

Effect of Tender Specification on Procurement Performance in Nyandarua County Government in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Efficient and effective tendering processes results in positive social impacts such as enhanced expectation of realizing other government objectives, more access to government contracts by citizens, better reputation for government institutions, and quality social services including stable and reliable electricity, better roads, clean water, airports, schools, hospitals. Despite the efforts made to streamline the public tendering processes in Kenya, tendering processes are still inefficient and usually lack proper accountability. In this regard this study sought to examine the effect of tender specification on procurement performance. The study was anchored on systems theory. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. The target population for the study was the procurement officers and chief officers in Nyandarua who numbered 44 employees in total. As such, the study adopted a census approach given the small size of the target population. The study utilized a questionnaire constructed on a Likert scale for primary data collection. The questionnaire was pilot tested to check for validity and reliability. Collected data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 24. The study established that tender specification had significant positive relationship with procurement performance in Nyandarua county government. Moreover, regression analysis demonstrated that tender specification had significant effect on procurement performance in the county government of Nyandarua. The study concluded that tender specifications are significant in determining procurement performance in the county government of Nyandarua. As such, the study recommended that the county leadership should ensure they improve the process of tender specification to enhance the performance of the procurement function. This will be important to ensure that only the required supplies with the right specifications are procured thus improving procurement performance.

Keywords: Tender, tender specifications, procurement, county government, procurement performance

INTRODUCTION

Amid the scarcity of resources and restricted public spending, public procurement is an important strategic tool for political intervention aimed at implementing public policies, simplifying procedures, modernizing structures, reducing expenditure and increasing efficiency of Public Administration operations (Arrowsmith, 2014; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015, 2019). Public procurement has not only an operating component, but also a strategic and politically sensitive dimension, which involves large amounts of public money and contributes strongly to economic dynamics (Guarnieri & Gomes, 2019; OECD, 2021). However, Grandia (2018) alludes that despite the enormous impact of public procurement on the economy, public sector and citizens, this sub-field of investigation has not yet been recognized as an important policy instrument in public administration research.

According to Liu, Wang and Wilkinson (2016), efficient and effective tendering processes results in positive social impacts such as enhanced expectation of realizing other government objectives, more access to government contracts by citizens, better reputation for government institutions, and quality social services including stable and reliable electricity, better roads, clean water, airports, schools, hospitals. Poor public tendering processes translates to higher cost to the government and the citizens, delays in execution of projects

or deliverables which ends up in escalation of cost, poorly executed project and delaying the delivery of benefits to the beneficiaries. They further result in poor proficiency of job contracts, delivering of poor-quality goods, delaying of benefits to the beneficiaries and nurtures elements of corruption in the tendering process (Tweneboah & Ndebugri, 2018).

Additionally, suppliers are not bound to supply only the public sector, as private sector suppliers meet the needs of a variety of buyers across the public, private and third sectors. If they are repeatedly frustrated and become dissatisfied with the tendering process of public sector buyers, they can stop supplying to the public sector and focus their efforts elsewhere (Schiele, 2020) and could limit choice of supply, increase costs and limit efficiency in the public sector.

The effectiveness of the tendering process significantly depends on efficient procurement planning (OECD, 2020). The ability to plan strategically, allocate resources effectively, and set clear objectives plays a crucial role in ensuring that the procurement process aligns with the broader goals of public entities. Effective procurement planning is the foundation for successful tendering processes (OECD, 2020). Public entities must invest in strategic planning to achieve desired procurement outcomes. Transparent and accountable tendering processes are central to maintaining public trust and upholding ethical standards (Witting, 2018). Transparency not only fosters honest competition but also serves as a safeguard against corruption and favoritism in public procurement.

Statement of the Problem

Reports on corruption cases involving county governments continue to hit media headlines in the country (EACC, 2022). Many of the cases have been attributed to procurement process especially in the award of tenders. Among the cases, in 2019, the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) started investigations regarding allegations of irregular award tenders worth Kshs. 588 million that were awarded to companies said to be linked with the governor of Kiambu County and his family members. In 2021, Muranga governor was alleged to have influenced the award of tender worth nearly Kshs 550 million to a company reportedly owned by the governors' relatives. Similar cases have been reported in several other counties including Nairobi, Siaya, Busia and others (Arnestad, 2021). Moreover, in the recent COVID 19 crisis, a report by the auditor general revealed irregularities by county governments in the use of COVID-19 funds. The irregularities included non-adherence to procurement procedures, misappropriation of funds and inadequate record keeping (Office of the Auditor General, 2021). All this go a long way in altering the efficiency in procurement performance and the overall service delivery by the county governments in Kenya. A number of studies have been undertaken on the subject of procurement performance as well as tendering process albeit separately. A study by Hassan (2021) examined the impacts of tendering process on service delivery in power supply at KPLC; a case study of Garissa county, Kenya. Gichuhi and Waruguru (2020) assessed the influence of e-tendering on procurement performance in Geothermal Development Company in Nakuru, Kenya. Further, Chemtai and Nyakwara (2020) examined the influence of open tendering on the performance of county government of Garissa, Kenya. Despite the wide research in this area, hardly are there enough studies linking tendering process and procurement performance and more so in county governments in Kenya. This study sought to fill this gap by examining the effect of the tendering process on procurement performance in Nyandarua County Government in Kenya.

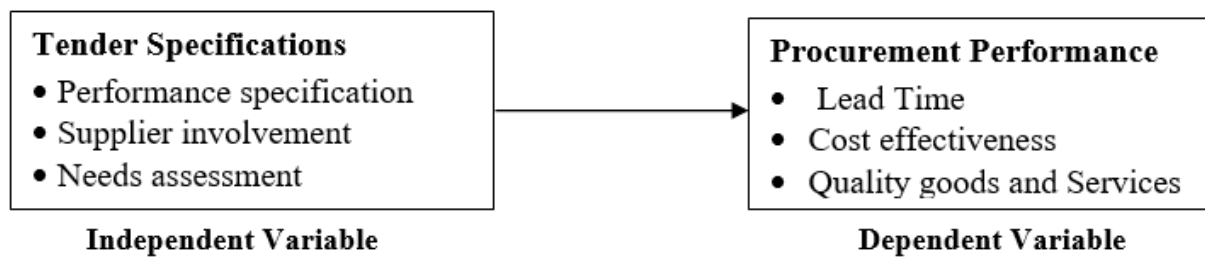
Objective of the Study

The study sought to examine the effect of tender specification on procurement performance in Nyandarua county government in Kenya.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: Tender specifications have no statistically significant effect on procurement performance in Nyandarua county government in Kenya.

Conceptual Framework



The Systems Theory

The General Systems Theory modeled by Von Bertalanffy in 1956 relates the functioning of organizations with how living organism's function. The theory states, from a biological point of view, that, an organism is an integrated system of interdependent structures and functions made up of cells, and a cell contains molecules, which must work in harmony. Each molecule must know what others are doing, must be capable of receiving messages and must be sufficiently disciplined to obey. Due to the complexity and instability of the external environment, the survival and effectiveness of an organization will depend on how well it scans and adapts to its internal environment (Whitchurch & Constantine, 2009).

Von Bertalanffy was reacting to reductionism and attempted to revive the unity of science. He emphasized that real systems were open to interact with their environments and that they can acquire qualitatively new properties through emergence, resulting in continual evolution. He argued that rather than reducing an entity or organization to the properties of its parts or elements, systems theory focused on the arrangement of and the inter-relations between the parts which connect them into a whole. Such an organization determined a system that is independent of the concrete substance of the elements (for example, the various departments such as finance, accounting, human resources, research and development). Thus, the same concepts and principles of organization underlie the different disciplines, providing a basis for their unification (Keraro, 2014).

Hanson (2014) observed that, the systems theory provides a leader with a tool for analyzing organizational dynamics without providing a specific theory about how an organization should be managed. He also observed that with the recognition of systems theory, all organizations consist of processing inputs and outputs with internal and external systems and subsystems helpful in providing a functional overview of any organization. The effect of the systems theory in management is that managers look at the organization from a broader perspective. Systems theory has a new perspective for managers to interpret patterns and events in the workplace. They recognize the various parts of the organization, and, in particular, the interrelations of the parts, e.g. the coordination of central administration with its programs, supervisors and workers, among other variables. In traditional management practices, managers typically took one part and focused on it. They then moved all attention to another part. The problem was that an organization could, for example, have a wonderful central administration and wonderful set of teachers, but the departments didn't synchronize at all (Adams et al., 2014). This study in adopting this theory tried to see how tendering process synchronizes with procurement performance. For the to be achieved, the county government ought to operate as a system with effective coordination across departments. For procurement to efficient, there should be clear coordination across the system something that appears to be a challenge even in Nyandarua county government where there lacks clear alignments in departments operations. This provides a challenge in tender specifications and thus impacting on procurement performance.

Tender specifications and procurement performance

A study by Munyimi (2019) examined the role of procurement specifications in curbing wrong deliveries of construction materials in the construction sector in Zimbabwe. The study did a cross sectional survey of construction companies in Zimbabwe. The study targeted the staff members working in the procurement department of the construction companies. Purposive sampling was done to come up with the study respondents while questionnaires as well as open ended interviews were done for primary data collection. The

study established that there was a positive significant relationship between performance specifications, brand or trade name specification, sample specification and curbing wrong deliveries of construction materials.

A study by Muya, Wanjiru and Datch (2019) examine the effects of tender management practices on procurement performance at Kenya ferry services. The study adopted a descriptive and inferential research design targeting senior managers, managers and suppliers at the Kenya ferry services. Both primary and secondary data was used in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. The findings showed that procurement specification significantly affected procurement performance. The study concluded that poor specification is a major setback in cost estimation for services and works. Moreover, failure to adhere to procurement specification enhances making of irregular and biased decisions.

In their study, Nang'ole et al. (2018) assessed factors influencing performance of the procurement function in Trans Nzoia County government in Kenya. The study employed descriptive research design with a sample of 70 respondents selected using simple random sampling. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires which were tested for validity and reliability prior to data collection. The study established that early supplier involvement in development of specification enhances the attainment of quality of procurements.

In his study, Gatobu (2020) examined the influence of procurement process on performance of public entities in Nairobi County government in Kenya. The study aimed at assessing the role of specification writing, procurement plan, tender evaluation and receiving procedures on the performance of public entities in Kenya. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study with a sample of 100 respondents picked through stratified random sampling. The study established that public entities usually liaise with the user department as well as the supplier in determining the specifications content. He also observed that public procurement entities in Kenya adopt various types of specifications among them design specifications, material specifications, standard specifications, interface specifications, test specifications, performance speculations and quality specifications.

Otieno and Shale (2019) assessed the influence of procurement process on performance of state corporations in Kenya. The study examined the influence of specification development, procurement regulations and procurement approvals on performance of state corporations in Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Questionnaires were used for primary data collection. The findings of the study demonstrated that specification development had a positive significant influence on performance of state corporations in Kenya. They observed that procurement process specifies how the supplier relationships would be managed to ensure high service delivery.

Onyango (2012) examined the effects of procurement planning on institutional performance at Mombasa Law Courts in Kenya. As such the study examine the influence of cost estimation, need assessment and quality specifications. A descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study with a sample of 60 employees selected through simple random sampling techniques. Primary data was gathered using a simple structured questionnaire. The findings of the study showed significant relationship between quality and procurement planning. Good procurements plans revolve around budget allocation for organization procurement needs which will ensure availability of departmental requirements. The study revealed factors having a direct impact on procurement activities are needs assessment, cost effect, and user quality specifications.

Procurement Performance

Andika (2022) established that procurement performance can be measured using the price/cost dimension, where the relationship between the standard/baseline and the actual price of the delivered items is measured. They further found that product or quality dimensions of items of goods purchased as a critical performance measuring indicator. They also revealed that the efficiency of inventory flow of purchased materials and services in quantity control and timely delivery of supplies are essential when measuring procurement performance.

Measuring procurement performance is important as the procurement function plays an ever increasingly important role in the supply chain. Performance measurement is the process of developing specific measurable indicators against which performance can be systematically tracked in order to assess progress towards the achievement of goals and objectives (CIPS, 2018). In order to measure and control the procurement process so as to improve it, it has to be mapped properly (Johnson & Flynn, 2015). A suitable way to govern procurement is through target setting and measuring. This could be done through key performance indicators (KPI). Having KPIs is important because it state performance goals in a way that it is capable of direct detailed, consistent measurement at operational level, using available data collection systems. KPIs are monitored, reviewed and reported on at regular intervals to ensure that the organization project is on track in relation to its most important yardsticks of success (Lyson & Farrington, 2016). According to CIPS, (2018) procurement performance is measured in terms of; cost saving obtained, quality improvement, timeliness, promptness of Service and number of resources of specified grades allocated for the project.

On the other hand, Muma et al. (2014) and Osuga et al. (2015) pointed out that procurement operational performance is associated with reduced procurement costs and improved achievement of procurement organizational goals respectively. The concept of procurement performance has emerged strongly in the recent past in Kenyan Public sector (Chemoiwo, 2014). This is due to the malpractices and inefficiencies experienced in the sector in the past. Similarly, the public procurement functions in Kenya have been characterized with inadequate funding from the government (Ikumu, 2014).

In their study, Githinji and Moronge (2018) examined the influence of procurement methods on procurement performance in public hospitals in Kenya, using a case of KNH. Specifically, the study sought to find the influence of international competitive tendering on procurement performance in public hospitals in Kenya; to establish the influence of national competitive tendering on procurement performance in public hospitals in Kenya; to determine the influence that restricted tendering has on procurement performance in public hospitals in Kenya; and to find out the influence of direct procurement on procurement performance in public hospitals in Kenya. The study used structured questionnaires for collecting primary data from the respondents. The study established that only International Competitive Tender and National Competitive Tender variables had a positive and statistically significant influence on the dependent variable (Procurement Performance). Both Restricted Tender and Direct Procurement were statistically insignificant. Therefore, the study concluded that a combination of all these methods do not necessary result in better procurement performance. Further, the study concluded that competitive tendering leads to better procurement performance.

In another study, Obura (2024) examined public procurement implementation and performance of service state corporations in Kenya. The study sought to establish whether ethical management practices tender evaluation process, procurement records management and supplier appraisal practices affect the performance of the organizations. The study adopted survey research design and use of a questionnaire in collecting data. The study targeted 132 respondents who included audit, ICT and procurement managers in service state corporations in Kenya. The study established that ethical procurement practices, tender evaluation process, procurement records management and supplier appraisal methods have a significant influence on organizational performance.

Gichuhi and Waruguru (2020) examined the influence of e-tendering process on procurement performance in geothermal development company in Nakuru, Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted in this study. The target population of this study was the procurement and logistics department's staff in GDC Nakuru region which was 170 in total. This study relied on primary data collected by use of questionnaires. The study established that e-tendering had positive significant relationship with procurement performance in geothermal development company and therefore concluded that it has a significant influence on procurement performance. Regression analysis indicated that e-tendering did not have a significant contribution on the variation in procurement performance in geothermal development company.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014) a descriptive study is concerned with finding out the what, where and how of a phenomenon. The design enabled the researcher describe the characteristics of the variables under study in relation to the practices in the County government operations. The target population for the study was the employees of Nyandarua county government who included procurement officers and chief officers of the various departments. There are 26 procurement employees in the Nyandarua County Government. In addition to the 26 employees, there is an addition of 18 chief executive officers to make up a total population of 44 persons. Given the small population, the researcher adopted a census approach where all the employees were taken as respondents.

Data Collection Instruments

The study employed the use of a structured questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of statements constructed in form of a 5 point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree). Before proceeding with data collection, a pilot study was conducted to authenticate the study instruments. In conducting the pilot study, the study sought to establish whether the respondents have understood the questions and thus offer the information required. This assisted to conduct reliability tests and checking the validity of the instrument. This also was important in checking the suitability and the clarity of questions on the instruments designed, relevance of the information being sought, the language used and the content validity of the research instrument.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The primary data collected in this study was coded and tested for completeness and then analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics and presented using tables. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24. Descriptive statistical techniques (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation) were employed to analyze field data from questionnaires to assist the interpretation and analysis of data. Inferential statistics, in form of Pearson correlation coefficient were used to check the relationship between the variables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

The researcher distributed 44 questionnaires to be filled by the respondents. 33 of the questionnaires were properly filled and returned. This represented a response rate of 75% which was characterized as very good (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012).

Tender Specification

The study sought to find out respondents' perceptions in regard to the tender specifications' influence on procurement performance in the county government. The means and standard deviation values were established in this regard. The results from the analysis were as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Tender Specifications

	N	Min	Max	M	Std. Dev
All open tenders have clear technical specifications that follow objective qualifications criteria	33	4	5	4.55	.506

Our government strictly follow all laid down procedures in provision of open tender documents	33	4	5	4.58	.502
The tender committee ensures elaborate performance specification for all tenders advertised	33	3	5	4.48	.566
Effective tender specifications help the county government arrive at the appropriate cost estimation for services and works	33	3	5	4.30	.585
The government ensures that it controls and certifies that both the contracting parties have honored the contractual responsibilities	33	3	5	4.64	.603
The county liaises with suppliers in tender specifications	33	3	5	3.85	.906
The tender committee normally liaises with the user departments in tender specification	33	4	5	4.67	.479
Tender specifications also consider the budget allocation for a given tender	33	4	5	4.64	.489
Valid N (listwise)	33				

The results in Table 1 demonstrated that respondents were in strong agreement or were in agreement with most of the statements regarding tender specifications. Respondents strongly agreed ($M=4.55$, $SD=.506$) that all open tenders have clear technical specifications that follow objective qualification criteria and that their government strictly follows all the laid down procedures in provision of open tender documents ($M=4.58$, $SD=.502$). The respondents were in agreement ($M=4.48$, $SD=.566$) that the tender committee ensures elaborate performance specification for all tenders advertised and that effective tender specifications help the county government arrive at the appropriate cost estimation for services and works ($M=4.30$, $SD=.585$).

Conversely, the respondents strongly agreed ($M=4.64$, $SD=.603$) that the government ensures that it controls and certifies that both the contracting parties have honored the contractual responsibilities while they agreed ($M=3.85$, $SD=.906$). Moreover, they strongly agreed ($M=4.67$, $SD=.479$) that the tender committee normally liaises with the user departments in tender specification and that the tender specifications also considers the budget allocation for a given tender ($M=4.64$, $SD=.489$). In all their responses, the respondents demonstrated greater congruence in their views reporting standard deviations values less than one. As such, there were no high variations in respondents views in regard to tender specifications in the county government of Nyandarua.

Procurement Performance

The study sought to establish respondent's views in regard to procurement performance in Nyandarua county government. The means and standard deviation values were computed in this regard. The findings from the analysis were as presented in Table 2

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Procurement Performance

	N	Min	Max	M	Std. Dev
There is timely delivery of goods and services	33	3	5	4.36	.653
The procured goods and services are of the right quality	33	3	5	4.55	.617
The procured goods are of the right price	33	3	5	4.45	.754
The procurement department ensures the price of goods supplied is	33	4	5	4.79	.415

comparable to the market rates					
The exercise of procurement especially on tender evaluation is fair and just	33	4	5	4.67	.479
Suppliers offer products that consistently conform to our specifications	33	3	5	4.61	.609
Purchase orders/contracts are sent electronically to suppliers resulting in reduced contract award lead time	33	3	5	4.36	.603
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Respondents were shown to agree with all the items regarding procurement performance in the county government of Nyandarua. The respondents agreed ($M=4.36$, $SD=.653$) that there is timely delivery of goods and services and strongly agreed ($M=4.55$, $SD=.617$) that the procured and services are of the right quality. Moreover, respondents agreed ($M=4.45$, $SD=.754$) that the procured goods are of the right price and that the procurement department ensures the price of goods supplied is comparable to the market rates ($M=4.79$, $SD=.415$). Respondents strongly agreed ($M=4.67$, $SD=.479$) that the exercise of procurement especially on tender evaluation is fair and just and that suppliers offer products that consistently conform to the county specifications ($M=4.61$, $SD=.609$). Lastly, respondents agreed ($M=4.36$, $SD=.603$) that purchase orders/contracts are sent electronically to suppliers resulting in reduced contract award lead time. In all the items, respondents depicted great consensus in their views with all the items registering standard deviation values less than one.

Tender Specification and Procurement Performance

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

Table 3: Correlation between Tender Specification and Procurement Performance

		Tender Specification
Procurement Performance	Pearson Correlation	.757**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	33

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

From the results in Table 3 above, tender specification was shown to have a strong positive significant ($r=.757$, $p=.000$) relationship with procurement performance. Therefore, it was observed that tender specification plays a significant role in determining procurement performance in the county government of Nyandarua. These findings concur with findings by Musyimi (2019) who established a positive relationship between tender specifications and procurement performance and observed that tender specifications help in curbing wrong deliveries of construction materials. Further, Muya et al., (2019) concurred with these findings by establishing that procurement specification significantly affected procurement performance. Conversely, Gatobu (2020) observed that public entities usually liaise with the user department as well as the supplier in determining the specifications content hence predicting positive outcome.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study noted that tender specification significantly influences the procurement performance in the county governments. Based on the study findings, it was concluded that tender specifications have a statistically significant effect on procurement performance in Nyandarua county government in Kenya. The study

recommends that the leadership in the county governments should ensure they improve the process of tender specification to enhance the performance of the procurement function. This will be important to ensure that only the required supplies with the right specifications are procured thus improving procurement performance.

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