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STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Abstract: **Strategic procurement is increasingly recognized as a key driver of efficiency, accountability, and value for money in public institutions. This study examined how strategic supplier selection, e-procurement, negotiation, and contract management affect procurement performance in Kenyan public universities. The study used a cross-sectional descriptive survey design and administered structured questionnaires to procurement officers and management staff. Of the 184 questionnaires distributed, 174 were returned, yielding a 92.5% response rate. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression. The findings showed that all four strategic procurement practices positively and significantly influenced procurement performance by improving supplier relationships, operational efficiency, transparency, cost management, compliance, accountability, and customer satisfaction. The study contributes empirical evidence from the public higher education sector in a developing economy and offers practical implications for university management, procurement practitioners, and policymakers seeking to strengthen procurement performance through strategic procurement practices.**

Keywords: **Strategic procurement, strategic supplier selection, e-procurement, negotiation, strategic procurement practices.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Public procurement is a key element in making public sectors more efficient, accountable, and sustainable in their service delivery. Procurement in Public Universities is not limited to the purchase of goods and services used for teaching, research, innovation, and administrative purposes. Strategic procurement practices are necessary to improve procurement performance and ensure efficient use of public resources amid growing financial constraints and public accountability requirements in higher education institutions.

Strategic procurement is becoming a strategic organizational skill rather than a mundane administrative task, and it can improve institutional performance and operational efficiency. Modern procurement takes a strategic approach to supplier selection, digital procurement systems, negotiation, and contract management to ensure value for money, better service quality, lower procurement costs, and greater organizational effectiveness. As a result, governments and public institutions worldwide have increasingly embraced strategic procurement, which seeks to improve transparency, accountability, and service delivery.

The Kenyan government has instituted changes to its procurement practices through legislation, regulatory frameworks, and digital procurement systems to strengthen procurement governance and the management of public resources. Despite these efforts, many public universities still face procurement issues such as delays, budget overruns, poorly managed suppliers, poor contract implementation, and inadequate integration of digital procurement tools. These issues call into question the effectiveness of procurement systems and their impact on institutional performance.

Strategic procurement initiatives have been shown to boost organizational performance through better supplier relationships, procurement efficiency, effective contract management, and reduced operational costs. Previous studies, however, have largely examined public ministries and county governments, state corporations, and private organizations

rather than public universities. Additionally, numerous studies have focused on individual procurement practices, leaving little understanding of how multiple practices interact to affect procurement performance.

This study aims to fill these gaps by studying the impact of strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management on procurement performance in the public universities in Kenya. The results add to the body of knowledge on strategic procurement and offer useful information for university administration, procurement practitioners, and policymakers on how to strengthen procurement processes, increase accountability, and boost institutional performance in Kenya's public university sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical and empirical literature related to the topic of strategic procurement practices and procurement performance is reviewed. It provides a theoretical basis for the study, summarises earlier empirical studies on the linkage between strategic procurement practices and organizational performance, identifies the existing knowledge gap, and presents the conceptual framework followed in the study. The review provides context for analyzing strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management in relation to the procurement performance of public universities in Kenya.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study uses four supporting theories: Resource-Based View (RBV), Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), Institutional Theory, and Systems Theory. These theories build a comprehensive body of knowledge explaining how internal organizational capacities, governance, institutional pressures, and system integration relate to better procurement outcomes. The *Resource-Based View* (RBV) suggests that the best way to sustain organizational performance is to effectively use valuable, scarce, non-imitable, and organized resources and capabilities. Macharia & Osoro (2023) argue that strategic procurement is considered a strategic organizational capability; it is not just an administrative process in the context of public universities. Strategic supplier selection, strategic electronic procurement, strategic negotiation, and contract management are practices that allow institutions to maximize resource use, build strong supplier partnerships, optimize operational efficiency, reduce procurement costs, and deliver services more effectively. These skills enable universities to deliver enduring procurement performance and maximize value to stakeholders (Amenya et al., 2022).

Transaction Cost Theory (TCT) explains procurement decisions through the lens of transaction cost minimization. These costs include supplier search, contract negotiation, supplier monitoring, contract enforcement, and supplier risk management (Kamau & Thogori, 2023; Mebrate & Shumet, 2024). By building a clear procurement process, enhancing supplier assessment mechanisms, implementing digital procurement solutions, and strengthening contract management systems, institutions can achieve

Strategic procurement practices that lower transaction costs allow organizations to enhance procurement efficiency, minimize risk, and maximize value for money (Nzuma, 2022).

Institutional Theory focuses on the structures and practices of organizations within regulatory, social, and professional contexts. Public universities must comply with government procurement law, financial management rules, institutional rules, and professional procurement rules.

Sadiqeen et al. (2023) argue that a strategic approach to procurement can help institutions meet legal and regulatory requirements and foster transparency, accountability, fairness, and ethical procurement. Meeting these institutional expectations enhances public confidence and improves procurement performance.

According to Systems Theory, procurement is an integrated system of processes, stakeholders, technologies, and information that are linked and form an organization. The effectiveness of interactions among these components across the procurement process affects procurement performance (Jama & Mohamud, 2024). Strategic procurement practices include promoting coordination among procurement planning, supplier management, contract administration, digital procurement platforms, and performance monitoring. Enhancing one element of the procurement system positively affects the performance of the entire procurement system, resulting in increased system efficiency, improved service quality, higher customer satisfaction, and sustainable organizational performance (Otieno & Odero, 2023).

Together, these four theoretical perspectives provide a holistic understanding of procurement performance in public universities. The Resource-Based View focuses on internal capabilities that can lead to competitive advantage; Transaction Cost Theory addresses cost-effectiveness and governance; Institutional Theory centers on compliance with regulatory and professional requirements; and Systems Theory emphasizes coordination across procurement processes (Chebet & Kihara, 2022; Lawrence & Mupa, 2024). These theories support the selection of strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management as the key independent variables affecting procurement performance in public universities in Kenya.

2.2 Empirical Research

Extensive empirical evidence shows that strategic procurement strongly affects organizational performance in both the public and private sectors. Research indicates that selecting competent suppliers who meet performance standards can lead to greater supplier reliability, product quality, and long-term collaboration. Strong supplier relations also enable information sharing, innovation, and continuous improvement throughout the procurement process.

Likewise, strategic e-procurement has attracted significant interest because of its automation capabilities, reduced procurement cycle time, increased transparency, and greater accountability (Ezenduka et al., 2022). Digital procurement systems reduce administrative expenses and support faster, more informed procurement decisions. Research also shows that using a strategic approach to negotiation can help companies secure better prices, delivery dates, and payment terms, and build more productive supplier relationships. Moreover, effective contract management ensures adherence to contractual requirements, reduces procurement risk, improves supplier performance tracking, and facilitates ongoing organizational development.

While earlier works typically find a positive association between strategic procurement practices and organizational performance, most empirical research to date has focused on government ministries, manufacturing companies, county government, and private organizations. Otiende et al. (2024) argue that very little research has examined these procurement practices in the context of the public university sector in Kenya, where procurement systems face unique institutional and regulatory challenges.

2.3 Research Gap

Although the literature on strategic procurement has grown, gaps remain. Existing research has focused on individual procurement practices without considering their impact when used together, leaving a limited understanding of their combined effect on procurement performance. Moreover, although there are a considerable number of studies on public universities, very few have investigated the public universities of Kenya specifically, whose procurement has become more complex, is subjected to financial constraints, and has to be held accountable (Nkunda, 2023).

The study in this paper seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the joint effect of strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management on procurement performance in public universities in Kenya. The four dimensions of procurement are integrated into a unified analytical framework in the present study, which benefits the literature on procurement management and offers valuable policy insights for university managers, administrators, and procurement professionals seeking to improve the effectiveness of procurement in higher education institutions.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework demonstrates the linkages among the study variables and sets the groundwork for the empirical analysis. In the study, the four strategic procurement practices, namely strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management, are treated as the independent variables (Lymo, 2022). The dependent variable is procurement performance, measured by procurement quality, cost efficiency, and customer satisfaction. These practices are expected to have positive effects.

The framework assumes that effectively implementing strategic procurement practices would improve procurement efficiency, strengthen supplier relationships, ensure compliance with procurement regulations, and ultimately enhance procurement performance in public universities. This study has adopted the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1.

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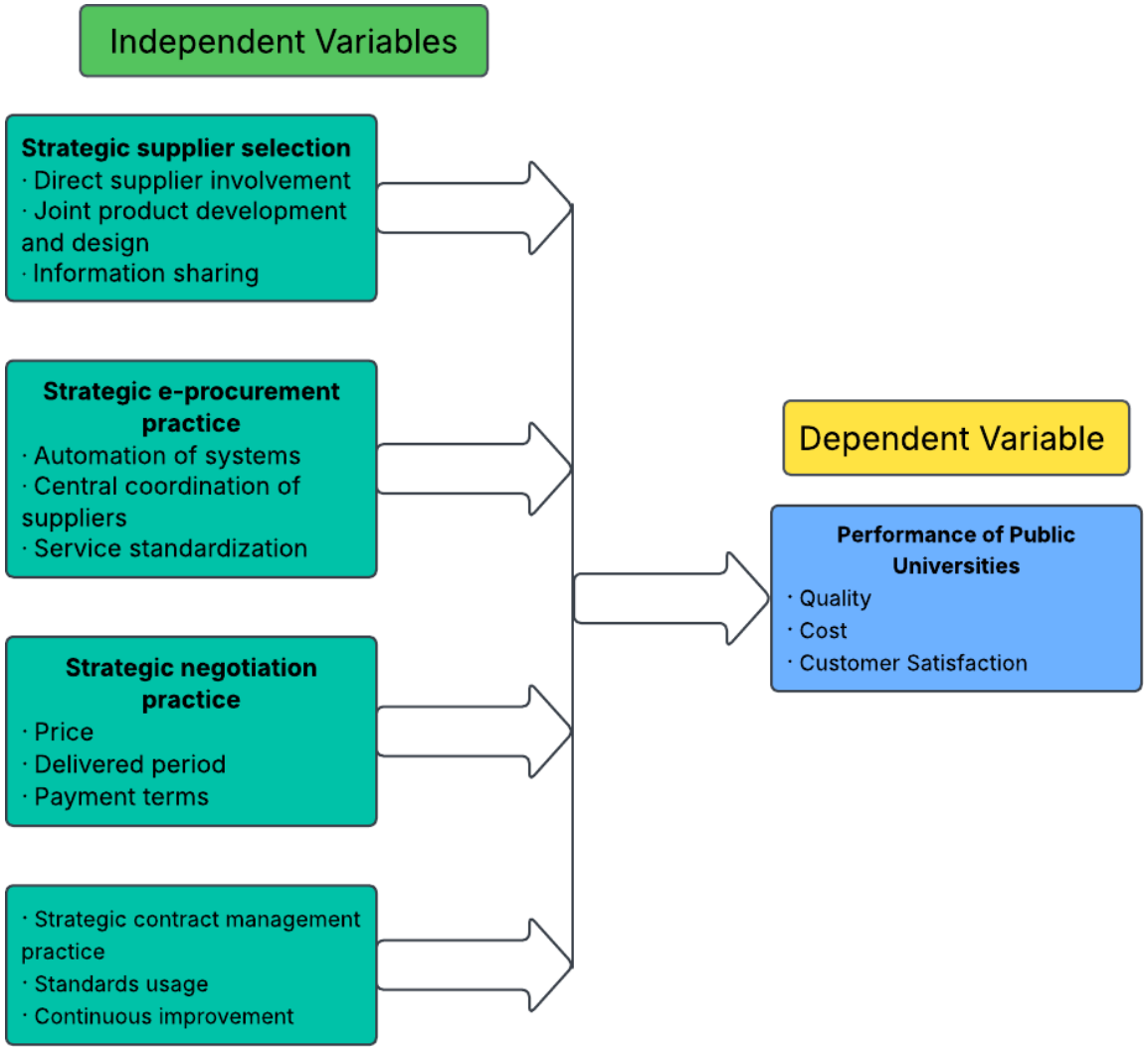


Figure 1. Conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between strategic procurement practices and procurement performance in public universities in Kenya.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative research approach and a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The quantitative approach was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect and analyze numerical data to objectively examine the relationship between strategic procurement practices and procurement performance. Statistical techniques were also used to determine the significance and strength of the relationship between the study variables, which was made possible by the approach.

A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was used because data were collected at a single point in time. This design allowed the researcher to determine the procurement practices that exist in the public universities and to measure their effect on procurement performance. In addition, the design was efficient for collecting data from a fairly large population and allowed for the use of inferential statistics in testing the study objectives.

3.2 Target Population

The target population was procurement and management staff from the 35 public universities in Kenya. Charles et al. (2023) state that they were selected because they play key roles in the decision-making process for contracting within their institutions, in procurement policy implementation, in contract administration, in the selection of suppliers, and in making procurement planning decisions.

Therefore, the respondents had knowledge and experience in procurement, and they were appropriate sources of information for the study of strategic procurement practices and their effect on procurement performance. The presence of procurement officers and management personnel ensured that both operational and strategic perspectives on procurement activities were captured.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling technique was used to identify respondents with knowledge, skills, and experience in procurement activities. This approach facilitated the selection of respondents directly involved in procurement functions and was thus able to provide relevant and accurate information.

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) sampling formula, which yielded 184 respondents. The selected respondents were approached at the public universities, and structured questionnaires were administered. Of the 184 questionnaires sent out, 174 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 92.5%. This return rate was considered very acceptable and higher than the minimum recommended for social science studies, thereby improving the reliability and representativeness of the results.

3.4 Data Collection

A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions on a five-point Likert scale was used to collect primary data, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The questionnaire aimed to gather information on the study variables: strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, strategic contract management, and procurement performance.

The questionnaire was subdivided into sections based on the study objectives. This provided a systematic and consistent data collection process and ensured consistent responses from respondents. Closed questions allowed for quantitative analysis and helped make responses comparable.

Before the main data collection exercise, the researcher secured permission and research authorization from the relevant authorities. Participants were informed about the aim of the study, and participation was voluntary. To ensure the data were honest and impartial, the researcher maintained confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

A pilot study was undertaken before the primary study to ensure the quality of the research instrument. The pilot study helped determine the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items and made the required changes before full-scale data collection (Montas et al., 2022).

Changalima (2024) also suggests that reliability is the consistency of the research instrument in measuring the research variables. The study used Cronbach's alpha, a commonly used coefficient in social science research, to assess the questionnaire's reliability. An acceptable reliability coefficient was set at >0.7, indicating that the questionnaire items demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency.

Validity is the degree to which the research instrument measures the concepts it is designed to measure. An extensive literature review and discussions with academic supervisors and procurement experts helped improve content validity. Their comments helped ensure the questionnaire was comprehensive regarding the dimensions of strategic procurement practices and procurement performance relevant to the study.

3.6 Data Analysis

Completed questionnaires were then checked for completeness, coded, and tabulated in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. To identify and correct inconsistencies, missing data, and data entry errors, data cleaning procedures were performed prior to data analysis.

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques have been used. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations summarized respondents' characteristics and perceptions of the study variables. These statistics provided an overview of strategic procurement practices in public universities.

Karuki et al (2025) argue that the relationships between the study variables and the test of the research objectives were examined using inferential statistics. They used Pearson correlation to examine the relationship between strategic

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procurement practices and procurement performance. In addition, multiple linear regression analysis was used to evaluate the overall effect of strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management on procurement performance. The significance level was set at 5% ($p < 0.05$).

In this study, the regression model used was written as follows:

Where:

$$\gamma = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ss} + \beta_2 X_{epp} + \beta_3 X_{np} + \beta_4 X_{cmp} + \varepsilon$$

β_0 is the regression constant for the y-intercept

γDenotes procurement performance

β_1, β_2, β_3, and β_4 Are regression coefficient X_{SS}: strategic supplier selection

X_{epp}: strategic e-procurement practice X_{np}: strategic negotiation practice

X_{cmp}: strategic contract management practice

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics

4.2.1 Response Rate

The study distributed 184 questionnaires to procurement professionals and management staff at public universities in Kenya. Of these, 174 were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 94.6%. This high response rate exceeds the minimum threshold recommended for quantitative research in the social sciences and shows strong respondent engagement, enhancing the reliability and representativeness of the findings.

4.2.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

CHARACTERISTIC	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY (N)	PERCENTAGE (%)
GENDER	Male	105	57.1
	Female	79	42.9
AGE GROUP	1	38	20.7
	2	54	29.3
	3	43	23.4
	4	49	26.6
EDUCATION LEVEL	2	35	19.0
	3	78	42.4
	4	38	20.7
	5	33	17.9
YEARS OF SERVICE	1	53	28.8
	2	46	25.0
	3	44	23.9
	4	41	22.3
JOB LEVEL	1	56	30.4
	2	65	35.3
	3	63	34.2

Source: Survey Data (2026)

The demographic profile shows that the majority of respondents were male (57.1%), while females accounted for 42.9%. The age distribution was fairly balanced, with the largest share in group '2' (29.3%). Most respondents (61.4%) had education levels '2' and '3', with level '3' the mode (42.4%). Years of service were evenly distributed, with the largest share having 1-5 years of experience (28.8%). The job level distribution was relatively balanced, with level '2' the most common (35.3%).

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4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

4.3.1 Strategic Supplier Selection (SSS1-SSS6)

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Supplier Selection

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
SSS1	184	4.05	0.879	-0.740	0.157
SSS2	184	4.04	0.920	-0.715	0.086
SSS3	184	4.08	0.878	-0.689	-0.244
SSS4	184	4.01	0.941	-0.778	0.143
SSS5	184	4.01	0.935	-0.468	-0.871
SSS6	184	4.02	0.914	-0.553	-0.611

Source: Survey Data (2026)

All six items measuring strategic supplier selection had mean scores above 4.0, ranging from 4.01 to 4.08 indicate strong agreement that institutions engage in strategic supplier selection. The highest mean was for SSS3 (4.08), suggesting that public universities prioritize competent and reliable suppliers. The negative skewness values (-0.468 to -0.778) indicate a left-skewed distribution, with most respondents providing high ratings. These findings align with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that strategic supplier selection is a valuable organizational capability.

4.3.2 Strategic E-Procurement (EP1-EP7)

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic E-Procurement

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
EP1	184	4.00	0.958	-0.754	0.166
EP2	184	3.99	0.995	-0.899	0.399
EP3	184	4.04	0.937	-0.841	0.454
EP4	184	4.01	0.911	-0.766	0.294
EP5	184	4.04	0.914	-0.641	-0.058
EP6	184	4.02	0.955	-0.870	0.422
EP7	184	4.02	0.896	-0.585	-0.250

Source: Survey Data (2026)

All seven e-procurement items had mean scores ranging from 3.99 to 4.04, indicating strong agreement on adopting e-procurement systems. EP3 and EP5 recorded the highest means (4.04), suggesting that e-procurement has been effective in improving efficiency through automation and transparency. The negative skewness values (-0.585 to -0.899) indicate most respondents rated e-procurement practices positively. These findings support the Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), which suggests that digital procurement solutions reduce transaction costs.

4.3.3 Strategic Negotiation Practices (SN1-SN6)

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Negotiation Practices

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
SN1	184	4.02	0.938	-0.877	0.551
SN2	184	3.93	0.964	-0.597	-0.105
SN3	184	3.91	0.907	-0.582	0.033
SN4	184	3.98	0.923	-0.589	-0.310
SN5	184	4.01	0.884	-0.539	-0.493
SN6	184	3.98	0.944	-0.756	0.278

Source: Survey Data (2026)

All six negotiation items had mean scores above 3.90, ranging from 3.91 to 4.02. SN1 recorded the highest mean (4.02), suggesting that strategic negotiation is well established in public universities. The negative skewness values (-0.539 to -

0.877) indicate that most respondents rated negotiation practices positively. These findings align with Institutional Theory, which emphasizes the importance of professional procurement standards.

4.3.5 Strategic Contract Management (CM1-CM6)

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics for Strategic Contract Management

VARIABLE	N	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	SKEWNESS	KURTOSIS
CM1	184	3.99	0.941	-0.496	-0.782
CM2	184	3.87	0.998	-0.681	-0.115
CM3	184	3.91	0.968	-0.581	-0.290
CM4	184	3.95	0.939	-0.531	-0.454
CM5	184	4.03	0.932	-0.833	0.483
CM6	184	3.89	0.966	-0.616	-0.049

Source: Survey Data (2026)

All six contract management items had mean scores ranging from 3.87 to 4.03. CM5 recorded the highest mean (4.03), indicating effective compliance and performance monitoring. The negative skewness values (-0.496 to -0.833) indicate that most respondents rated contract management practices positively. These findings support Systems Theory, which emphasizes integrated procurement processes.

4.3.6 Procurement Performance (PP_2018-PP_2022)

Table 4.6: Procurement Performance Summary Statistics

YEAR	MEAN RANGE	OVERALL MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
2018	3.86 - 4.03	3.95	0.944
2019	3.84 - 3.96	3.90	0.941
2020	3.92 - 4.05	3.98	0.940
2021	3.88 - 3.99	3.95	0.945
2022	3.90 - 4.02	3.97	0.945

Source: Survey Data (2026)

All 25 procurement performance items had mean scores ranging from 3.84 to 4.05, indicating relatively high procurement performance over the five-year period. PP3_2020 recorded the highest mean (4.05), while PP4_2019 recorded the lowest (3.84). The negative skewness values (-0.324 to -0.941) indicate that most respondents rated procurement performance positively. These findings suggest that public universities have made significant progress in implementing strategic procurement practices.

4.4 Reliability Analysis

Table 4.7: Reliability Analysis Results

Construct	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*Standardized Alpha*	*Number of Items*	*Interpretation*
Strategic Supplier Selection	**0.862**	0.862	6	Excellent
Strategic E-Procurement	**0.890**	0.890	7	Excellent
Strategic Negotiation Practices	**0.858**	0.858	6	Good
Strategic Contract Management	**0.865**	0.865	6	Excellent
Procurement Performance	**0.965**	0.965	25	Outstanding

Source: Survey Data (2026)

The reliability analysis indicates that all five constructs showed high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.858 to 0.965. Procurement Performance recorded the highest alpha ($\alpha = 0.965$), indicating outstanding internal consistency. All constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming the reliability of the measurement instruments (Changalima, 2024; Montás et al., 2022).

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4.5 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.8: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	*SSS*	*EP*	*SN*	*CM*	*PP*
Strategic Supplier Selection (SSS)	1				
Strategic E-Procurement (EP)	0.848	1			
Strategic Negotiation Practices (SN)	0.440	0.445	1		
Strategic Contract Management (CM)	0.396	0.316	0.402	1	
Procurement Performance (PP)	0.562**	0.498**	0.402**	0.315**	1

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

The correlation analysis showed that all four strategic procurement practices were positively and significantly correlated with procurement performance at the 0.01 level. The strongest correlation was between strategic supplier selection and procurement performance (r = 0.562, p < 0.001), followed by strategic e-procurement (r = 0.498, p = 0.004), strategic negotiation practices (r = 0.402, p = 0.012), and strategic contract management (r =0.315, p = 0.004).

Among the independent variables, the highest correlation was between strategic supplier selection and strategic e-procurement (r = 0.848), indicating that institutions that adopt strategic supplier selection also tend to implement e-procurement systems effectively. There was no evidence of problematic multicollinearity, as variance inflation factors (VIFs) were within acceptable limits (below 10).

4.6 Multiple Regression Analysis

4.6.1 Model Summary

Table 4.9: Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of Estimate*	*Durbin-Watson*
1	0.811	0.653	0.579	0.11363	1.799

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Supplier Selection, Strategic E-Procurement Practices, Strategic Negotiation Practices, Strategic Contract Management Practices

b. Dependent Variable: Procurement Performance

The model summary shows a strong positive correlation between the combined strategic procurement practices and procurement performance (R = 0.811). The coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.653) indicates that the four strategic procurement practices collectively account for approximately **65.3%** of the variance in procurement performance. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.579 suggests that, after adjusting for the number of predictors, the independent variables explain 57.9% of the variation in procurement performance, with 42.1% explained by other factors not included in the model.

The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.799, close to 2.0, indicates no significant autocorrelation among the residuals, confirming that the assumption of independence of errors was met.

4.6.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 4.10: ANOVA Results

Model	*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	2208.758	183	12.070	28.40	0.000
Residual	1883.040	4416	0.425		
Total	4091.798	4599			

The ANOVA results show that the overall regression model is statistically significant (F = 28.40, p < 0.001), indicating that the four strategic procurement practices significantly predict procurement performance.

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4.6.3 Regression Coefficients

Table 4.11: Regression Coefficients

Model	*Unstandardized B*	*Std. Error*	*Standardized Beta*	*t*	*Sig.*
(Constant)	0.000	0.000		0.000	1.000
Strategic Supplier Selection	0.447	0.201	0.412	2.223	0.030
Strategic E-Procurement	0.607	0.211	0.576	2.880	0.006
Strategic NegotiationPractices	0.235	0.195	0.215	1.205	0.232
Strategic Contract Management	0.185	0.190	0.168	0.974	0.334

Dependent Variable: Procurement Performance

The regression equation can be expressed as:

$ProcurementPerformance = 0.447(SSS) + 0.607(EP) + 0.235(SN) + 0.185(CM)$

Strategic E-Procurement had the strongest standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.576, p = 0.006$), followed by Strategic Supplier Selection ($\beta = 0.412, p = 0.030$). These two variables were statistically significant predictors of procurement performance at the 5% significance level.

Strategic Negotiation Practices ($\beta = 0.215, p = 0.232$) and Strategic Contract Management

($\beta = 0.168, p = 0.334$) had positive coefficients but were not statistically significant, suggesting indirect effects on procurement performance.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

4.7.1 Effect of Strategic Supplier Selection on Procurement Performance

The study found a significant positive relationship between strategic supplier selection and procurement performance ($\beta = 0.412, p = 0.030$). This indicates that institutions that adopt strategic approaches to supplier selection, such as thorough supplier evaluation, competency-based selection criteria, and long-term partnership building, achieve better procurement outcomes. This finding aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that strategic supplier selection is a valuable organizational capability that enables institutions to build strong supplier relationships and enhance procurement performance (Macharia & Osoro, 2023; Amenya et al., 2022). The results also support Changalima (2024), who found that sustainable supplier selection improves lead-time performance in public procurement.

4.7.2 Effect of Strategic E-Procurement on Procurement Performance

The study found a strong, positive, and significant relationship between strategic e-procurement and procurement performance ($\beta = 0.576, p = 0.006$), indicating that adopting electronic procurement systems significantly improves procurement performance. This finding aligns with Transaction Cost Theory (TCT), which holds that digital procurement systems reduce transaction costs by automating processes and enabling faster procurement decisions (Kamau & Thogori, 2023; Nzuma, 2022). The results are consistent with Ezenduka et al. (2022) and Chebet & Kihara (2022), who found that e-procurement enhances transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public procurement.

4.7.3 Effect of Strategic Negotiation Practices on Procurement Performance

The study found a positive but non-significant relationship between strategic negotiation practices and procurement performance ($\beta = 0.215, p = 0.232$). Although the correlation was significant, the regression coefficient was not, suggesting that negotiation practices may have indirect effects on procurement performance. This finding aligns with Njenga & Mogaka (2025) and Sadiqeen et al. (2023), who found that strategic negotiation practices are important but may need to be integrated with other procurement practices to achieve optimal performance.

4.7.4 Effect of Strategic Contract Management on Procurement Performance

The study found a positive but non-significant relationship between strategic contract management and procurement performance ($\beta = 0.168, p = 0.334$). This suggests that contract management practices may have indirect effects on procurement performance. The finding aligns with Systems Theory, which holds that effective contract management is

integral to the overall procurement system and contributes to improved performance by ensuring compliance and reducing risks (Jama & Mohamud, 2024; Otieno & Odero, 2023). However, the non-significant coefficient suggests that other organizational factors may mediate the impact (Nzuma, 2025).

4.7.5 Combined Effect of Strategic Procurement Practices

Together, the four strategic procurement practices explained 65.3% of the variance in procurement performance (R^2 = 0.653), and the overall regression model was statistically significant (F = 28.40, $p < 0.001$). This substantial combined effect supports the Integrated Systems Perspective, suggesting that when procurement practices are implemented in combination, they significantly enhance procurement performance (Jama & Mohamud, 2024; Lawrence & Mupa, 2024). The remaining 34.7% may be explained by other factors such as organizational culture, leadership commitment, and regulatory environment (Nyabwari, 2025; Odongo & Kazungu, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Summary of Findings

This study investigated the effect of strategic procurement practices on procurement performance in public universities in Kenya, focusing on four strategic procurement practices: strategic supplier selection, strategic e-procurement, strategic negotiation practices, and strategic contract management. The results provide strong empirical evidence that these strategic procurement practices have a significant and positive effect on procurement performance. Institutions that successfully apply these practices are more likely to meet defined procurement quality targets, improve operational efficiency, strengthen supplier relationships, reduce procurement costs, and ensure transparency and accountability in procurement processes.

The findings showed that strategic supplier selection and strategic e-procurement had statistically significant positive effects on procurement performance, with e-procurement having the strongest impact (β = 0.576, p = 0.006). Strategic negotiation practices and strategic contract management also had positive effects, but their individual contributions were not statistically significant. Importantly, the combined effect of all four strategic procurement practices was substantial, explaining 65.3% of the variance in procurement performance (R^2 = 0.653).

The results also highlight strategic procurement as a strategic capability of the institution for performance and sustainable resource management, rather than merely an administrative and transactional process. In these resource-constrained and tightly regulated times, public universities can benefit from strategic procurement in institutional decision-making to ensure value for money.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, the findings confirm the Resource-Based View (RBV), which states that procurement skills can be valuable organizational resources that produce better procurement outcomes. The study also supports Transaction Cost Theory (TCT) by showing that strategic e-procurement reduces transaction costs and improves efficiency. Furthermore, the findings support Institutional Theory by showing that strategic procurement practices help institutions comply with regulatory requirements, and Systems Theory by demonstrating the importance of integrated procurement processes.

The study adds to the procurement management literature by providing empirical evidence from the public higher education sector, which has been studied less than other public sector institutions (Amenya et al., 2022). By examining the combined effect of multiple strategic procurement practices, the study addresses a gap in the literature where studies have typically focused on individual procurement practices in isolation.

5.4 Practical and Policy Implications

The results are significant for university management, procurement staff, and university policymakers concerned with improving the performance of university-based procurement systems. University management should focus on strategic procurement by improving the ability to evaluate suppliers, investing in modern e-procurement technologies, enhancing the negotiation skills of procurement personnel, and building monitoring and evaluation systems for contracts. These initiatives can help achieve a more efficient procurement process, lower operational costs, mitigate procurement risks, and improve supplier performance.

The findings at the policy level further underscore the need to persist in policy reform efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in procurement and in adherence to public procurement rules and laws. Government agencies and regulators should continue to sustain the digital transformation of procurement systems and encourage ongoing professional development for procurement practitioners. Improving institutions' procurement capacity will help improve the use of public resources and service delivery in Kenya's higher education sector.

5.5 Study Limitations

This research contributes to understanding the relationship between strategic procurement practices and procurement performance, but it has limitations. First, the study was limited to public universities in Kenya, so the results may not generalize to private universities or other public-sector institutions in different institutional contexts.

Second, the cross-sectional research design meant the study collected data at a single point in time, making it difficult to establish long-term causal links among the variables. Third, the study relied primarily on self-report questionnaire data, which, despite efforts to ensure reliability and validity, can be subject to respondent-perception bias.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

Longitudinal research designs would be useful for investigating how strategic procurement practices affect procurement performance over time. A comparative analysis of procurement processes across private universities, state corporations, and other public institutions would also help to understand procurement processes in different contexts. Further studies are needed to explore other variables that affect procurement performance, such as organizational culture, leadership commitment to procurement, technological capability, supplier relationship management, regulatory compliance, and procurement with sustainability considerations (Nzuma, 2025).

The mediating and/or moderating effects of organizational capabilities and digital transformation between strategic procurement practices and procurement performance could also be further investigated. These studies would enhance understanding of strategic procurement and build further evidence to inform procurement policy formulation and institutional decision-making.

5.7 Final Remarks

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that strategic procurement practices have a significant positive effect on procurement performance in public universities in Kenya. The findings validate the theoretical framework and provide empirical evidence that strategic procurement should be viewed not merely as an administrative function but as a strategic organizational capability that drives institutional performance and sustainable resource management. By embracing strategic procurement as a core institutional capability, public universities in Kenya can enhance operational efficiency, improve service delivery, and better fulfill their mandate of teaching, research, and community engagement.

Declaration

All authors have shown no conflict of interest.

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