution variables under supplier governance on procurement function performance, particularly in higher education institutions (Cheptora et al., 2018). The current study fills this void by demonstrating the positive effects of supplier assessment and governance on procurement function performance in public universities. It emphasizes the significant impact of supplier selection on procurement function performance within the unique context of public universities in Kenya.

In summary, the findings of this study significantly contribute to bridging gaps in existing literature by empirically establishing the substantial influence of supplier selection through supplier assessment and governance on procurement function performance, specifically within public universities in Kenya. These insights underscore the critical importance of robust

supplier selection mechanisms in enhancing the outcomes of procurement functions in higher education institutions.

Conclusions

The findings from this study unequivocally affirm that robust supplier selection practices play a pivotal role in augmenting the overall performance of procurement functions within Kenyan public universities. This substantiates that the methodical assessment of suppliers directly and positively influences the efficiency, effectiveness, and triumph of procurement operations in these academic institutions. Furthermore, the results underscore the significance of adept governance mechanisms in supplier selection processes, amplifying the overall performance of procurement functions in Kenya's public universities. The implementation of robust governance practices within supplier selection and management significantly contributes to the efficiency, transparency, and triumph of procurement operations within these academic settings. These outcomes stress the imperative nature of instituting and reinforcing robust supplier assessment procedures alongside effective governance mechanisms to optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of procurement operations in higher education institutions. Endeavors aimed at refining supplier assessment and governance practices stand as pivotal measures toward achieving enhanced procurement function performance, ultimately benefiting the comprehensive operations and strategic objectives of public universities in Kenya.

Recommendations

The study findings recognize the reliance of organizations, particularly universities, on external sources like suppliers to acquire essential resources (Tehseen & Sajilan, 2016), emphasizing the importance of managing supplier relationships to secure vital resources.

To bolster the performance of procurement functions within Kenyan public universities, it is necessary to enhance supplier selection practices. This necessitates initiatives focusing on the implementation of comprehensive and systematic assessment criteria for suppliers. Such endeavors should entail conducting due diligence encompassing checks on supplier credibility, commitment to quality, financial stability, and competence. By instituting and adhering to rigorous assessment protocols, universities can ensure the selection of top-tier suppliers capable of fulfilling their diverse requirements. Consistent monitoring and periodic reassessment of supplier performance are equally crucial to uphold quality standards and enhance the efficiency of procurement processes.

Augmenting the effectiveness of procurement functions in Kenyan public universities can be substantially achieved by reinforcing governance mechanisms within supplier selection processes. Institutions should prioritize the formulation and execution of robust governance frameworks that advocate transparency, fairness, and accountability in supplier selection and management. This could encompass establishing clear and standardized procedures for supplier selection, nurturing open communication channels, and implementing effective conflict resolution mechanisms.

Limitations

Although the study yielded significant insights into the nexus between supplier selection, measured through supplier assessment and supplier governance on procurement function performance within Kenyan public universities, several limitations need acknowledgment. Firstly, the study's exclusive concentration on procurement functions within Kenyan public universities restricted the applicability of the findings to other sectors or institutions.

Consequently, the generalizability of these findings to different organizational settings might be limited. Secondly, the study primarily relied on quantitative measures for analyzing the impact of supplier assessment and governance on procurement function performance. The absence of qualitative interviews or open-ended inquiries might have limited the depth of understanding and nuanced perspectives that could have been attained through qualitative data, thereby potentially missing insightful viewpoints.

Future Research

Future research endeavors should extend beyond the confines of public universities to explore the impact of supplier assessment and governance on procurement performance in diverse sectors and across various educational institutions. Broadening the scope of investigation would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the relevance and effectiveness of these practices in different contextual settings.

Additionally, upcoming research initiatives should consider integrating qualitative methodologies, like interviews or focus groups, to delve deeper into the intricacies of supplier assessment and governance practices. Qualitative approaches hold the potential to unravel the underlying mechanisms and perceptions related to these practices, providing richer insights into stakeholders' experiences, perspectives, and the contextual nuances shaping supplier management. Such in-depth qualitative analyses would significantly enrich our understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of supplier assessment and governance.

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