

The Impact of Academic Qualifications and Professional Training on Procurement Staff Performance in Tanzania: A Case Study of Morogoro Referral Hospital

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Abstract:- This study investigates the crucial role of academic qualifications and professional training in enhancing procurement staff performance at Morogoro Referral Hospital, focusing on their impact across various procurement activities. The study utilizes a mixed research approach and a case study research design. The target population of the study comprised of individuals who are involved in procurement activities at Morogoro Referral Hospital. The sample size was 67 respondents selected through convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected by using questionnaire and interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data is examined through thematic analysis. The study highlights the essential role of academic qualifications and professional training in boosting procurement staff performance, noting broad agreement on their benefits for foundational knowledge and critical skills such as supply chain management and negotiation. Despite varying levels of agreement on areas like supplier evaluation and risk mitigation, the overall positive impact is clear. It is recommended that organizations invest in targeted training programs to address performance gaps, particularly in risk mitigation and supplier evaluation, and ensure ongoing updates to keep staff current with regulations, technology, and best practices. This approach will enhance procurement efficiency and effectiveness, supporting organizational success.

Keywords:- *Academic Qualifications, Professional Training and Procurement Staff Performance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Procurement is a critical function in public administration, influencing the efficient allocation of resources and the overall effectiveness of government operations. Professionalism in procurement encompasses adherence to ethical standards, competence, and effective management practices that ensure transparent, accountable, and efficient procurement processes (Mrope, 2017). The global concern about wasteful spending in public procurement has highlighted the need for rigorous

accountability and strategic management, as vast sums of public funds are expended on goods and services (Siemiatycki, 2019). Inefficiencies in procurement can lead to significant financial waste and impact the quality of essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

The relationship between procurement and associated costs is a crucial aspect of this issue. Various costs, including transaction costs, opportunity costs, and both short-term and long-term expenses, affect procurement outcomes (Guthrie, 2020). The failure to manage these costs effectively can result in increased financial burdens on both clients and contractors, and ultimately on society. Effective procurement systems are essential to mitigate such risks and ensure continuous availability of resources, which is vital for maintaining service levels and avoiding costly last-minute procurement arrangements (Jaffu, 2023).

Corruption and lack of transparency in procurement processes exacerbate these problems, leading to billions of shillings in losses annually (Mwagike & Chagalima, 2022). Effective procurement management not only helps in planning and resource availability but also enables organizations to focus on long-term strategic goals and innovation (Ndei & Mutuku, 2021). Robust procurement systems should include frameworks for risk assessment and mitigation, ensuring that procurement practices are both efficient and resilient.

Despite numerous advancements in public procurement legislation and policies since 1960, challenges such as strategic misalignment, corruption, conflicts of interest, and non-compliance continue to plague procurement practices in Tanzania (Mboma, 2022). While research has frequently pointed out inefficiencies in procurement performance across various public institutions, the specific influence of academic qualifications and professional training on the performance of procurement staff has been underexplored. This study aims to address this gap. By focusing on Morogoro Referral Hospital, the research investigates how the educational background and professional development of procurement staff contribute to their performance. The study seeks to

provide actionable insights for improving procurement practices, professionalism, and accountability within Tanzanian public entities.

➤ Theoretical Framework

This study used Resource Based Theory in interpreting the study. Resource-Based Theory (RBT) was first put forward by Penrose (2009), who proposed a model on the effective management of firms' resources, diversification strategy, and productive opportunities. Penrose's publication was the first to propose conceptualizing a firm as a coordinated bundle of resources to address and tackle how it can achieve its goals and strategic behaviour. RBT began to take shape in the 1980s. The antecedent of RBT was the Theory of the Growth of the Firm. Later, during the 1990s, Jay Barney's work was critical to the emergence of RBT and became the dominant paradigm in strategic management and strategic planning (Utami & Alamanos, 2023). Resource Based Theory (RBT) provides a framework to highlight and predict the fundamentals of organization performance and competitive advantage. The focus of RBT on the firm's performance based on perspectives was a reaction to the earlier managerial interest in the industry structure, a more macro perspective. RBT addresses an internally-driven approach by focusing on internal organization resources, as opposed to externally driven approaches to understanding the accomplishment or failure of leveraging organizational activities. It aims to elaborate on imperfectly imitable firm resources that could potentially become the source of sustained competitive advantage.

One strength of RBT lies in its emphasis on internal factors, highlighting how firms can leverage their distinct resources to achieve sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). By focusing on resources such as technology, human capital, and organizational culture, RBT provides a framework for understanding why some firms outperform others. However, critics argue that RBT can be ambiguous in defining what constitutes a valuable resource and how to sustain competitive advantage over time (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). Additionally, RBT's reliance on internal capabilities may overlook the influence of external factors such as market dynamics and regulatory changes, limiting its applicability in dynamic and uncertain environments (Peteraf, 1993). Thus, while RBT offers valuable insights into strategic management, its effectiveness depends on a firm's ability to continuously adapt and innovate in response to both internal

and external challenges (Barney, 1991; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010).

RBT is highly relevant to this study since it highlights how the academic qualifications and professional training of procurement staff can be viewed as valuable resources that contribute to more efficient and effective procurement practices. By leveraging these human capital resources, organizations can enhance their procurement processes, reduce costs, and improve overall performance, thereby gaining a strategic advantage. This theoretical framework helps in understanding how investment in staff development translates into superior procurement outcomes and contributes to the organization's overall success.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employs a mixed-method research approach combined with a case study design, focusing on procurement practices at Morogoro Referral Hospital. The target population included individuals directly involved in the hospital's procurement processes. A sample size of 67 respondents was used. Data collection involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaires were administered to 67 respondents to gather quantitative data. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with senior procurement officers and heads of department from Morogoro Referral Hospital to collect qualitative insights.

The convenience sampling technique was employed to select individuals directly involved in the hospital's procurement processes who are easily accessible and willing to participate, while purposive sampling ensured that participants with specific expertise in procurement such as individuals directly involved in the hospital's procurement processes are included in a study. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring themes and insights related to the impact of academic qualifications and professional training on procurement staff performance.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Academic qualifications and professional training play a crucial role in enhancing the performance of procurement staff. Table 1 explores how these factors impact various aspects of procurement activities based on user responses.

Table 1 The impact of academic Qualifications and Professional Training on Procurement Staff Performance

Items / Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Provides a solid base for procurement staff.	17 (25.4%)	20 (29.9%)	7 (10.4%)	4 (6.0%)	1 (1.5%)
Understanding core principles	13 (19.4%)	18 (26.9%)	8 (11.9%)	5 (7.5%)	2 (3.0%)
supply chain	15 (22.4%)	17 (25.4%)	10 (14.9%)	6 (9.0%)	1 (1.5%)
Negotiation	12 (17.9%)	20 (29.9%)	6 (9.0%)	5 (7.5%)	2 (3.0%)
Supplier evaluation	7 (10.4%)	10 (14.9%)	13 (19.4%)	11 (16.4%)	3 (4.5%)
Contract management	8 (11.9%)	14 (20.9%)	12 (17.9%)	10 (14.9%)	1 (1.5%)
Risk mitigation	5 (7.5%)	8 (11.9%)	17 (25.4%)	13 (19.4%)	1 (1.5%)

Staff gets updated on regulations, software, and best practices	10 (14.9%)	15 (22.4%)	11 (16.4%)	7 (10.4%)	2 (3.0%)
Invest in well-designed programs that tackle current industry challenges.	12 (17.9%)	17 (25.4%)	9 (13.4%)	6 (9.0%)	2 (3.0%)

Source: Field Data (2024)

The procurement function plays a crucial role in organizational success, and the effectiveness of procurement staff is significantly influenced by their academic qualifications and professional training. A detailed analysis of a survey among procurement professionals reveals insightful perspectives on how education and continuous professional development contribute to various competencies essential for procurement practices.

➤ *Providing a Solid Base for Procurement Staff*

A significant portion of respondents, 55.3%, strongly agree or agree that academic qualifications and professional training provide a solid foundation for procurement staff. This consensus indicates that formal education and ongoing professional development equip procurement professionals with the essential knowledge and skills required to execute their roles effectively.

Senior procurement officers often emphasize the importance of this foundation. As one head of procurement stated, *“Our procurement team’s ability to navigate complex procurement challenges is heavily dependent on the strong educational foundation they possess. It’s this base that allows them to apply critical principles effectively across various situations.”* This strong base is crucial because procurement involves not just buying goods and services but also understanding intricate market dynamics, supplier relationships, and compliance with regulations.

➤ *Understanding Core Principles*

Understanding core procurement principles is vital for implementing best practices and ensuring compliance with procurement standards. A combined 46.3% of respondents strongly agree or agree that academic qualifications and professional training significantly help procurement staff in grasping these fundamental principles. A senior procurement officer remarked, *“Without a solid understanding of core principles, procurement can become a reactive process rather than a strategic function. Education and training ensure that our staff not only follow best practices but also anticipate potential challenges before they arise.”* This understanding enables procurement professionals to make informed decisions, enhancing the overall procurement process and ensuring that organizational objectives are met efficiently.

➤ *Supply Chain Management*

Supply chain management is a critical area in procurement, with 47.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that professional training improves understanding in this domain. Effective supply chain management ensures that the flow of goods and services is efficient and cost-effective, which is paramount for organizational success. A head of department highlighted the impact of training in this area, saying, *“Professional training in supply chain management allows our procurement staff to optimize processes, reduce*

costs, and improve service delivery. This knowledge is indispensable in today’s competitive market where efficiency and reliability are key.” Enhanced understanding of supply chain management enables procurement staff to streamline operations and contribute to the organization’s bottom line.

➤ *Negotiation Skills*

Negotiation is a crucial skill in procurement, where 47.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that training enhances negotiation abilities. Effective negotiation can lead to better terms, cost savings, and stronger supplier relationships. *“Negotiation is at the heart of what we do in procurement,”* said a senior procurement officer. *“The ability to negotiate effectively can mean the difference between a good deal and a great deal. Training sharpens these skills and gives our team the confidence to secure the best possible outcomes for the organization.”* Through professional training, procurement staff are better equipped to handle negotiations, ensuring that their organizations obtain maximum value from their contracts.

➤ *Supplier Evaluation*

Supplier evaluation is another critical area in procurement, though it received slightly lower agreement levels, with 25.3% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that academic qualifications and professional training positively impact this area. Despite the lower percentage, the importance of education and training in assessing and selecting reliable suppliers cannot be overstated. A department head mentioned, *“Effective supplier evaluation is not just about choosing the lowest bidder; it’s about assessing quality, reliability, and long-term value. Training ensures that our staff are equipped with the tools to make these assessments thoroughly and effectively.”* This ability to evaluate suppliers accurately ensures that the organization maintains high standards in its procurement processes.

➤ *Contract Management*

Contract management is a critical area where 32.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree that training has a positive impact. Proper contract management is essential for ensuring that agreements are fulfilled as per the terms, reducing risks, and enhancing the quality of procured goods and services. According to a senior procurement manager, *“Contract management is where many procurement risks are managed. Training in this area equips our staff with the skills to handle complex contractual obligations effectively, ensuring that the organization is protected from potential legal and financial issues.”* Training in contract management is therefore vital for procurement professionals to safeguard their organizations against risks and ensure successful contract execution.

➤ Risk Mitigation

Risk mitigation is crucial in procurement to minimize potential losses and ensure smooth operations. However, only 19.4% of respondents agree or strongly agree that academic qualifications and professional training have a positive impact on risk mitigation, suggesting that more targeted training in this area may be necessary. A senior procurement officer noted, *“While general training provides a good foundation, risk mitigation in procurement requires specialized knowledge and experience. There is a clear need for more focused training programs that address the specific risks associated with procurement activities.”* This insight highlights the need for procurement teams to engage in continuous learning, particularly in areas of high risk, to better prepare for potential challenges.

➤ Staying Updated on Regulations, Software, and Best Practices

The procurement field is constantly evolving, and staying updated on regulations, software, and best practices is essential. A total of 37.3% of respondents agree or strongly agree that academic qualifications and professional training help staff remain current in these areas. One head of procurement emphasized, *“Procurement is a dynamic field. What worked last year might not work this year. Continuous professional development ensures that our staff are not only compliant with current regulations but also proficient in the latest tools and methodologies.”* Staying updated is critical for maintaining compliance and leveraging new technologies to improve procurement efficiency and effectiveness.

➤ Tackling Current Industry Challenges

A combined 43.3% of respondents agree or strongly agree that well-designed training programs that tackle current industry challenges are beneficial. This highlights the importance of relevant and up-to-date training programs that address the evolving landscape of procurement. *“Industry challenges are ever-changing, and our training programs need to reflect that,”* said a senior procurement executive. By addressing current industry challenges through training, organizations can ensure that their procurement teams remain resilient and adaptable.

➤ Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is fundamental for problem-solving and strategic decision-making in procurement, with 55.3% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that academic qualifications and professional training enhance this skill.

A procurement manager explained, *“Critical thinking allows our staff to analyze situations from multiple angles and make informed decisions that benefit the organization. Training programs that focus on developing these skills are invaluable.”*

The ability to think critically enables procurement professionals to navigate complex scenarios and make decisions that align with organizational goals.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study underscores the vital role of academic qualifications and professional training in enhancing procurement staff performance. A majority of respondents agree that such qualifications provide a solid foundation, deepen understanding of core procurement principles, and improve skills in critical areas like supply chain management, negotiation, and critical thinking. While areas like supplier evaluation and risk mitigation show varying levels of agreement, the overall positive impact on procurement practices is evident. This highlights the necessity for continuous investment in education and training programs tailored to current industry challenges, which are crucial for optimizing procurement processes and achieving organizational success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that organizations invest in comprehensive and targeted training programs for procurement staff to address identified gaps and enhance performance across all critical areas. Emphasis should be placed on improving skills in risk mitigation and supplier evaluation, where current training appears less effective. Additionally, regular updates and refresher courses should be implemented to keep staff abreast of evolving regulations, software advancements, and industry best practices. Tailoring training programs to tackle current industry challenges and promoting ongoing professional development will ensure that procurement staff are well-equipped to handle complex procurement tasks, ultimately leading to more efficient and effective procurement processes.

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