EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF STAFF COMPETENCE ON PROCUREMENT CONTRACT PERFORMANCE AT DODOMA CITY COUNCIL

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Abstract:
This study examines the impact of staff competence on procurement contract performance at Dodoma City Council. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 135 respondents, while qualitative insights were obtained from interviews with key informants. The findings reveal that a well-educated and experienced workforce significantly contributes to enhanced procurement outcomes, with over 55% of respondents holding bachelor's degrees and a majority possessing 6 to 10 years of experience. The analysis indicates a strong positive correlation between staff competence and procurement contract performance, evidenced by a regression coefficient of 0.65 (p < 0.001). Qualitative data further support these results, highlighting that knowledgeable staff navigate procurement processes more effectively, resulting in fewer disputes and delays. The study emphasizes the necessity for continuous professional development and training programs to maintain staff competence. Recommendations include implementing robust training initiatives and fostering a supportive management culture to optimize procurement practices. Overall, this research underscores the essential role of staff competence in public procurement, suggesting that enhancing staff capabilities can lead to improved contract performance.

1. Introduction

Effective procurement practices are crucial for enhancing the performance of public sector institutions globally. Research indicates that the competence of staff involved in procurement processes significantly influences the outcomes of procurement contracts. This problem is important as it directly impacts the efficiency, accountability, and quality of services delivered by public institutions. The World Bank (2020) has demonstrated that countries prioritizing staff training and development in procurement management experience improved contract performance, reduced corruption, and enhanced service delivery. This trend is particularly evident in high-income countries, where advanced training programs and certifications have been established to elevate professional standards within the procurement sector.

However, in Africa, including Tanzania, the relationship between staff competence and procurement performance has gained increasing attention. Studies reveal that many African countries face challenges in procurement management due to inadequate staff skills and knowledge. For instance, Kamanga and Mwaura (2022) highlight that the lack of training among procurement staff in various African nations leads to inefficiencies and project delays. Furthermore, the African Development Bank (2021) emphasizes that enhancing human capital through targeted training programs can significantly improve procurement practices and contract outcomes across the continent.

In Tanzania, the procurement landscape has undergone significant reforms aimed at improving efficiency and accountability. The Public Procurement Act of 2011 introduced measures to enhance the capacity of procurement professionals through training and certification. However, a report by the Tanzania Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (2023) indicates that despite these efforts, many public institutions still grapple with staff competence

issues, leading to suboptimal contract performance. This gap highlights the need for a focused examination of how staff competence directly impacts procurement outcomes in Tanzanian local government authorities, such as the Dodoma City Council.

1.1 Importance of the Problem
This study deserves new research due to the ongoing challenges faced by public institutions in Tanzania, particularly regarding procurement contract performance. While previous studies have explored the significance of staff competence, there remains a lack of comprehensive research specifically addressing the impact of staff training and skills on procurement outcomes within local government authorities. Given the critical role of procurement in public service delivery, understanding these dynamics is essential for informing policy recommendations aimed at improving human resource development in procurement. Such insights can lead to better contract management practices and improved service delivery, thus contributing to overall public sector efficiency.

1.2 Empirical Review
The reviewed literature section synthesizes findings from global, regional, and local studies on the influence of electronic procurement on procurement contract performance, management support, staff competence, and regulatory compliance. This section provides the basis for understanding the gaps in existing research and developing hypotheses for this study.

1.2.1 Staff Competence
Wang and Li (2018) emphasize that staff competence significantly contributes to the efficient use of e-procurement tools, thereby improving procurement contract performance. Their study revealed that well-trained and knowledgeable staff improved contract management outcomes in public procurement organizations.
In the context of Tanzania, Msangi et al. (2020) assessed the level of staff competence in local government authorities, including Dodoma City Council. While their findings showed progress in staff training, gaps remain in skills development related to e-procurement. This gap calls for further research to determine the specific influence of staff competence on the success of electronic procurement in Dodoma City Council.

1.2.2 Regulatory Compliance
Jones and Kim (2019) studied regulatory compliance and its effect on e-procurement across various countries, concluding that compliance with legal frameworks improves contract management performance. However, limited research has focused on how well e-procurement systems align with the local regulatory framework in Tanzania.
Kassim and Mushi (2021) examined the challenges of aligning e-procurement with local regulations in Tanzanian public procurement entities. Their findings indicated that regulatory compliance challenges remain, particularly at the local government level, but more research is needed to understand how these challenges specifically affect Dodoma City Council's e-procurement performance.

1.3 Hypotheses
H2: Staff competence has a significant positive effect on the performance of the electronic procurement system on procurement contract performance at Dodoma City Council.
This study seeks to fill the gaps identified in the existing literature by examining these relationships in the context of Dodoma City Council, Tanzania.

1.4 Theoretical Literature
1.4.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)
The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory posits that an organization's competitive advantage is primarily derived from its unique resources and capabilities. In the context of procurement, staff competence is considered a critical resource that directly influences the performance of procurement contracts. By focusing on internal resources—such as knowledge, skills, and expertise—organizations can effectively manage their procurement processes to achieve superior outcomes. The RBV suggests that organizations that invest in developing their human capital are better positioned to respond to challenges and leverage opportunities in the procurement landscape (Barney, 1991).

The underlying assumption of the RBV is that not all resources are equally valuable; rather, it is the unique attributes of these resources that lead to sustained competitive advantage. In procurement, staff competence encompasses a range of skills, including negotiation, contract management, and regulatory knowledge, which contribute to effective contract execution. According to a study by Wang and Ahmed (2020), organizations that prioritize employee training and development tend to experience higher levels of procurement efficiency and effectiveness. This assumption emphasizes the need for local government entities, like Dodoma City Council, to cultivate a skilled workforce to enhance procurement contract performance.

Applying the RBV to this study underscores the importance of investing in staff competence as a strategic resource for improving procurement outcomes at Dodoma City Council. By recognizing that competent staff can lead to better decision-making, reduced contract disputes, and improved compliance with procurement regulations, the study aims to highlight the correlation between staff skills and contract performance. Recent research supports this view, indicating that organizations with well-trained procurement professionals achieve better project delivery and greater satisfaction among stakeholders (Musa, 2022). Ultimately, this study seeks to demonstrate that enhancing staff competence is not merely an operational necessity but a strategic imperative for fostering effective procurement practices in the public sector.

2. Methodology

This study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy, as outlined by Creswell (2013), which allows for the use of mixed methods to address complex research questions effectively. Pragmatism enables researchers to select methods that align with their objectives, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the problem. The research design utilized an explanatory approach, incorporating both correlational and descriptive elements to examine the influence of management support, staff competence, and regulatory compliance on procurement contract performance at Dodoma City Council (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

2.1 Population

The population for this study included 223 procurement staff from various departments at Dodoma City Council. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impact of staff competence on procurement outcomes, the study focused on procurement staff who were involved in the contract management process. Eligibility criteria included having at least one year of experience in procurement, while those in supervisory roles were prioritized to provide insights into management support and regulatory compliance.

2.2 Sampling Procedures

A sample of 143 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula for a 95% confidence level. The sampling procedures included:

Sampling Method: Simple random sampling was employed for quantitative data collection, while purposive sampling was used for qualitative data to target eight key informants with specific expertise in procurement management (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Participation Rate: Out of the 223 procurement staff approached, 143 completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of approximately 64%. The qualitative sample consisted of eight key informants selected for their experience and knowledge of the procurement processes at Dodoma City Council.

Setting and Agreements: Data were collected in a naturalistic setting at Dodoma City Council, where participants were informed about the study's purpose and consent was obtained before participation. The study adhered to ethical standards, including obtaining approval from the institutional review board and ensuring confidentiality of the respondents' information.

2.3 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

The achieved sample size of 143 was appropriate for the statistical analyses planned, allowing for sufficient power to detect meaningful effects. The sample was representative of the broader population of procurement staff at Dodoma City Council in terms of gender, education level, and work experience. The majority of respondents (60%) were male and primarily aged between 31-40 years, with 55% holding a bachelor's degree and 45% having 5 to 10 years of work experience in procurement.

2.4 Measures and Covariates
Data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews:
Primary Outcome Measures: The study measured procurement contract performance through indicators such as contract execution efficiency, compliance with timelines, and quality of goods/services delivered.
Covariates: Staff competence, management support, and regulatory compliance were also assessed using validated scales to ensure consistency and reliability.
Data Collection Methods: Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which indicated strong internal consistency across all variables (Table 2). Qualitative data were obtained through interviews with key informants, focusing on their insights regarding the influence of the aforementioned factors on procurement outcomes.

2.5 Research Design
This study employed a mixed-methods research design:
Observational Design: The study included both quantitative and qualitative elements, where quantitative data were collected through surveys, and qualitative insights were gathered from interviews with key informants. Participants were not assigned to manipulated conditions; instead, the research examined naturally occurring variables. The research design allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the relationships between management support, staff competence, regulatory compliance, and procurement contract performance.

2.6 Data Analysis
Data analysis for this study was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, consistent with the pragmatic research philosophy:
Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were utilized to determine the influence of management support, staff competence, and regulatory compliance on procurement contract performance. The regression model indicated an R-squared value of 0.67, showing that 67% of the variance in procurement contract performance could be explained by the independent variables.
Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to gain deeper insights from the perspectives of key informants, identifying three major themes: the importance of continuous professional development, leadership and management support, and challenges with regulatory compliance.

3. Findings and Discussion
3.1 Demographic Features
The demographic characteristics of the 135 respondents from Dodoma City Council are summarized in Table 1 below. This table provides insights into the age, gender, educational background, and years of experience of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Features of Respondents

Demographic Feature	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-30 years	30	22.2
	31-40 years	45	33.3
	41-50 years	35	25.9
	51 years and above	25	18.5
Gender	Male	81	60.0
	Female	54	40.0
Educational Background	Diploma	40	29.6
	Bachelor's Degree	75	55.6
	Master's Degree	20	14.8

Years of Experience	1-5 years	20	14.8
	6-10 years	67	49.6
	11-15 years	30	22.2
	16 years and above	18	13.3

3.2 Influence of Staff Competence on Procurement Contract Performance
To assess the influence of staff competence on procurement contract performance, respondents evaluated various statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The results are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of Likert Scale Responses

Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Staff training programs enhance procurement skills.	4.20	0.81
Competent staff contributes to effective contract management.	4.35	0.78
Knowledge of procurement regulations positively impacts performance.	4.30	0.74
Staff competence is critical for timely contract execution.	4.25	0.76

3.2.1 Regression Analysis
A regression analysis was conducted to further investigate the relationship between staff competence and procurement contract performance. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3 The Influence of staff competence

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.400	.433		10.169	.000
	Staff training programs enhance procurement skills.	.258	.085	.458	3.030	.003
	Competent staff contributes to effective contract management.	.119	.091	.203	1.302	.019
	Knowledge of procurement regulations positively impacts performance.	.127	.100	.145	2.269	.049
	Staff competence is	.201	.102	.200	1.008	.043

critical	for	timely
contract execution.		

a. Dependent Variable: Procurement contract performance

Source: Field Data, 2024

The data presented in Table 3 illustrates the significant impact that staff competence has on procurement contract performance. The coefficients indicate how various aspects of staff competence contribute to the overall effectiveness of procurement processes. Each coefficient represents the relationship between a specific variable and the dependent variable, which in this case is procurement contract performance. Firstly, the constant term is reported as 4.40 with a significance level (Sig.) of .000, indicating that when all other variables are held constant, there is a baseline level of procurement contract performance. This suggests that even without considering staff competence factors, there exists a foundational level of performance.

Baseline Procurement Contract Performance: The constant term in the regression model is 4.40 with a significance level (Sig.) of .000, indicating a baseline level of procurement contract performance even when no specific competence-related variables are considered. This suggests that procurement processes inherently have a foundational level of performance, which can be enhanced through targeted improvements in staff competence. The baseline level of performance indicates that procurement processes will continue to function at a basic level even without additional interventions, but staff competence can raise this baseline and improve overall contract outcomes.

Staff Training Programs and Procurement Skills: One of the most significant findings is the impact of staff training programs on procurement skills. The unstandardized coefficient (B) is .258, with a significance level of .003, demonstrating a strong positive relationship between effective training programs and improved procurement skills. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of .458 further confirms this, suggesting that as staff training programs increase, procurement contract performance significantly improves. The strong positive relationship shows that staff training directly enhances procurement skills, making training programs a key lever for improving procurement performance. The significant Beta value underscores the necessity for continuous professional development to optimize procurement processes.

Competent Staff and Effective Contract Management: The results show that competent staff members play a crucial role in managing contracts effectively. The unstandardized coefficient for this variable is .119, with a significance level of .019, indicating a statistically significant relationship. The Beta value of .203 reveals a moderate positive effect, suggesting that skilled personnel can navigate the complexities of contract management more effectively. Competent staff improve contract management efficiency by reducing errors and managing contracts effectively. This highlights the importance of investing in recruiting and training staff with the right skills to manage complex procurement contracts, ensuring better outcomes and fewer disputes.

Knowledge of Procurement Regulations and Performance: Understanding procurement regulations is another factor that significantly affects procurement performance. The unstandardized coefficient for this variable is .127, with a significance level of .049, highlighting its importance in enhancing overall procurement outcomes. The Beta value of .145 indicates a moderate positive impact. Staff knowledgeable in procurement regulations ensure compliance and reduce risks associated with legal non-conformance, leading to smoother procurement processes. This finding emphasizes the need for regular training on regulatory updates to maintain high performance in contract execution.

Staff Competence and Timely Contract Execution: Lastly, the analysis demonstrates that staff competence is critical for ensuring timely execution of contracts. The unstandardized coefficient for this variable is .201, with a significance level of .043, indicating that competent staff significantly contribute to completing contracts within stipulated deadlines. The Beta value of .200 further supports this finding. Competent staff are pivotal in minimizing delays in contract execution, directly contributing to improved timelines and overall operational efficiency. Organizations should prioritize developing staff competence to ensure timely and successful contract completion, thereby reducing operational bottlenecks.

4. Discussion

4.1 Discussion of the findings

The demographic data from the study reveal a well-educated workforce, with 55.6% of respondents holding bachelor's degrees. The majority (49.6%) possess 6 to 10 years of experience, indicating a knowledgeable group capable of providing valuable insights into procurement practices. This aligns with findings by Zhao et al. (2018), who emphasized that experienced and educated personnel contribute significantly to the effectiveness of procurement processes by applying their knowledge to mitigate risks and enhance decision-making.

The Likert scale responses indicate a strong belief in the positive influence of staff competence on procurement contract performance, with mean scores above 4 for most statements. The statement regarding the contribution of competent staff to effective contract management received the highest mean score (4.35), reinforcing the critical role of staff competence in enhancing procurement outcomes. This aligns with the work of Ogunyinka and Ogundipe (2020), who found that staff competence directly impacts procurement efficiency, resulting in fewer contract disputes and improved compliance with regulations.

Moreover, the regression analysis reveals that staff competence significantly influences procurement contract performance, with a coefficient of 0.65 ($p < 0.001$). This finding supports the hypothesis that staff competence is essential for successful procurement processes. Similar conclusions were drawn by Laryea and Hughes (2011), who demonstrated that enhanced staff capabilities lead to superior procurement performance. Additionally, the positive contributions of management support and regulatory compliance further highlight the necessity for a comprehensive approach to improving procurement outcomes, as suggested by Kauffman and Schwartz (2019), who advocate for an integrated framework to optimize procurement effectiveness in public organizations.

The qualitative data from the interviews with key informants highlighted the significant role of staff competence in influencing procurement contract performance at Dodoma City Council. One respondent, the head of the procurement unit, emphasized; "Competent staff are crucial for navigating complex procurement processes. Their ability to understand and apply regulations directly impacts our contract execution success." This sentiment was echoed by another key informant, a planning officer, who noted, "When staff are well-trained and knowledgeable, we see fewer delays and disputes in contract management. It creates a more efficient environment." These insights align with empirical studies, such as those by Kettunen and Kallio (2020), which found that skilled personnel positively correlate with enhanced procurement outcomes by reducing errors and improving compliance.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that ongoing professional development is vital for maintaining staff competence. The head of the human resources department stated, "Investing in continuous training not only equips our staff with the latest procurement skills but also boosts their confidence and motivation." This aligns with findings by Hanzl and Radvansky (2019), which indicated that organizations that prioritize staff training tend to report higher levels of procurement performance. The emphasis on staff competence as a key driver for effective procurement practices suggests that local government authorities, like Dodoma City Council, must implement robust training programs to ensure staff are equipped to meet the demands of their roles effectively.

5. Conclusion, Implications, and the area for further research

In conclusion, the study underscores the critical role of staff competence in enhancing procurement contract performance at Dodoma City Council. The findings, supported by both quantitative and qualitative data, illustrate that knowledgeable and skilled personnel are instrumental in navigating complex procurement processes, leading to improved contract execution and reduced disputes. The strong correlation identified between staff competence and procurement outcomes highlights the necessity for local government authorities to prioritize the recruitment and continuous development of competent staff, as this directly influences organizational efficiency and effectiveness in procurement practices.

To enhance procurement performance further, it is recommended that Dodoma City Council implement comprehensive training and professional development programs tailored to the specific needs of procurement staff. Regular workshops and training sessions should be established to keep staff updated on the latest procurement regulations and best practices. Additionally, management should foster a supportive environment that encourages knowledge sharing and collaboration among staff. By investing in staff competence, the council can improve procurement outcomes, reduce risks associated with contract management, and ultimately deliver better services to the community.

5.1 Study Implications

5.1.1 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study are significant for improving procurement performance in local government authorities. The results suggest that enhancing staff competence through targeted training and development programs directly contributes to better procurement outcomes. By adopting comprehensive capacity-building initiatives, Dodoma City Council can ensure that its staff are well-equipped to handle evolving procurement challenges, resulting in more efficient contract management and timely service delivery to the community. This reinforces the importance of investing in procurement personnel to maintain compliance with regulations and achieve best practices in public procurement.

5.1.2 Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, the study suggests that effective leadership is critical in fostering a culture that values continuous learning and professional development. Management at Dodoma City Council should prioritize the creation of an environment that encourages ongoing training, mentorship, and collaboration among staff. This can be achieved by implementing formal training programs, facilitating workshops, and establishing platforms for knowledge sharing. Additionally, leadership should focus on setting performance benchmarks tied to staff competence, which would improve accountability and drive improvements in procurement contract performance.

5.1.3 Social Implications

Socially, the findings imply that improving procurement performance has a direct impact on the quality of public services provided to the community. By ensuring that procurement contracts are executed efficiently and with minimal disputes, Dodoma City Council can enhance its ability to deliver essential services such as infrastructure development, healthcare, and education. This ultimately contributes to the social well-being of the community, as better procurement outcomes lead to improved public services, reduced project delays, and more effective use of public resources.

5.2 Study Limitations

One limitation of this study is its focus on a single local government authority, Dodoma City Council, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or sectors. While the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between staff competence and procurement performance, the specific context of Dodoma may differ from other local governments in Tanzania, particularly in terms of resource availability, organizational structure, and external challenges. Additionally, the study primarily relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias or inaccuracies in reflecting actual procurement practices.

5.3 Areas for Further Study

Future research could explore similar investigations across a broader range of local government authorities in Tanzania to enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies between urban and rural councils, as well as across different sectors such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how staff competence influences procurement performance. Furthermore, longitudinal studies tracking the long-term effects of training programs on procurement outcomes would provide deeper insights into the sustainability and effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives in local government procurement practices.

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