

## Investigating How Procurement Strategies Influence the Performance of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact that procurement methods have on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly those in the manufacturing industry. In this industry, achieving higher levels of competitiveness and long-term sustainability requires efficient procurement management. The study carefully examines the complex relationship between SME performance and their procurement methods using a regression-based methodology. Quantitative information is methodically collected using carefully designed questionnaires, with an emphasis on important areas including information technology integration, supplier selection, and ethical purchasing. The study's conclusions highlight how different procurement strategies have a significant impact on SMEs' performance and highlight how important they are to raising service standards. Specifically, the study shows information technology as a vital factor contributing to enhanced service quality, demonstrating a statistically significant and favorable association. Furthermore, it has been discovered that a business's efficiency can be significantly impacted by the proper selection of suppliers. This study provides SME managers with insightful recommendations in light of these findings. They are urged to make strategic investments in information technology, which can improve data management, automate procedures, improve communication, and streamline operations, all of which can result in higher service quality and productivity. SME managers should also place a high priority on establishing and maintaining strong relationships with dependable suppliers who offer premium materials and components, given the critical relevance of supplier selection. This will have a direct impact on the final product's overall quality. Managers should give ethical issues top priority while making purchases in order to promote a responsible and ethical image.

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### Introduction

In recent years, the field of procurement has been rapidly evolving, steadily maturing into a recognized profession. This progression has underscored the increasing necessity for the development of professional ethics, standard nomenclature, and best practices within the domain (Guth, 2010). Notably, there has been a growing emphasis on the integration of procurement, as it entails the alignment of a company's strategic objectives with its purchasing practices (Narasimhan and Das, 2001). The intricacies of procurement encompass the process of acquiring all the goods and services essential for an organization's day-to-day operations. This encompasses tasks such as price negotiations, item procurement, quality inspections, and

meticulous record-keeping. Effective procurement practices play a pivotal role in enhancing a company's capacity to efficiently deliver goods and services to its clientele. They ensure the timely availability of requisite resources, thus supporting the efficient distribution of products and services (Kebaso, 2011). While sound procurement practices enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to operate at peak efficiency, poor practices lead to underperformance, customer dissatisfaction, and a decline in market share for the company.

In the modern corporate landscape, businesses have committed to adopting robust and well-defined procurement practices. This commitment aims to

bolster operational efficiency, cost-effectiveness in procurement, and increased accountability (Nyakundi, 2016). Companies expect that refining their procurement practices will result in a reduction in discrepancies, greater recognition of advantageous supplier opportunities, and the cultivation of stronger relationships with existing corporate suppliers. However, it's important to note that the quest for cost savings and procurement quality often presents a challenging equilibrium for procurement departments, as the two objectives are frequently in conflict (Muturi, 2015).

As small businesses in Abuja seek to enhance their organizational performance, they actively explore various procurement practices designed to fulfill their objectives. These practices include green purchasing, partnering, e-procurement, ethical purchasing, total quality management, just-in-time delivery, supply planning, and risk management. Their aim is to augment procurement practices and, ultimately, elevate SME performance in the region.

However, it is important to note that while the performance of many business functions, such as productivity and profitability, can be quantified, the same cannot be said for the procurement practice. This inability to measure procurement performance has often resulted in misguided decisions that carry costly consequences for organizations. To address this issue, coherent procurement performance measurement approaches are imperative. Without them, organizations risk losing skilled professionals and squandering resources unnecessarily.

## **Literature Review**

### **2.0 Procurement Practices**

Procurement plays a pivotal role in modern business operations, facilitating the acquisition of products and services essential for commercial purposes. Procurement practices are not solely about buying; they encompass the entire procurement process, influencing an organization's purchasing decisions (Nyakundi, 2016). This process is vital for organizations, as they source services and materials in significant quantities. While the concept of procurement encompasses various aspects, this study primarily focuses on the procurement practices of the requesting firms, or buyers. In the context of procurement, organizations aim to ensure they obtain the right quality, in the correct quantity, at the appropriate time, from the right source, and at the right price – often referred to as "the five rights" of procurement (Ngugi, 2014). Effective procurement management directly influences an organization's strategic approach and profitability by ensuring the availability of specific goods and services. The adoption of procurement practices is a strategic move for businesses to enhance their performance by improving

the quality of goods and services while simultaneously reducing procurement costs. Effective procurement practices encompass on-time delivery of products and services, cultivating a positive supplier relationship based on supplier profiles, and building a loyal customer base, all contributing to a positive organizational image (Masiko & Waigonjo, 2014). Procurement procedures may not be uniform among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) due to the unpredictable nature of the business environment. Procurement practices evolve at a rapid pace, influenced by technological advancements and procedural changes that have lasting impacts on organizations (Nyakundi, 2016). Staying updated with these developments has become a necessity, with organizations striving to adhere to the latest, proven, and effective procurement best practices.

### **2.1 Supplier Partnering**

Supplier partnering involves collaborative business arrangements where two or more individuals or companies mutually share resources to foster success. Typically, these partnerships include non-competing businesses and often entail shared risks and rewards stemming from joint decision-making. The primary goal of supplier partnering is to create value for all parties involved by offering information, services, and additional resources that would otherwise be inaccessible or necessitate financial transactions (Mokogi, 2015). The practice of supplier partnering promotes procurement planning and problem-solving. It aids businesses and suppliers in executing procurement-related tasks more successfully and efficiently, particularly in terms of organizing timely product deliveries to respective consumers. Integrated technology enables the sharing of information about products and services with suppliers, with the entire supply chain functioning optimally (Harvey B. L., 2019). Supplier partnering empowers businesses to work closely with their suppliers, ensuring the integration of procurement processes and the adoption of a purchasing system that coordinates the use of procurement technologies to improve performance by all involved parties (Grant, 2011).

### **2.2 Adoption of Information Technology**

Information technology (IT) plays a vital role in enhancing procurement efficiency, ultimately contributing to improved organizational performance (Mutuku, 2022). The impact of IT is evident across various dimensions, providing a flexible and efficient procurement process. IT integration unifies all procurement methods within the distribution chain and implements robust responsibility controls. The integration of IT into transaction processing leads to increased productivity and cost reduction. Additionally, IT can mitigate risks associated with imperfect information by providing risk management services

through transfer and distribution processes (Rajasekar, 2014). As organizations undergo growth and changes, their reliance on IT becomes increasingly crucial for survival (Feeny & Willcocks, 2018). In today's business landscape, organizations utilize and implement IT to address business challenges, enhance management decision-making, improve productivity and quality, and compete in global markets (Porter & Millar, 2015). IT serves as a powerful catalyst, unlocking exciting opportunities for organizations to achieve their missions and goals efficiently.

### **2.3 Purchasing Ethics**

Ethics plays a fundamental role in procurement practices, encompassing standards of behavior that differentiate between what is considered acceptable and unacceptable (Cherotich, 2018). Purchasing professionals need to adhere to ethical principles when interacting with colleagues, organizations, and society as a whole. The adherence to ethical practices is vital for both their individual reputation and their organization's image (Islam, 2017). Firms that have adopted procurement practices prioritize delivering services in a diligent and honest manner. This fosters a positive public image for the firms and enhances value for both customers and investors. Transparency plays a crucial role in ensuring that numerous firms embrace optimal procurement practices, capable of providing value to their customers through efficient delivery of goods and services (Mokogi, 2015). The adoption of a sound procurement system that improves performance fosters responsibility in procurement-related matters, increased by the incorporation of information technology (IT) and the establishment of cultural procurement standards within firms. Ethical behavior enables businesses to compete effectively and efficiently in the market by delivering high-quality goods and services (Thai, 2011).

### **2.4 Productivity**

The success of manufacturing SMEs hinges on productivity, a vital factor in their performance. Productivity relates to an organization's capacity to efficiently produce goods or services using the available resources. Productivity involves optimizing the use of labor, machinery, materials, and time to achieve optimal productivity levels. SMEs must ensure efficient resource utilization to achieve productivity. Efficient use of Resources: SMEs need to ensure that resources such as labor, machinery, materials, and time are utilized efficiently to achieve optimal productivity levels. Lean Manufacturing: SMEs can implement lean manufacturing techniques to reduce waste, optimize processes, and improve productivity. Lean manufacturing involves eliminating non-value-added activities, streamlining production processes, and reducing inventory. Manufacturing SMEs need to focus on productivity to remain competitive and achieve

growth. By adopting efficient practices, investing in automation and employee training, and innovating, SMEs can increase output, reduce costs, improve quality, and meet customer demands (Ackah, 2019). Effective management is also crucial to ensure that resources are utilized efficiently and that processes are continuously improved.

### **2.5 Service Quality**

Manufacturing SMEs also need to focus on service quality to meet customer demands and stay ahead of their competitors in the market (Mutuku, 2022). While manufacturing companies produce tangible products, they often provide accompanying services, such as after-sales support, warranty repairs, and technical assistance (Cherotich, 2018). Manufacturing SMEs need to focus on service quality to meet customer demands and stay competitive. By being responsive, communicating effectively, providing technical expertise, ensuring product quality, making services accessible, and continuously improving, SMEs can deliver standard quality service that meets customer needs (Flanagan, 2009).

### **2.6 Product Quality**

Product quality is a crucial factor for manufacturing SMEs as it directly affects customer loyalty and satisfaction. Product quality refers to the features of a product that meet or exceed customer expectations (Amino, 2018). Here are some key factors that affect product quality in manufacturing SMEs:

**Quality Control:** Manufacturing SMEs need to ensure good quality control procedures to ensure that the goods meet up to the basic quality. This involves monitoring and inspecting the production and finished product and ensuring that all products meet the required specifications.

**Supplier Quality:** The quality of raw materials and components sourced from suppliers can affect the quality of the final product. Manufacturing SMEs need to have strict supplier selection processes in place, monitor supplier performance, and work closely with suppliers to ensure that the materials and components they supply meet the required quality standards.

**Product Design:** The design of the product can impact its quality. Manufacturing SMEs need to ensure that the product design is suitable for its intended use, meets customer requirements, and is optimized for efficient production and assembly.

**Production Process:** The production process can also affect product quality. Manufacturing SMEs need to certify that the production process is optimized for efficiency and quality.

**Testing and Inspection:** Testing and inspection are essential to ensure that products meet the required quality standards. Manufacturing SMEs need to conduct rigorous testing and inspection procedures to detect any defects or issues before the product is shipped to customers.

**Continuous Improvement:** Product quality is an essential factor that determines the success of manufacturing SMEs. By implementing quality control processes, selecting quality suppliers, designing products that meet customer needs, optimizing production processes, conducting rigorous testing and inspection, and continuously improving product quality, SMEs can provide superior products that meet or surpass customer expectations in terms of quality. It can result in loyalty, customer satisfaction, and repeat business (Edlawit, 2022). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) need to focus on multiple aspects, including procurement practices, supplier partnering, IT adoption, purchasing ethics, productivity, service quality, and product quality, to enhance their performance and stay competitive in the market. These practices contribute to efficiency, reduced costs, and a loyal customer base, ensuring a competitive edge in the market.

**3.0 Methodology**

In this research, a descriptive research approach was employed to examine the impact of procurement practices on the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Abuja, Nigeria. The study focuses on SMEs involved in the manufacturing of various products in Abuja. The sample size was determined using Solvin's formula, resulting in a sample of seventy-six SMEs selected through a simple random sampling technique. Data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire distributed in a "drop and pick" fashion. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Part A collected respondent demographic information, while Part B consisted of twenty items related to procurement practices and SME performance, measured on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire's validity was ensured through content validity, and the reliability was established by adopting measurement scales from previous studies. Data analysis was conducted using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20, employing descriptive statistics (frequency tables, means, percentages, and standard deviations) to analyze demographic characteristics and inferential statistics to test hypotheses via regression analysis. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant authorities, and confidentiality of respondents' information was assured throughout the questionnaire administration.

**4.0 Test of Hypothesis**

**4.1 Hypothesis one**

H<sub>0</sub>: Information technology has no significant effect on service quality

**Table 1**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.500 <sup>a</sup>	.250	.240	.40068

a. Predictors: (Constant), INFORMATION

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

Interpretation of result: The link between information technology and service quality is shown to be 50.0% in the table above, where R is 0.500, indicating that there

is a relationship between the variables. The table also demonstrates that information technology, with a R square of 0.250, is accountable for a change in SME performance of 25.0%.

**Table 2**

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.957	1	3.957	24.650	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	11.880	74	.161		
	Total	15.837	75			

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

b. Predictors: (Constant), INFORMATION

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

Interpretation of result: The table above shows the statistical significance of 0.000 which is less than

0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which implies that there is a significant relationship between information technology and service quality.

**Table 3**  
**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.370	.407		5.827	.000
	INFORMATIO N	.480	.097	.500	4.965	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

The table above shows a positive beta coefficient of 0.500 which implies that there is a positive relationship between the two variables, where a unit change in Information Technology would bring about a 50.0%

change in service quality of the firm. Since B of unstandardized coefficient is 2.370, therefore, Information technology would be 23.70% when Service quality is 0 **Hypothesis Two**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Supplier selection practice has no significant effect on firms' productivity

**Table 5**

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.271 <sup>a</sup>	.073	.061	.44534	.073	5.856	1	74	.018

a. Predictors: (Constant), PARTNERING

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

Interpretation of result: The above shows that there is a 27.1% relationship between supplier selection practice

and firms productivity, where R is 0.271. The table also shows that supplier selection practice is responsible for 7.3% change in productivity, where R Square is 0.073.

**Table 6**

ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.161	1	1.161	5.856	.018 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	14.676	74	.198		
	Total	15.837	75			

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

b. Predictors: (Constant), PARTNERING

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

Interpretation of result: The table shows the statistical significance of 0.018 which is less the 0.05. Therefore,

the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted, which implies that there is a significance between supplier partnering and productivity.

**Table 7**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.438	.391		8.788	.000
	PARTNERING	.224	.092	.271	2.420	.018

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

The table above shows a positive beta coefficient of 0.271 which implies that there is a positive relationship

between the two variables, where a unit change in supplier partnering would bring a 27.1% change in the Productivity of the firm. Since B of unstandardized coefficient is 3.438, therefore, Supplier Partnering would be 34.38% when Productivity is 0

**Hypothesis Three**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Purchasing ethics has no impact on the product quality of the firm

**Table 8**  
**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.256 <sup>a</sup>	.065	.053	.44726	.065	5.171	1	74	.026

a. Predictors: (Constant), ETHICS

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

Interpretation of result: The table above shows that there is a 25.6% relationship between Purchasing Ethics

and product quality, where R is 0.256. The table also shows that Purchasing Ethics is responsible for 6.5% changes in product quality, where R Square is 0.065.

**Table 9**  
**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.034	1	1.034	5.171	.026 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	14.803	74	.200		
	Total	15.837	75			

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

b. Predictors: (Constant), ETHICS

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

Interpretation of result: The table above shows the statistical significance of 0.026 which is lower than

0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted, which implies that Purchasing Ethics has an impact on product quality of the firm.

**Table 10**  
**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.284	.483		6.801	.000
	ETHICS	.256	.113	.256	2.274	.026

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE

**Source: Field Survey 2023**

The table above shows a positive beta coefficient of 0.256 which implies that there is a positive relationship between the two variables, where a unit change in

purchasing ethics would bring a 25.6% change in product quality of the firm. Since B of unstandardized coefficient is 3.284, therefore, purchasing ethics would be 32.84% when product quality is 0

**4.4 Discussion of result and implications**

A significant relationship (significance (0.00) of less than 0.05) reveals that Hypothesis 1 indicates a statistically significant relationship between information technology and service quality. This means that information technology has a significant impact on service quality. Rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative means there is sufficient evidence to conclude that information technology plays an important role in influencing service quality. This result suggests that the introduction and effective use of information technology may lead to improvements in

service quality. Companies that use information technology effectively can experience improved service delivery, increased customer satisfaction, and improved overall service quality. The link between information technology and service quality highlights the importance of investing in and using technology to optimize service delivery processes, streamline operations, and deliver a better customer experience.

A significant relationship (significance value (0.018) less than 0.05) for Hypothesis 2 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between supplier

selection and firm productivity. This implies that supplier selection has a significant impact on a company's productivity. By rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, we conclude that there is sufficient evidence to support the assumption that supplier selection affects firm productivity. This result indicates that careful supplier selection can have a significant impact on overall company productivity. An effective supplier selection process improves input quality, timely delivery of materials and services, better coordination with suppliers, and a more efficient production process. These factors contribute to increased productivity and operational efficiency within an organization. Understanding the significant link between supplier selection and productivity highlights the importance of strategic supplier management and the potential benefits of investing time and resources in selecting suppliers. By making informed decisions regarding supplier selection, businesses can improve productivity and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

A significant relationship (significance value (0.026) less than 0.05) for Hypothesis 3 indicates that there is a statistically relationship between purchasing ethics and product quality. This means that shopping ethics have a significant impact on product quality. By rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, we conclude that there is sufficient evidence to support the idea that shopping ethics play an important role in shaping product quality. This result suggests that ethical considerations in the purchasing process have a significant impact on final product quality. Practicing ethical shopping ethics has many positive consequences, including Sourcing quality materials, ensuring fair trade practices, promoting sustainable sourcing, and adhering to ethical standards throughout the supply chain. These ethical practices help us to produce quality products that meet or exceed customer expectations. Understanding the link between purchasing ethics and product quality underscores the importance of making ethical decisions in the purchasing department. By prioritizing and enforcing ethical standards in the purchasing process, companies can improve product quality, build trust with their customers, and maintain a positive reputation in the marketplace.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the significant influence of various procurement practices on the performance of SMEs in the manufacturing sector. The research has identified that information technology plays a crucial role in enhancing service quality, highlighting a positive and statistically significant association. Moreover, the selection of suppliers has a substantial impact on productivity within businesses. The study also

underscores the strong link between ethical purchasing practices and the quality of products produced by companies, further emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations in procurement.

Overall, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing valuable insights into the relationship between procurement practices and firm performance. It emphasizes that well-informed decisions and strategic investments in information technology can improve service quality and productivity, ultimately leading to increased customer satisfaction and competitiveness. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of supplier selection and ethical purchasing practices as key drivers for enhancing product quality in the SME sector.

The findings of this study hold several important managerial implications for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector:

### **5.1 Managerial Implication**

**Investment in Information Technology:** SME managers should consider investing in information technology (IT) infrastructure as a strategic priority. Enhancing IT capabilities can streamline operations, improve communication, automate various processes, and facilitate data management. This, in turn, leads to increased productivity and higher service quality. Managers should allocate resources to adopt IT solutions that align with the specific needs and goals of their organization.

**Strategic Supplier Selection:** Recognizing the significance of supplier selection, SME managers should focus on establishing and maintaining strong relationships with reliable suppliers. By carefully choosing suppliers who provide high-quality materials and components, SMEs can significantly impact the quality of their end products. Managers should implement rigorous supplier evaluation processes to ensure consistent quality in their supply chain.

**Embrace Ethical Purchasing Practices:** Ethical procurement practices should be an integral part of SME operations. SME managers should prioritize ethical considerations in their purchasing decisions. This includes ensuring that suppliers adhere to ethical and sustainable business practices. Ethical procurement not only contributes to product quality but also fosters a positive public image, which can lead to increased customer trust and loyalty.

**Performance Monitoring and Improvement:** SMEs should regularly monitor and assess their procurement practices and their impact on performance. Periodic evaluations of IT systems, supplier relationships, and ethical procurement standards are essential. Continuous improvement efforts should be made based on these

assessments, with a focus on enhancing both service and product quality.

**Customer Satisfaction and Competitiveness:** SME managers should recognize that customer satisfaction is closely linked to procurement practices. Higher service quality and product quality resulting from effective procurement can lead to increased customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are more likely to become loyal, repeat customers. Therefore, SMEs should continually strive to meet or exceed customer expectations by improving their procurement practices.

**Collaboration and Communication:** Collaboration and open communication between procurement departments and other business units are crucial. Managers should promote cross-functional collaboration, particularly between procurement, production, and quality control teams. Effective communication ensures that procurement decisions align with production needs and product quality requirements.

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