

THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PRACTICES ON SERVICE DELIVERY: INSIGHTS FROM ZIMBABWE'S RURAL DISTRICT COUNCILS

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ABSTRACT

Procurement in an organization supports operations by assuring the prompt acquisition of high quality, low cost, inputs and raw materials. The continuous expansion of procurement requirements and operations necessitates procurement personnel with the necessary skills and understanding of current technology for procurement management. The prime objective of this study was to assess the relationship between public procurement practices and service delivery in the rural district councils of Zimbabwe. In the quest to attain this objective, a structured Google form questionnaire survey of procurement professionals was employed and provided 150 usable responses from Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils. Collected data were analyzed using the structural equation modelling in AMOS version 26. The major findings of the research were that some RDC's procurement activities were not being executed by trained procurement professionals (human resources, finance and administration departments) as required by the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Procurement Act chapter 22:23. It was also found that the fundamental procurement skills set are supplier relationship management, negotiation, risk management and data analytics, and that procurement expertise enables the RDCs to realize value for money in their projects. Consequently, the study recommends that competent procurement staff be utilized in RDCs as a means to improve service delivery quality. It was also recommended that the RDCs should invest extensively in procurement personnel capacity building in terms of their knowledge and skills capability through (off the job and in-service training for procurement staff officers) as a key aspect in enhancing quality service delivery in the rural district councils of Zimbabwe.

Key Words: Procurement, expertise, service delivery, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

Public procurement performs a fundamental role in service delivery as well as the effectiveness of government departments in the global context. It fulfills the fiduciary duty of ensuring the efficient delivery of goods and services to the general public (Uyarra & Flanagan, 2010).The procurement activities are carried out by personnel who are responsible for a variety of duties, including selecting the tender structure, tender specifications and award criteria; writing the contract that will be attached to the tender; managing purchasing risks and overseeing the contract execution. It is worth noting that due to the intricate and varied nature of procurement, personnel who act as buyers play a crucial role in achieving the goals and functioning of the organization (Bosio, Djankov, Glaeser & Shleifer, 2022). Given that procurement is a fundamental component of providing public services and is crucial to a nation's economy and public spending, public procurement can be seen as a crucial indicator of a government's effectiveness. As a result, it is crucial that everyone involved in public procurement, regardless of their position, is familiar with the rules that govern it. The ability to manage and carry out the

procurement job effectively may become apparent if the processes for doing so are understood. Mastering a wide range of knowledge is necessary for procurement effectiveness. This procurement knowledge is both explicit and implicit and it comes from experiences, education, and training.

Qualifications are crucial for value-based management, which emphasizes the need for people to assess and improve processes while boosting team performance (David, 2022). In addition, multiskilling of workers is essential as it provides them with a variety of talents and should significantly be expanded (Sanboskani, Asmar, Chammout & Bou Maachar (2022). Therefore, all procurement personnel require comprehensive and ongoing education and training in order to attain value for money in their procurement activities. Insufficient understanding in procurement-related matters may have major repercussions, including violations of codes of behavior which is detrimental to the objectives and reputation of the organisation (Ganfure & Kedir, 2020).

The government must ensure that resources are used in the most effective, transparent, and ethical way possible in the procurement process in order to maintain the sustainable growth of the economy and living standards of its citizens (Lessambo, 2022). In order for government organizations to achieve their strategic service delivery goals, they need a staff with sufficient capacity and capability in public procurement. For the successful delivery of strategic procurement efforts, professionals with a diverse set of skills and competences, such as negotiating, project management and risk management are required. Due to decentralization and the expanding range of duties carried out by governments in most countries, procurement, once seen as a clerical and reactive task, has since established itself as one of the core organizational functions, and its management is intriguingly essential for the smooth operation of any organization, including public institutions both at the local and central levels (OECD, 2017).

In Zimbabwe, the State Procurement Board (SPB) in the Ministry of Finance was responsible for awarding contracts for more than 10,000 Zimbabwean dollars. However, later on, development partners and other stakeholders realized that public procurement was a barrier to efficient service delivery and development because the State Procurement Board had been unable to keep up with the rapidly expanding range of governmental activities, particularly those that were conducted in a decentralized manner and faced a myriad of difficulties. The challenges led to public procurement mitigatory reforms that were designed as a result of a number of recommendations that were made. This ushered in the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) Act Chapter 22:23 in 2018, along with the monitoring of the public procurement by the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) (Dhlakuseni, Kanyepe, Tukuta, M., & Sifile 2022). This regulatory framework provided the parameters within which all operations in the public procurement in Zimbabwe were to be carried out so as to advance governmental goals wherever viable and legal (Panganayi, Msipa & Mazhazhate, 2021). Its principal goal was the promotion of a professional approach to public procurement through an increase in public organizations' competence and knowledge in procurement.

Various studies have focused on procurement management in general resulting in numerous publications on the best ways to achieve it by industry and academia such as Dzuke (2015), Dzuke and Naude (2016), Dhlakuseni, Kanyepe, Tukuta & Sifile (2022) and Mazikana, (2019). However, little attention was given to rural local authorities. This study aim to close this gap through contributing to the rural local authorities body of knowledge on the procurement objectives, procurement expertise and procurement management. The rural local authorities known as Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe are made up of loosely connected activities and a number of services from numerous departments in the country side. These features distingue it from other procurement situations and its success is primarily determined by the level of expertise employed in its procurement, strategy and implementation. In order to be effective and efficient, procurement officers require appropriate knowledge and training so that they can be familiar with the procurement regulatory framework.

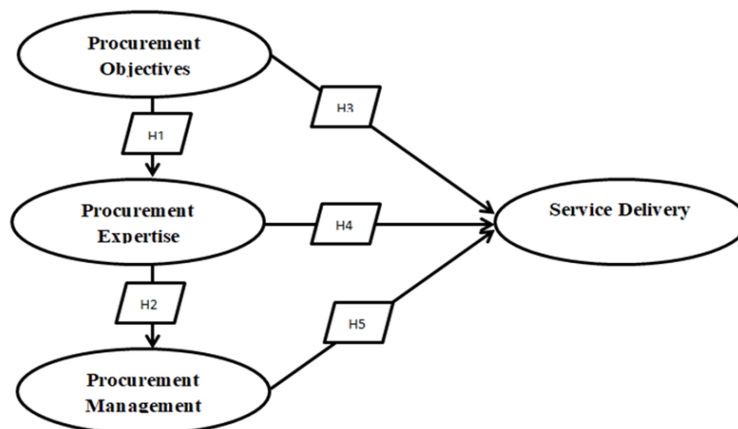
LITERATURE REVIEW

Making a conceptual framework for the study that describes how variables interact is the first step in the literature review process. Below is the conceptual framework of this study.

Conceptual framework

The study sought to identify the relationship between procurement and service delivery in quasi government organisations using rural district councils. The independent factors are pre-contract, Contract Award and post contract award competencies while the dependent variable is service delivery.

Figure: 1 Conceptual Framework



Source: Own

The study hypotheses

To explain relationships between the variables in figure 1, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1: Procurement objectives have a positive influence on procurement expertise.
- H2: Procurement expertise has a positive influence on procurement management.
- H3: Procurement objectives have a positive influence on service delivery.
- H4: Procurement expertise has a positive influence on service delivery.
- H5: Procurement management has a positive influence on service deliver.

SERVICE DELIVERY

The concept of service delivery refers to the provision of goods and services to customers in a way that lives up to their expectations (Ramesh, 2022). Material infrastructure such as roads, power grids, healthcare, education, water systems and social protection are development priority in terms of service delivery (Kim, 2013). As highlighted by Helmsing (2015), service delivery is the distribution of goods and services to intended beneficiaries through a responsible and judicious organization or its designated agents. It can be noted that there is a difference between a service and its delivery in that a service is a system or arrangement that meets the demands of the public on a regular basis while delivery is periodic performance of a service. As a result, service delivery is a method or plan for routinely meeting the needs of the general public (Oboth, 2001). Never before has the members of the public been more conscious of public procurement than in the contemporary world owing to the proliferation of technology and the need to hold the public institutions accountable. The value of procurement strategy has increased as a result of the realization of the savings that may be realized from well-run procurement operations which improves service delivery.

Characteristics of quality service

The procurement department of any rural local authority organisation attempts to achieve and deliver quality service to the clients or citizens upon whom they derive their existence. Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml (1996) identified five indicators of quality service which this study discusses in brief.

Reliability

This is the local authority's ability to provide its services to the customers consistently and accurately. The likelihood that a service may fall within a certain time frame over a foreseeable period of is represents its dependability. The average time between failures,

the average time to first failure, and the failure rate per unit time are some of the popular reliability metrics (Balunywa, 1998).

Accessibility

Accessibility is a concept whereby the services of a local authority are readily available and easy to get when required. It follows therefore that accessible services are perceived to be of higher quality than those which are inaccessible, which are considered to be of lower quality. The lack of accessibility results in limited services as the facilities are not put to their full potential which services depend on their use (Ssemayengo, 2005). Hence, the citizens consider quality service delivery in line with the easiness to which they obtain the required service.

Conformance

As its definition, quality pertains to conformance to specification. This measures how closely a service's operating principles and design adhere to accepted guiding principle. Therefore, providing good service means operating within a certain expectations and tolerance of the customers (Balunywa, 1998). The question of whether or not the service is able to fulfill its primary goal is determined by its ability to fit precisely into the predetermined standards of customers. It will be regarded as good service provided if the service operates as anticipated and intended by the recipients.

Safety

Every customer expects the service provided to be harmless before, during and after using it. The quality of a service is determined by degree of protection of the users. Therefore, the safer the service the quality it becomes. When it comes to services, those that are unsafe to use are viewed as substandard services, while those that are secure to use are viewed as standard services (Kakuru, 2004). The protection by a local authority to its citizens determines the quality of its service delivery.

Completeness

The fullness or comprehensiveness of the local authority's service delivery depicts its quality. It follows therefore that a service must have all the physiognomies that meet customers' expectations in order to be considered as a service (Kakuru, 2004). This position had earlier been shared by Balunywa, (1998) when the author posits that for a service to be considered high quality by the recipients, it must possess all of its fundamental functioning features as well as all of the quantifiable attributes.

Timeliness

The aptness of a service is critical in satisfying one of the five rights of procurement which is the right time. Therefore, the services that are provided on time are considered to be of high quality, whereas those that are not provided on time are considered to be of lower quality. Delivery delays cause services to lose their significance, as a result, services should be provided promptly to avoid upsetting customers (Ali, Mahdi, Mahdi, & Assaf,

(2021). The responsiveness of a local authority to the needs of its citizens determines the quality of its service delivery.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Procurement Expertise and Service Delivery

Procurement expertise is required at every stage of the procurement process from pre-contract to post contract award (Ganfure & Kedir, 2020). Rengshik (2020) established that there was a positive relationship between procurement expertise and service delivery. Prior to any purchase is made, a thorough needs assessment is done to comprehend the precise wants of the organisation and create space for innovations to successfully meet the need (Hyatt, 2017). When demands and suppliers are not properly identified, incorrect goods or services may be supplied which adds time, effort, and cost which impact on the standard of service delivery. (Atkinson, 2006). Lack of proper needs assessment by Zimbabwe's central government over Belarus fire fighting vehicles deal for local authorities led to strong criticism from residents associations preferred roads, water and sewer reticulation to fire tenders (Kawadza & Kachiko, 2022).

In terms of specifications development, the procurement personnel need to apply their knowledge and experience to avoid any potential ambiguities, mistakes, or omissions from occurring (van der Valk and Rozemeijer, 2009). It enables vendors analyse and comply with the customer's expectations in terms of function, performance, and quality (Timothy, Hawkins, & William, 2014). The absence of precise specification and communication to the supplier can lead to poor service delivery as evidenced by the supply of \$8 million worth snow graders to local authorities in Zimbabwe by Univer in 2012 instead of the motorized graders for road construction (Langa, 2015).

The organisations also conduct supply market analysis to understand the market dynamics in terms growth, decrease, or stagnation and to determine the competence and capacity available. Procurement expertise is applied in market studies to determine the current and future sourcing initiatives where savings can be made, and procurement method for goods or services which it is seeking to source. This is very critical in the ultimate service delivery. As posited by Sultana (2012), the success or failure of supply market analysis is determined by the knowledge of the procurement personnel. The lack of thorough market analysis is evident in the alleged procurement by Zimbabwe's local government ministry of fire fighting vehicles at inflated rates of US\$464,296 per truck from Belarus against fairer prices between US\$26,001 and US\$28,001 of foam fire-fighting truck in China, US\$194,000 per unit in Pozhsnab, and US\$26,001 for a 4 000-liter medium six-wheel fire truck in Malaysia (Kawadza & Kachiko, 2022).

Influence of procurement expertise on procurement management

Procurement management is a delicate task which requires knowledgeable individuals with the right mindset to successfully exercise the functions (Ganfure & Kedir, 2020). Procurement expertise influence cannot be underestimated. The training of the staff

ensures that the procurement managers can read and comprehend the established procurement guidelines in order to adhere to the standards as stated. The members' procurement expertise can be attained by certification and registration with higher professional organisations that monitor the members' skills (Ndung'u, Were, & Mwangangi, 2020) It was discovered that the procurement management was significantly impacted by procurement expertise. There shouldn't be as many instances of missing deadlines in the procurement department.

As posited by Ganfure & Kedir (2020) public procurement professionals must balance three conflicting demands: the need to satisfy commercial interests, whose primary concerns are value for money, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; regulatory interests, whose primary concerns are competition, transparency, equality, and compliance; and social interests, whose primary concerns are public interest, employment issues, social exclusion, economic development, and environmental policy. GAO, (2011) determined that two crucial success elements in effective evaluation for acquisitions were the continuity of government employees and their expertise and abilities.

Fletcher (2020) emphasized that anyone involved in procurement must have the requisite expertise to bargain with vendors. The management and key procurement personnel must be skilled negotiators if organizations are to flourish as they will be able to spot possibilities to cut expenditures and save money. Procurement expertise can be applied to negotiations to achieve shorter delivery duration, a better focused product or service, increased stakeholder/client satisfaction, fewer disputes, lower costs, the delivery of innovative benefits, and better risk allocation outcomes (Ndung'u, Were, & Mwangangi, 2020). Procurement expertise prevents slower negotiations by sticking to a schedule. In order to maintain service, the government frequently accepts less advantageous conditions as deadlines approach. This is because the reputational cost of a service disruption for government agencies is so significant.

Procurement objectives influence on service delivery

The procurement's responsibility is to ensure that the main objectives of contract management such as quality goods and services, prompt delivery of goods and services and cost effectiveness are achieved. As noted by Arcelus, Arocena, Cabasés, & Pascual (2015) these objectives are attained through contract performance monitoring and control. They are critical in contract fulfillment which culminates in quality service delivery. The cost effectiveness objective is to establish robust operations which can produce more goods with less money spent to ensure successful service delivery (Arcelus, Arocena, Cabasés, & Pascual, 2015).

The other objective of delivering value is key aspect in service delivery. Any operation carried by the organisation is aimed at adding value for the business, its workers, suppliers, and customers in the end (Somani, 2022). Ethical and responsible sourcing objective is where the highest level of ethics is guaranteed by procurement management. It prevents unlawful practices during the procurement process through performing

background checks on the suppliers and their sources of the supply. Management ensures that principles and standards are understood by public officials and are followed thereby facilitating the behavior needed in effective and efficient public service delivery (Kgobe & Chauke, 2021).

Procurement management and service delivery

Procurement management has an influence on service delivery (Somani, 2022). Rengshik (2020) established that procurement management positively influences service delivery. The effective management of contract includes accurate records maintenance and oversight of implementation of specifications and service level agreements. Effective contract administration lowers procurement costs while enhancing the quality of the products and services provided (Sayyed, Hatamleh, & Alaya, 2021). The supply of quality services is impacted by two main procurement management activities which are to follow up on deliveries and then expediting which can be done through reviewing the status of the transaction and routine communication with suppliers (Kgobe & Chauke, 2021).

The procurement manager can ensure quality service delivery by checking and confirming that the received products, machinery, or services that the supplier has provided meet the specifications (Tumusiime, 2022). Effective contract management settles disagreements during contract delivery in order to align the expectations, perceptions and collectively establish plans to success of procurement and ultimately service delivery.

Procurement management also covers supplier relationship management (SRM) which maximizes value through handling all interactions with external organizations that provide goods and services to an organization for mutual success to enhance quality service delivery (Oduro, Nyarku, & Gbadeyan, 2020). Procurement management through developing stronger and more cooperative relationships with important suppliers ensures service delivery by lowering total ownership costs, managing risks, responsiveness, reliability and flexibility enhance performance quality (Tumusiime, 2022). The local authorities should embrace procurement management to facilitate an effective service delivery.

The Study Gap

Due to the fact that the core of providing any service under the value for money principle, is a procurement role that is professionally carried out, it is therefore imperative that some gaps in the competence of procurement be periodically undertaken (Lindholm, Korhonen, Laine, & Suomala, 2019). Different tools can be used by procurement organizations, functions and teams to determine whether their employees have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet their current procurement policy, business, and organizational objectives. In other words, by comparing staff members' present skill levels with pre-established targets, the tools can be utilized to conduct an organizational competency gap study. After identifying skill gaps, procurement organizations, functions, or teams can decide how to best close those gaps. This may entail participating in training, hiring new

candidates with the necessary knowledge and abilities, or working closely with other specialists to help people develop their knowledge and abilities in specific areas.

One of the tools used in procurement gap analysis is the Best in Class Procurement tool created by the Finnish Association of Purchasing and Logistics (LOGY), which was introduced in 2015 with the aim of assisting members from the public and private sectors in enhancing their procurement function (Yhdistys, 2022). The tool serves for organizational self-assessment that gives organizations a description of their procurement function. It enables the organisations to compare themselves to other member organizations and identifies areas where the organization's procurement activities could be performed more effectively and efficiently. Additionally, organizations of all sizes and sorts, such as cities, local authorities and tertiary academic institutions can utilise some national procurement development frameworks such as the Scottish to conduct routine organizational competency gap analysis. The exercise ensures that the best procurement results are produced by the right people being in the right place at the right time and possessing the appropriate skills and experience.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative method was used in the study and descriptive research design was chosen in order to get detailed information about the rural district councils in Zimbabwe. The data collection instrument used in the study was self-administered Google questionnaire. The reliability and validity of the instrument were assessed using Cronbach's coefficient Alpha and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The instrument was administered to 160 respondents and 150 usable responses were realized. After cleaning and coding the data, it was loaded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for analysis. Data analysis was considered using descriptive and inferential statistics. Further, Structural Equation Modeling was performed using AMOS version 25 to test for posited hypotheses. Data was presented using charts and tables as needed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Analysis

The study involved a sample of 160 respondents in the 60 rural district councils who were randomly selected from Zimbabwe's eight (8) non - metropolitan provinces. Out of the 160 questionnaires sent out, 150 were returned. The response rate was 80 percent as a result. Males made up 75% (n=113), while females made up 25% (n = 37) of the total respondents. These results support earlier researches that found men make up the largest segment of people employed in public procurement (Smith, 2018; Churchil, 2018).

Reliability and Validity (Measurement Model)

To evaluate construct Reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients were used.

Area of Employment

The placement of procurement personnel is very critical in service delivery of local rural authorities. The majority of the respondents were from the Finance and Procurement departments with a cumulative total of 66%. The Administration had the least number of participants with a 3.3% score.

Length of Employment

The majority of the respondents fell between 5 to 15 years of serving the rural local authorities with a cumulative total of 77%. The respondents who served for over 21 years show a paltry 5%. This pattern may reflect that the respondents have the necessary experience to carry out their duties.

Employment Type

The contract of employment type plays a critical role in terms of service delivery owing to continuity. The majority of the respondents were employed on permanent basis with a 72% score while there are few casual employees with just 3.3 %. The respondents who were employed on contract basis were just 24.0.

Highest Qualification

The quality and type of decisions that top procurement officials, such as procurement managers, make for their companies might be influenced by their educational backgrounds. As a result, the respondents were asked for their educational backgrounds. The results as indicated on Table shows that the majority had diploma, degree and post graduate qualifications. These results are in line with earlier research by Walker, Di Sisto, and Mc Bain (2008), who argue that purchasing managers' perspectives are influenced by their degree of education and training.

Reliability and Validity

Table 1: Reliability and Validity

Latent Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Score	KMO and Bartlett's Test
Procurement Objectives	0.916	0.840
Public Procurement Process	0.799	0.715
Public Procurement Expertise	0.819	0.841
Procurement Management	0.906	0.908
Service Delivery	0.780	0.815
Value for Money	0.827	0.839

Source: Data Analysis

The level of internal homogeneity in the measurement items is indicated by the Cronbach's alpha values, which can range from 0.00 to 1.00. On the one hand, a value of 0.00 shows that there is no homogeneity whatsoever among the measurement items employed to test a certain latent variable. The measurement items for the latent variable,

on the other hand, are completely homogeneous if the value is 1.00. In other words, the reliability level increases as the value gets closer to 1. Where the value is low, there might not be much homogeneity among the measurement items because there aren't enough of them. In this study, the reliability process in the SPSS (version 26) program was used to calculate the coefficient values for the five latent variables. As indicated in Table 5 above, the internal reliability of each latent variable in this study was evaluated using the standardised Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Measurement item dependability is indicated by a higher Cronbach's coefficient alpha especially one that is nearer 1. In addition to Cronbach's coefficient alpha, the current study used stronger item-total correlations as shown in Table 1 above to demonstrate statistical agreement among the tested items. The validity of the data in this study was done using the KMO and Bartlett tests which combined all of the relevant data for evaluation. Noijaroen & Theppitak (2022) also established that KMO is ideal to use such a scenario like this. A KMO score more than 0.5 and a significance level for the Bartlett's test lower than 0.05 imply that the data are significantly correlated. The degree of a variable's collinearity describes how closely it is connected with other variables. In this current study, the KMO and Bartlett tests outcomes as indicated in Table 5 above range from 0.715 to 0.908 which clearly indicate high validity level. After assessing validity and reliability, it was found that the research data is both valid and reliable therefore progress was made to conduct structural equation modeling using Amos 26 software. Below is the assessment of the five hypotheses with Structural Equation Modeling and path.

SEM-PATH ANALYSIS

H1: Procurement objectives have a positive influence on procurement expertise in Zimbabwe's RDCs.

A linear relationship (positive and significant) between procurement objectives and procurement expertise was proposed by the current study. This hypothesis was developed in an effort to determine how procurement objectives affect procurement expertise. The SEM outcomes that validate or invalidate this hypothesis are displayed in Table 2 and Figure 2 below. The Table shows that procurement objectives has a strong positive (C *** - p-value less than 0.001; t-value of 6.517) and very significant (path coefficient of 0.75) procurement expertise.

Table 2: Hypothesis One SEM Results

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Procurement Objectives	➔	Public Procurement Expertise	H1	0.75	0.104	6.517	C***

H2: Procurement expertise has a positive influence on procurement management in Zimbabwe's RDCs.

As shown on Table 3 and Figure 2 below, there is a strong and positive linear relationship between procurement expertise and procurement management. The results of this study corroborated the current study's hypothesis that procurement expertise had a positive impact on procurement management. The considerable beneficial influence that procurement expertise is thought to have on procurement management is supported by a high and positive path coefficient (0.95).

Table 3: Hypothesis Two SEM Results

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Public Procurement Expertise	➔	Procurement Management	H2	0.95	0.148	5.213	C***

H3: Procurement objectives have a positive influence on service delivery in Zimbabwe's RDCs.

It was proposed that procurement objectives have a favorable and significant impact on the service delivery. The SEM outcomes that support or refute this hypothesis are displayed in Table 4 and Figure 2 below. The table shows that procurement objectives has a strong positive (C *** - p-value less than 0.001; t-value of 5.965) and very significant (path coefficient of 1.02) service delivery. Since the two requirements of significance and positive path coefficients are satisfied, the findings shown in Table 4 validate hypothesis H3.

Table 4: Hypothesis Three SEM Result

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Procurement Objectives	➔	Service Delivery	H3	1.02	0.166	5.965	C***

H4: Procurement expertise has a positive influence on service delivery in Zimbabwe's RDCs.

A linear relationship (positive and significant) between procurement expertise and service delivery was also proposed by the current study. This hypothesis was developed in an effort to determine how procurement expertise has an effect on service delivery. The SEM outcomes that validate or invalidate this hypothesis are displayed in Table 5 and Figure 2 below. According to the findings of the (H4), procurement expertise has a weak negative (path coefficient of -0.85; ns 0.104 or -p-value greater than 0.1; t-value of -1.624) and insignificant (t-value of -1.624) impact on supply chain performance. These findings fail to reveal the positive influence of procurement expertise on service delivery as evident from the results on Table 5.

Table 5: Hypothesis Four SEM Results

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Public Procurement Expertise	➔	Service Delivery	H4	-0.85	0.564	-1.624	C.104

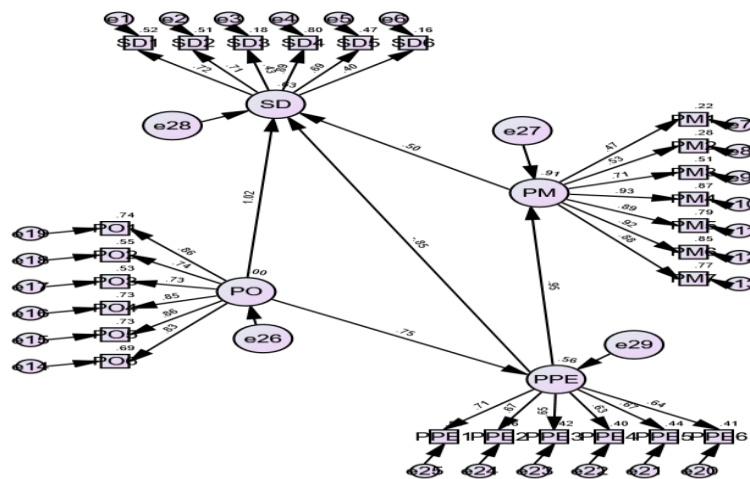
H5: Procurement management has a positive influence on service delivery in Zimbabwe’s RDCs.

The current study also suggested that there is a linear association between procurement knowledge and service delivery that is both favorable and substantial. In an effort to ascertain how procurement knowledge affects service delivery, this hypothesis was established. The results of the SEM that support or refute this hypothesis are shown in Table 6 and Figure 2 below. The results of the fifth path (H5) show that the impact of procurement management on service is moderate (t-value of 1.071; path coefficient of -0.50; ns 0.284 or -p-value larger than 0.1; and path coefficient of 0.50.

Table 6: Hypothesis Five SEM Results

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Procurement Management	➔	Service Delivery	H5	0.50	0.622	1.071	C.284

Figure 2: SEM Hypotheses Testing Results



Source: Data Analysis

CONCLUSION

It was determined from the literature analysis and support provided by the respondent's remarks that skilled public procurement specialists were required to improve service delivery. The results of this study indicate that good procurement management in public procurement would not only enhance service delivery but would also infuse public institutions with confidence, which is crucial for boosting public confidence. The rural local authority procurement has the potential to improve service delivery by utilizing reliable, unbiased suppliers who have the necessary capacity to provide goods and services.

Recommendations

The local authorities adopt comprehensive procurement objectives to guide their procurement operations in order to fulfill their service delivery expectations. The rural local authorities should improve the expertise of procurement officers through continuous training and development in order to align with the ever changing procurement environment. Finally, they should improve their procurement management approach to curtail millions of dollars that are lost each year through the awarding of tenders to briefcase and under-or non-performing and intermediary businesses.

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