

The Challenges of Public e-Procurement Practices in Sub-Saharan Africa in Relation to Public Service Delivery

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Abstract

This paper identified and analysed the challenges facing public e-procurement practices in sub-Saharan Africa in relation to service delivery. It engaged a cross-sectional research design. It used cross-country data. This is an attempt to provide comparable data on challenges of public procurement practices from sub-Saharan Africa in relation to service delivery. Thus, the design encouraged the verifiability of situations in countries and ensures comparability. Data used are based on the hypothetical case studies provided in the literature provided on sub-Saharan African countries. The paper identified obsolete administrative cultures which have underscored bureaucracies as a traditional problem. However, there continue to be insufficiently skilled professionals and inadequate strategic treatment of procurement transactions. Arguably, the challenges facing sub-Saharan African countries in the area of public e-procurement in relation to service delivery are multidimensional with deep corrupt neurosis.

Key words: Public procurement; E-procurement; Service delivery; Corruption

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1. INTRODUCTION

Public procurement is a tool in the hand of public administrations across the world to provide or perform basic governance operations. This is a means to provide service delivery to the citizenry, from a minimum purchase of stationary to the procurement of highly sensitive ammunition and artilleries for military use. An effective government is expected to deploy the best practices to attainment its constitutional duties. It could be presumed that public procurement is heavily regulated in countries of the world; this is because they have assumed public sector capacity for efficient institutions' running. Public procurement practices are becoming an essential part of governance, and cardinal to good governance.

The basic principles of public procurement include transparency, healthy competition, and value for money is pivotal to the success of any government. This is because of the sensitive nature by which money expended on public procurement is gotten from ... taxpayers' money, donations, grants, and subventions. Worldwide in 2018, public procurement amounts to 12% of the global Gross Domestic Product in the procurement of goods, services and works by public authority on behalf of the citizenry. This accounts for the complexity inherent in the processes. Hence, public procurement is progressively becoming a key means of maintaining innovation (Sönnichsen & Clement, 2020), such as the deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for procurement steps including the advertisement, bidding, selection, contract award, payment among others to promote transparency, improved competition, and enhance value for money.

Nations have seen the importance of good practices. For instance, the European Union member states were very fast in taking up e-procurement to deliver goods and services while staying guided by common treaties

or regulations (2014 Directives). NASA was the first to have used such technology in transforming to the computerised process of procurement. As a result of the rapid uptake of ICT, electronic public service delivery is now becoming a strong way to minimise redtapism, high cost of governance, and long waiting time for the citizens. However, sub-Saharan African countries are still considering losing so much money to traditional procurement methods with much of paper works and less computerisation. Though a common problem or challenge of public procurement is corruption, no country is shielded from it even the most developed. But the situation is less favourable in sub-Saharan African countries that are falling short of standards. In the 21st century, many African governments are striving for quality service delivery through effective procurement (e-government/e-procurement). For instance, Nigeria had joined Open Government Partnership and also adopted modern technologies through Bureau Public Procurement. To this extent, this paper aimed at analysing the various challenges facing e-public procurement practices in sub-Saharan Africa with particular reference to public service delivery.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Public Procurement

Public procurement is a tool in the hand of public administrations across the world to provide or perform basic governance operations. This is a means to provide service delivery to the citizenry, from a minimum purchase of stationary to the procurement of highly sensitive ammunition and artilleries for military use. An effective government is expected to deploy the best practices to the attainment of its constitutional duties. It could be presumed that public procurement is heavily regulated in countries of the world; this is because they have assumed public sector capacity for efficient institutions' running. Public procurement practices are becoming an essential part of governance, and cardinal to good governance.

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Nations have seen the importance of good practices. For instance, the European Union member states were very fast in taking up e-procurement to deliver goods and services while staying guided by common treaties or regulations (2014 Directives). NASA was the first to have used such technology in transforming to the computerised process of procurement. However, sub-Saharan African countries are still considering losing so much money to traditional procurement methods with much of paper works and less computerisation. Though a common problem or challenge of public procurement is corruption, no country is shielded from it, even the most developed. But, the situation is less favourable in sub-Saharan African countries that are falling short of standards. In the 21st century, many African governments are striving for quality service delivery through effective procurement (e-government/e-procurement). For instance, Nigeria had joined Open Government Partnership and also adopted modern technologies through Bureau Public Procurement.

Public procurement is a complex activity. It is also referred to as government procurement. The International Organisation for Standardisation (2010) described it as “the process which creates, manages and fulfils contracts and a succession of logically related actions occurring or performed in a definite manner and which culminate into the completion of a major deliverable or the attainment of a milestone” (p.v). The concept of government procurement is largely defined as the acquisition, obtaining or purchasing by any means of a contract of goods, services, and construction services by the public authority (Bwoga & Kamau, 2011). Public procurement involves the purchase of goods and awarding of contracts for construction works using the state's resources as the main sources of finance (Ghossein, Hoekman, & Shingal, 2021). Though, source of financing public procurement may include donor funds and other stakeholders having interest in the need assessment that has been carried out.

Thus, public procurement is the purchasing of goods and services with taxpayers' money. Items that fall within public procurement may include simple goods and services (for example buying of files, staple pins among others) to big projects such as the construction of roads, electric installation, water projects among others (Bwoga & Kamau, 2011). Public procurement as a public policy tool within a legal framework aims to realise social justice (Ferreira, Cunha, Amaral, & Camões, 2014). Nevertheless, it can be suggested that there are so many explanations for considering government procurement as one of the essential activities of governments across the world because it influences economic value; the effectiveness of the nations; the welfare of citizenry; all government sectors. Public sectors really need to procure goods and

services to achieve their objectives (Ferreira et al., 2014). Globally, public procurement is broad, it is a means of providing social services to the citizens and it constitutes 18.42% of the worldwide Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Government procurement is significantly a share of public annual expenditures (Hetland, 2012), about \$11 trillion (Dzuke & Naude, 2017). Further, Dzuke & Naude noted that in developing countries, procurement represents 25 per cent of the GDP.

Public procurement represents the complex process that develops, manages and ensures contracts in the public sphere. It is the arrangement by which public authorities purchase goods and services from a second party including private entity or sector, this form of procurement is said to be conducted at regional or national levels following specific rules and regulations (Ahmari-Davis, 2017). Public procurement is a form of purchasing that has an effect on the economy of any nation (Fazekas & Blum, 2021). It involves the procurement of goods or services by the public authority and this is a key activity of the government in delivering good governance. In the achievement of public policy, government procurement became relevant.

The notion that government is the purchase of goods and services by public agencies is widely supported by scholars. For instance, Dzuke and Naude (2017) stated that government procurement is the process of acquiring goods and services by public authority on behalf of the state using taxpayer or citizen's money, hence value for money should be demanded (Dzuke & Naude, 2017; Kristensen *et al.*, 2021). Public procurement is then the procedure whereby government entities acquire works, goods and services and routine items from third parties, for example, stationery, roads construction, construction of power stations among others (Dzuke & Naude, 2017; Lindfors & Ammenberg, 2021). However, government procurement includes four fundamental principles which are policymaking, procurement regulation, public procurement processes and procurement authorization (Ahmari-Davis, 2017; Kristensen *et al.*, 2021). This kind of system sets up bid qualification and other contract award selection mechanisms.

While taking note of public procurement procedures, Neupane, Soar, Vaidya and Yong (2012) explained that there are different phases in public procurement processes; each of these phases has a risk of corruption. The phases include planning and budgeting of procurement activities, procurement solicitation, and award of contract and performance. In another perspective, Dzuke and Naude (2017) noted that stages of public procurement include preparation (Stage 1), advertising (Stage 2), bid evaluation (Stage 3), award (Stage 4), and contract (Stage 5).

2.2 E-government

E-government is the process of informing open government through the transformation and advancement

of public administration to accommodate both the internal and external relations aided by network-based activities, information and communication technology with the view to optimising social service delivery. E-government in the opinion of Twizeyimana and Andersson (2019) is referred to as the deployment of ICT to enhance the efficiency of the functions that are internal in the processes of government. E-government links different agencies and departments, thus presenting the flow of information more easily and faster in various government departments (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019). E-government provides that ICT is opened up to new potentials for public administration to be more transparent to businesses and citizenry by disseminating information, enhancing a great deal to access, collect and generate data by the government (Cegarra-Navarro, Pachón, & Cegarra, 2012; Pérez-Morote, Pontones-Rosa & Núñez-Chicharro, 2020). It has been argued that e-government is all about the citizens, businesses, governments, and employees (Moon, 2002; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019; Choi & Chandler, 2020). The electronic interactions and transactions between the government and each group are categorised into Government to Citizens, Government to Businesses, Government to Government, and Government to Employee.

In the literature, e-government has been defined as the procedure or arrangement that transforms public administration's external or internal relations using network-based information and communications technologies and other associated activities to optimise social service delivery, increases business and citizen participation, and enhances government's ability (Corsi, Gumina, & Ciriaci, 2006; Farida, Setiawan, Maryatmi & Juwita, 2020). However, the citizens, businesses, administrations and governments formed part of the network that are interconnected probably by ICT, hence the major idea of e-government. Thereby, Wirtz, Mory, Piehler and Daiser (2017) noted that e-government is the quintessential method for entrusting citizens concerned with service and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of governance in general. E-government entails the use of online platforms to provide service to citizens. This is supported by Basahel and Yamin (2017) who narrated that e-government is a method and platform to provide e-governance or e-services to citizenry and other residents of a country through internet-enabled systems and platforms. E-government is an electronic system informed by ICT adopted by governments to deliver social services to the citizen; it also allows citizen online participation through a network; interconnecting citizens, government, public officers and business (Reddick, 2020).

From the above, it can be identified that e-government is all about the process that brings technological innovation to optimise service delivery, improve government's capability, include business and citizen

participation. This is probably the main idea of what e-government means. It entails the development of events linking public administration to businesses and citizens through more technological innovations for the state and its apparatus. E-government entails a dynamic and complex innovation bringing together all sectors of the government with ICT being pivotal to involving citizens, businesses, government and administrations, public servants and even foreign entities.

2.3 Public e-Procurement

One of the natures of organisations is to buy or sell goods and services and the emergence of Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) has given way to changes in which procurement is done, called e-procurement (Bulut & Yen, 2013). In the 1990s when for the first time the system of web-based procurement were being engaged, bigger corporations including Cisco, IBM or Dell became the first users of e-procurement systems (Bulut & Yen, 2013). E-procurement is growing faster now within the public administration (governance) and is becoming a force driving governments around the world. Meanwhile, Bulut and Yen noted that the first e-procurement idea in the public sector was the “NASA Acquisition Internet Service” in the USA (Bulut & Yen, 2013). However, public e-procurement cannot be separated from the electronic government (e-government) which feeds into the Open Government Partnership. Public e-procurement (P e-P) is a strong indicator to watch in the e-government process, especially in the 21st century. Public e-procurement is the process of carrying out public procurement procedures using ICT and associated gadgets.

Public e-procurement can also be defined as the utilisation of ICT by governments in procurement activities (Neupane et al., 2012). Public e-procurement is said to have presented itself as one of the main important innovations of government (Ferreira, Cunha, Amaral and Camões, 2014). In an attempt to define P e-P, Fernandes and Vieira (2015) noted that it is a broad process or arrangement in which public authority use ICT to establish contracts for the acquisition of public goods and services or products (Fernandes & Vieira, 2015). Further, P e-P is defined as an online usage of ICT and associated infrastructure to the processing, management, evaluation and reporting of public procurement (Fernandes & Vieira, 2015; Nykolaieva, 2020). Fernandes and Vieira then observed that P e-P is a deployment of any internet-based and intergovernmental information systems that integrates and automates any phase of the procurement procedure to improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the public sectors. For the meantime, Vaidya and Campbell (2016) posited that e-commerce technologies are a function of e-procurement that is e-procurement includes the e-commerce. Vaidya and Campbell rested on the opinion of Wigand on e-commerce to be concerned

with five different approaches to include: “transaction cost theory, marketing, diffusion, information retrieval, and strategic networking” (p. 4). From this point of view, P e-P is equally a subset of e-government; P e-P also includes the e-supply chain/logistics management. Hence, the argument of Vaidya and Campbell can be reinforced because P e-P gives room for multiple frameworks, an adopted solution for procurement problems.

It is important to tap into the perspectives of the United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) on the concept and idea that connotes e-P. UNGM (2012) documented that e-procurement includes the transfer of electronic data to reinforce strategic, operational, and tactical procurement. It was also noted that e-procurement really uptakes electronic data interchange (EDI). In the current time, it has been supported by internet technologies and innovations. This is becoming more pronounced in the administrative systems (UNGM, 2012). Scholars have also reviewed both the system and features of e-procurement. The system characterising e-procurement includes e-sourcing, e-tendering, e-reverse auction, Web-based ERP, e-MRO, e-market, e-intelligence, and e-ordering (Neupane et al., 2012). However, the stages of e-procurement according to Corsi (2006) and Bromberg and Manoharan (2015) include; stage 1: evolutionary stages- the chance of accessing tender notices for a public contract using the Internet only; stage 2: the possibility of tendering electronically; and stage 3: the chance of using the internet to extend the procurement including e-Auctions, e-Invoicing and e-Catalogue.

Many benefits can be obtained from the use of ICT to implement public procurement practices. Many scholars have their account of the benefits - For instance, Bof and Previtali (2010), Ferreira et al. (2014), Adebayo and Evans (2015), Boafu and Ahudey (2020) highlighted the benefits of e-procurement as an efficient way of reducing corruption, administrative barrier and other challenges associated with too much officialdom and paperwork; and a simple way of improving transparency, effectiveness and quality supply of goods and services.

From the foregoing, some notable literature has been put on record for e-procurement tools and applications. Neupane et al. (2012) and UNGM (2012) agreed that for electronic systems to support traditional procurement some tools and applications must be adopted. These tools include but not limited to EDI, ERP systems, the internet, e-mail, and XML, and World Wide Web (www).

2.4 Open Contracting

Open contracting is a set of principles reflecting an increase in participation and disclosure of information on public contracting making public procurement more competitive, fair, enhancing contract performance, and seeking value for money as the main outcomes. The open contract has been discussed by many scholars, for instance, Clare, Sangokoya, Verhulst and Young

(2016); Guerzovich and Chies Schommer (2017); Oakden, Walton and Foote (2021) have seen open contracting to be enhancing transparency to improve public procurement. Open contracting is now gaining momentum to become the norm across the globe. However, Open Contracting at its core consists of the agreeing disclosure of data; and monitoring, participation, and oversight. Open contracting is generally publishing and employing open, timely and accessible data on public contracts to engage businesses and citizens in identifying and solving problems. Essentially, open contracting contains disclosure of data throughout the whole chain of procurement starting from planning, tendering, awarding, and implementation. Open contracting can also cover other issues of non-procurement such as extractives and licensing contracts (Open Government Partnership Global Report, 2019).

From the above, it can be observed that the concept of open contracting means to carry out public contracts in a way that will allow citizens' participation and information concerning public procurement to be made open to the public without any form of restriction or hidden. The public contract should not be devoid of competitiveness, fairness, and must enhance contract performance, and seek value for money as the means justified. Open contracting has to do with all activities that improve public procurement, publishing and using open-access systems to deliver information, tendering, engaging citizens and troubleshoot problems in a timely manner (Teremetskyi, Duliba, Kroitor, Korchak & Makarenko, 2021). Open contracting gave room for the engagement of procurement stakeholders through an open procurement chain of procurement and non-procurement issues including licensing and extractives contracts.

2.5 Service Delivery

The state is saddled with vital roles to deliver a wide range of public services from security and justice to services for private enterprises and individual citizens. Besides traditional service delivery, such as education or health care, there are administrative services, such as the delivery of permissions and licences which are necessary to regulate administrative practices and proceedings. Service delivery can be defined as any interaction or contact with the administration in the public sphere during which customers that is the residents, citizens or enterprises – provide or seek to handle their affairs or fulfil their duties (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2001). This kind of services is better delivered in a reliable, predictable, and customer-friendly manner and should be effective as well (Omotoso, 2014).

Service delivery is a concept that describes the means of getting goods and services to the citizenry in a way that meets their expectations (Li & Shang, 2020). Service delivery is important to the government, crucial to the public sector as part of the government's social

contract with citizenry. Service delivery is crucial as it provides infrastructure like roads, health care, power grids, education, social protection, and water systems. The concept of service delivery as it applies to development is a unique one. Scholars have linked service delivery with socioeconomic performance and other parameters of development as it relates to the political dimensions. According to World Bank, service delivery is how the government's business is being operated to deliver service to people besides profit-making. These enterprises provide services to the citizenry (Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Service delivery is a similitude of service to customers and society concerning ethical standards of business in the best practices (Liu, Wong, Shi, Chu & Brock, 2014).

However, the World Bank is concerned with nations' development - the follow up of economic and social projects became imperatives in order maintain sound compliance with development standards as a function of public service delivery. Service delivery is the disposition of the citizens with respect service programmes in any way executed by any government (Oladoyin & Onabanjo, 2021).

According to Fagbemi (2006), there are activities that could result in effective public service delivery. They include "reviewing the past performances of the factors in the near and far of the environment which impacts upon service quality delivered by the public sectors and closing the gaps between citizen expectations and their experience" (p. 2). Service delivery is expected to get people closer to the government hence bridging the administrative gap. Scholars have agreed that the improvement of public service delivery in the public sector is not a task that could be completed in a day; it is rather a continuous and complex process involving bureaucratic reinforcement. Afegbua (2011) in Agboola (2015) suggests some possible approaches to service delivery. These according to him are the "establishment of customer-service task forces, having regular meetings with employees and customers' regular information through newsletters or other publications" (p. 3). Others include creating benefits; applying problem-solving approaches, and employing strategies of management quality are necessary for effective service delivery (Agboola, 2015). The above implies that citizens are at the centre of service delivery and they must be treated as clients or customers by the public service providers.

2.6 Challenges of Procurement in Relation to Service Delivery

In Africa, besides the challenges associated with the measurement of the public procurement procedure and inadequate quality data, other challenges mentioned by Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012) are "lack of proper skills and capacity, knowledge, non-compliance with policy and regulations, fraud and corruption" (p. 2). To

Ambaw and Telgen (2017), the challenges facing public procurement procedure in SSA are routed in the mode at which African countries receive their finance, the government projects are fully or partly financed either by donors, international development agencies including World Bank where the government is forced to use the procurement guideline of the donors sometimes. In the view of Komakech (2016), the most challenge facing Africa is the lack of a strong institutional mechanism to fight corruption. Collaboratively, Bothell

(2016) noted that challenges that are making SSA falling short in the area of PPP include the lack of capacity in subnational bodies, delays in the evaluation of tenderers, information management constraints and perception of corruption by the media and public. To Asamoah et al. (2019), status quo bias could influence the compliance to public procurement laws and regulations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Another problem identified is that the anti-corruption agencies are not adequately independent, as many of them are still under the wings and caprices of the executive; the executives wield too many powers unchecked, there are inadequate effective internal regulations and oversight mechanisms; there is a weak political will to change; the development of civil activism measures and administrative measures are neglected or almost non-existing. Generally, the challenge facing SSA's PPP according to Bekele, Kedir and Karafo (2020) is corruption. It is posited by CPI (2019) that "corruption is more pervasive in countries where big money can flow freely into electoral campaigns and where the government only listens to the voices of wealthy or well-connected individuals." Finally, Ndercaj and Ringwald (2014) pointed out that sub-Saharan African countries are facing common challenges including, poor public procurement systems, lack of accountability and transparency, lacks of competitiveness in that small local businesses are not allowed to be part of the procurement process as a result of inadequate capabilities, knowledge deficiency in procurement, professionalism and qualification, limited use or adoption of e-procurement, and corruption at high levels.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper engaged a cross-sectional research design. It uses cross-country data. This is to provide comparable data on challenges of public procurement practices from sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, the design encourages the verifiability of situations in countries and ensures comparability. Data used are based on the hypothetical case study provided in the literature from sub-Saharan African countries including Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroun, Cape Verde, and Chad. Others are DR Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Kenya. The rest are

Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Hence, the paper used secondary data that were collected from relevant procurement literature. In addition, common indicators of public procurement challenges were identified, each of the indicators was checked against what is obtainable in the study area and if the challenges are "applicable" or "not applicable" to the countries under study. However, a deductive analysis was employed as a form data analysis technique.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Generally, African countries have had challenges in implementing e-government with many projects being partial or total failures. In sub-Saharan African countries, the table below revealed that the states' agencies are slow in putting in place the capacities needed with widespread inadequate ICT infrastructure and mass connectivity to the Internet have hindered expected procurement roll-out. There is the challenge of obsolete administrative cultures which have underscored bureaucracies. However, there continues to be an insufficient skilled professional, inadequate strategic treatment of procurement transactions, few systematic approaches to procurement, and corruption in public procurement are not effectively controlled because of the inadequacy in accountability and control mechanisms.

The challenges of public procurement practices in SSA Challenges of public procurement practices	Is it applicable to the sub-Saharan African Countries as a whole?
Free movement of money into election campaigns (CPI, 2020; Ufere, Gaskin, Perelli, Somers & Boland, 2020)	Yes
State agencies are slow in putting in place capacities needed (Engelbert, 2016; Ufere et al., 2020)	Yes
Inadequate ICT infrastructure for mass internet connection (Bakibinga-Gaswaga, Bakibinga, Bakibinga, & Bakibinga, 2020)	Yes
Obsolete administrative cultures (Asamoah, Annan, Rockson & Effah-Baah, 2019)	Yes
Insufficient skilled professionals (Ufere et al., 2020)	Yes
Inadequate strategic plan to treating procurement issues (Bashaka, 2017)	Yes
Inadequate systematic approaches to completing procurement steps (Stoffel, Cravero, La Chimia & Quinot, 2019)	Yes
Kickbacks and diversions (Toeba, 2018)	Yes
Inadequacy in the control and accountability mechanisms (Gbahabo, 2017; Knack & Kackers, 2019)	Yes
Limited data and secrecy in public procurement (Knack & Kackers, 2019)	Yes

In SSA, limited data is an expensive challenge facing the region in the area of public procurement practices concerning service delivery. Though, some of the countries of SSA have already joined the Open Government Partnership; Nigeria is heading towards its implementation and has come up with the legal means and policy frameworks to ascertain ownership beneficiaries. Nigeria, the extractive segment needs firms to disclose ownership via centralised registration. In Kenya, the regulations to develop a centralized registration of beneficial ownership had equally been put forth in an Executive Order of 2018, disclosing winning suppliers mandatory in government procurement. In Gabon, the Ministry of Finance also agreed to disclose beneficial ownership information as part of the oversight framework. Yet, corruption seems to be impeding the success of various procurement initiatives. This is perhaps why money freely flows into the electoral campaign in the region. A means of getting this huge sum of money is usually through kickbacks, bribery during the public procurement cycle. This is similar to the opinion of Transparency International which asserted that corruption is more pronounced and pervasive in countries where huge or big money can freely flow into the electoral campaign (CPI, 2019; Oduola, Hassan, & Bana, 2020).

For instance, Nigeria the most populated country in the sub-Saharan African countries spent about N8billion on the 2015 General Election (Lois, 2018) amidst huge procurement fraud. In the country, it is arguable that there is no really a time in the history of the country when corruption revolving around fraudulent public procurement will not be identified or raised in a fiscal year. Procurement fraud costs Nigeria at least N300billion yearly (Mathias, 2021), a notable scenario is Sambo Dasuki's diversion of \$2.1 billion (N546 billion) arms procurement and fund, this represents about 3.2% of the 2022 budget, which was higher in the fiscal year when the fraud was committed.

A high level of public procurement secrecy has been identified in SSA. This is equally discussed in the UNCA (2021) which pointed out that in Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Kenya a high level of secrecy has been identified in procurements practices. This had caused an increase in the likelihood of high-level corruption, because African leaders most time do not comply with the standards prescribed by UNCAC Article 9, which promotes best practices in preventing corruption and associated unethical behaviour.

The corruption level seems to become so high in SSA even during the pandemic, COVID-19. This is also contained in the three case studies presented during the first-ever regional meeting for Sub-Saharan Africa (UNCA, 2021). The problem caused by the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide has placed an exceptional strain on public service delivery. This is already giving indicators

in sub-Saharan African countries increasing inequalities, particularly for those who live hand-to-mouth, because of an increase in the unemployment rate and conspicuous social insecurity. In addition, the procurement of services and goods has been hindered with irregularities, some due to the weak service delivery initially caused by poor public procurement practices. From the foregoing, it is arguable that the challenges facing sub-Saharan African countries are multidimensional with deep corrupt neurosis.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the basic principles of public procurement including transparency, healthy competition, and value for money is pivotal to the success of any government. It has been seen that government procurement is sensitive to public service delivery going by the nature of such huge transactions which money expended is sourced from taxpayers' money, donations, grants, and subventions. However, the deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for procurement steps including the advertisement, bidding, selection, contract award, payment among others have helped in promoting transparency, improved competition, and enhanced value for money. To this extent, it was identified that obsolete administrative cultures have underscored bureaucracies. However, there continue to be insufficiently skilled professionals and inadequate strategic treatment of procurement transactions. Arguably, the challenges facing sub-Saharan African countries in the area of public procurement in relation to service delivery are multidimensional with deep corrupt neurosis.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes of the study, it is recommended that the leaders in sub-Saharan Africa should intensify efforts to increase the transparency procedures to help prevent malicious acts including corruption which became the "hot spot" in procurement cycles. The member countries should cooperate to promote green procurement as this will help in reaching some of the targets of Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, leaders of the sub-Saharan African countries are strongly encouraged to imbibe good political culture, to turn down selfish interest for strong political will in allowing functioning institutions and mitigating the effect of the procurement capacity challenges examined in the region, in particular issues regarding accountability, integrity, and transparency.

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