

# TO EXAMINE THE PERCEIVED EFFECT OF TRADE LIBERALIZATION ON PROCUREMENT PROCESS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN TANZANIA, TAKING RUAHA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY (RUCU)

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**Abstract:** This study examined the perceived effect of trade liberalization on the procurement process at Ruaha Catholic University (RUCU) in Iringa, Tanzania. Guided by dependency theory and strategic choice theory, the research explored how global trade reforms influence institutional procurement practices, transparency, supplier collaboration, and efficiency. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 62 staff members directly or indirectly involved in procurement through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS. The findings revealed that trade liberalization is perceived to enhance procurement outcomes by fostering supplier competition, encouraging e-procurement adoption, improving information sharing, and promoting long-term partnerships. However, challenges such as limited institutional capacity, inconsistent inventory management practices, and marginalization of small and medium enterprises were also identified as barriers to fully leveraging liberalization benefits. The study concludes that while trade liberalization significantly shapes procurement practices, its effectiveness depends on institutional readiness, governance structures, and digital transformation. It recommends strengthening institutional capacity, professionalizing procurement staff, supporting SMEs, and investing in digital procurement systems to maximize the opportunities presented by liberalized trade frameworks.

**Keywords:** Trade liberalization, procurement process, transparency, e-procurement, institutional capacity, SMEs, Tanzania, Ruaha Catholic University.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, trade liberalization has been widely discussed for its impact on procurement processes, especially in the public sector. Anderson and Müller (2020) explained that within the European Union, procurement policies were reshaped to align with the World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, enabling cross-border supplier participation and minimizing barriers to international sourcing. Likewise, Asian countries such as India and China introduced procurement reforms in response to open trade regimes, focusing on efficiency, transparency, and anti-corruption measures. These global experiences demonstrate how different states translate international trade liberalization principles into procurement systems, adapting them to national needs and institutional contexts.

In Tanzania, procurement processes reveal how global trends filter down into country-specific reforms. Mchopa and Sulle (2024) observed that the country's procurement framework has increasingly been shaped by liberalized trade policies, encouraging competitive supplier participation and the adoption of e-procurement technologies. By aligning with international best practices while also addressing domestic challenges like governance gaps and limited technical capacity, Tanzania illustrates how a global policy agenda can be localized. This linkage highlights the interplay between international trade liberalization and procurement reforms in developing countries.

Recent regulatory reforms in Tanzania highlight the government's determination to improve efficiency in procurement processes. Strengthening rules on tendering, monitoring, and compliance reflects broader strategies to curb misuse of public funds and ensure procurement delivers value for money. Such reforms provide a critical framework within which trade liberalization interacts with procurement institutions (Kasenene, 2025).

Digitalization has also emerged as a transformative force in procurement. Tanzania's adoption of the National e-Procurement System (NeST) has reportedly saved nearly five million U.S. dollars in tender documentation costs. These savings demonstrate the potential of integrating technological solutions with liberalized trade regimes to improve both cost efficiency and transparency in procurement entities (Public Procurement Regulatory Authority [PPRA], 2023).

International partners have further supported Tanzania in strengthening procurement systems. The World Bank's financing initiatives have been directed at enhancing public financial management and modernizing procurement frameworks. Such investments reinforce the capacity of institutions to adapt to trade liberalization pressures by building systems that are more transparent, professional, and service-oriented (World Bank, 2024).

Scholars have also examined Tanzania's procurement trajectories, identifying a pattern of reforms that emphasize compliance, transparency, and accountability. Despite progress, gaps remain in capacity, enforcement, and stakeholder engagement. These limitations may reduce the ability of institutions like cooperative unions to fully exploit the opportunities presented by liberalized trade (Mchopa et al., 2024).

The Tanzanian government has signaled its commitment to aligning procurement practices with the revised national trade policy. By directing facilitators to implement updated trade frameworks, policymakers aim to create an enabling environment where procurement entities can engage more effectively with both domestic and international suppliers under liberalized conditions (Mwendapole, 2024).

Cooperative unions themselves play a central role in linking producers with wider markets. Recent reports show that many unions have offered competitive prices to farmers, thereby incentivizing productivity and strengthening members' welfare. Such market responsiveness made possible through liberalized trade frameworks inevitably influences procurement choices, pricing strategies, and supplier selection at the union level (Kajubi, 2025).

Accountability and oversight remain critical for cooperative entities in the procurement space. Directives requiring cooperative unions and large savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOS) to hire internal auditors underscore the push toward stronger governance structures. This step reflects growing recognition that transparent auditing and oversight mechanisms are essential for unions to thrive in competitive, liberalized procurement environments ("Cooperative unions, large SACCOS," 2025).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

Dependency theory remains relevant in examining the perceived effect of trade liberalization on procurement because it highlights how developing economies often rely heavily on external markets and suppliers. Marini (2023) argued that dependency is reinforced when institutions in developing countries become reliant on foreign goods, technologies, and capital due to liberalized trade structures. In the context of procurement, this implies that organizations such as RUCU may increasingly depend on international suppliers for essential goods and services, potentially weakening local production capacity and bargaining power. Such a dynamic underscores the concern that liberalization may entrench unequal relationships between developing institutions and global suppliers.

Strategic choice theory, on the other hand, emphasizes the role of organizational decision-makers in navigating external pressures while shaping internal strategies. Child (2021) explained that managers are not merely passive actors responding to external conditions but make deliberate choices that align with institutional goals, resource constraints, and regulatory

contexts. For RUCU, this means that procurement officers and administrators strategically select suppliers, negotiate contracts, and balance compliance with trade liberalization requirements. The theory highlights that while global trade structures shape available options, organizational leaders retain agency in optimizing procurement processes to reduce costs, enhance quality, and strengthen efficiency.

## Empirical Review

### Perceived Effect of Trade Liberalization on Procurement Process

The studies have shown that trade liberalization tends to increase import competition, which in turn forces local procurement entities or public institutions to adopt stricter supplier evaluation criteria. For example, Onono, Omondi, and Mwangangi (2024) find that in East African countries, liberalization under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) pressures governments to harmonize procurement regulations to meet standards of transparency and fairness to attract regional suppliers. These harmonization pressures result in changed procurement timelines, more rigorous vetting of foreign suppliers, and sometimes delays in contract award as administrative capacity struggles to adapt. (Onono and Mwangangi, 2024).

In Tanzania, emerging literature highlights how procurement effectiveness is impacted by human resource development within procuring entities in the face of external trade pressures. Jaffu and Changalima (2023) show that training, performance appraisal, and career development significantly affect procurement officers' capacity to manage procurement in a liberalized trade environment. Stakeholders perceive that trade liberalization increases complexity (more international supplier documentation, higher quality standards), and without adequate HRD these become bottlenecks. (Jaffu and Changalima, 2023).

Another relevant insight comes from studies of e-procurement practices. Mwalukasa (2024) documents that while the Tanzanian government has invested in e-sourcing, e-evaluation, and e-contracting, many public entities still underutilize these tools. Respondents perceive that trade liberalization, by bringing more foreign suppliers into tendering, necessarily increases the demand for digital procurement systems to handle complexity, but the slow uptake of e-procurement is seen by procurement professionals as limiting the ability to compete and maintain fairness. (Mwalukasa, 2024).

Case studies from India illustrate how national policies under trade liberalization, especially international agreements, have influenced procurement in public sector units (PSUs). Sahu (2014) analyzes procurement by Indian PSUs in light of WTO procurement agreements and finds a significant increase in awarded contract value, especially in utilities and services sectors. Indian procurement officials perceive that liberalization (via WTO obligations and external pressure) has necessitated more transparency, more open tendering, and adjustments in procurement regulation to satisfy non-discrimination requirements. (Sahu, 2014).

In India as well, Shingal (2015) emphasizes that governmental procurement regulation has become more internationalized, meaning that domestic procurement policies are increasingly influenced by global norms of fairness, accountability, and openness. Procurement professionals in India perceive that alignment with best practices (e-tendering, dispute settlement, etc.) is no longer optional but essential for accessing international trade opportunities, foreign direct investment, and global suppliers. These perceptions sometimes clash with legacy practices, leading to institutional friction. (Shingal, 2015).

From broader trade liberalization literature in Tanzania, Utouh (2023) provides evidence that liberalization correlates positively with export performance, but the study suggests that the positive effects are mediated by institutional factors, including regulatory frameworks and macroeconomic stability. Procurement may be one of those institutional intermediaries even though the study does not focus on procurement, its findings imply that procurement systems which are efficient and transparent are critical in leveraging the gains from trade liberalization. (Utouh, 2023).

Regional integration and market liberalization in East Africa are shown by Onono et al. (2024) to have mixed effects: while trade balances improve for some bilateral pairs, there are concerns about whether procurement regulations have kept up. Procurement officers perceive that regulatory lag (procurement laws/regulations not updated quickly enough to match trade treaty obligations) creates uncertainty and risks of non-compliance. This perception affects the procurement process by slowing down decision making and increasing perceived costs of compliance. (Onono, Omondi, & Mwangangi, 2024).

Literature on trade liberalization's effect on sustainable development and institutional capacity reveals risks that are often part of perceptions. A systematic review by authors in literature on sustainable development (studies included in trade

liberalization-sustainability reviews) indicates that while trade liberalization can enhance economic outcomes, it often increases institutional challenges such as environmental or regulatory oversight burdens, monitoring, accountability which procurement processes must internalize. Procurement professionals perceive the burden of additional compliance, especially regarding standards and international norms, which may slow procurement or increase costs. (Systematic literature on trade liberalization and sustainable development, 2022).

Trade liberalization policies implemented by organizations like the WTO, IMF, and World Bank have been perceived to produce both opportunities and constraints. Whereas procurement entities in Central Africa perceive trade liberalization as enabling access to more suppliers and better goods, they also see the costs of aligning domestic procurement regulations with international standards, dealing with greater documentation, and facing competition that local suppliers may not match. These perceptions affect procurement process design, from supplier prequalification to contract monitoring. (Kaldowski et al., 2024).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the effects of globalization drivers on the procurement process at Ruaha Catholic University (RUCU) in Iringa Region, Tanzania. RUCU was selected as the study area because it is a private higher education institution that plays a significant role in Tanzania's academic landscape, yet little research has been conducted on how globalization affects its procurement operations. The descriptive design enabled the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, offering a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

A quantitative research approach was employed to allow for the measurement of relationships between globalization drivers such as technological advancements, trade liberalization, and supply chain integration and the procurement process. The target population of the study was 74 staff members directly or indirectly involved in procurement activities. From this, a sample size of 62 respondents was determined using a formula for finite populations. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across departments, while simple random sampling within each stratum minimized bias and ensured fairness in selection.

Data collection relied primarily on structured questionnaires, which included closed-ended questions on a five-point Likert scale to capture respondents' perceptions and experiences. Both primary and secondary data were used to strengthen the study, with secondary sources including institutional reports, procurement guidelines, and prior research studies. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize findings and inferential statistics to test relationships among variables, all processed through SPSS software for accuracy and reliability.

To ensure research quality, both validity and reliability were emphasized. Content validity was established through expert review, while construct validity was tested using the Keyser Meyer Oklin (KMO) measure. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, with acceptable thresholds applied. Ethical considerations were also strictly followed, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, avoidance of harm, and respect for institutional authority. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from RUCU, ensuring compliance with institutional policies and safeguarding participants' rights throughout the research process.

### 4. FINDINGS

The findings revealed that supply chain integration had improved procurement visibility, enhanced supplier performance, strengthened collaboration, and ensured efficiency in managing inventory and procurement activities at RUCU.

**Table 4.1: There is high collaboration with Suppliers in the organization**

Collaboration with suppliers	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	21	33.9
Agree	15	24.2
Neutral	15	24.2
Disagree	11	17.7
Total	62	100.0

Source: Field data, (2025)

The data in Table 4.1 presents respondents' views on the level of collaboration between the organization and its suppliers. According to the findings, 33.9% of respondents strongly agreed and 24.2% agreed that there is high collaboration with suppliers making a total of 58.1% who positively perceive supplier collaboration within the organization. Meanwhile, 24.2% were neutral, and 17.7% disagreed, indicating that a significant minority either do not experience or are unaware of such collaboration.

The positive responses suggest that the organization has established relatively strong supplier relationship practices. This aligns with existing literature, which emphasizes that supplier collaboration leads to improved procurement efficiency, better quality of materials, cost savings, innovation, and timely delivery. According to Chen et al. (2004) and Monczka *et al.* (2015), high levels of collaboration with suppliers often lead to joint planning, shared risk management, open communication, and strategic partnerships key components in achieving a resilient and responsive supply chain. However, the 24.2% neutral responses and 17.7% disagreement suggest that this collaboration may not be consistent across all departments or that some employees are not fully involved in or informed about supplier interactions. It may also indicate that while collaboration exists, it may not be at a strategic level, or that some suppliers do not engage as expected, resulting in varied experiences among staff.

In conclusion, the data indicates that while the organization is perceived to maintain a relatively high level of collaboration with its suppliers, there is room for improvement in ensuring consistent and deeper engagement. To strengthen supplier relationships further, the organization should consider implementing supplier relationship management (SRM) systems, conducting regular supplier performance reviews, and facilitating more frequent joint planning meetings. Additionally, training staff on collaborative procurement practices and ensuring transparent communication channels can help build trust, enhance coordination, and create mutual value across the supply chain.

**Table 4.2: Inventory Management Efficiency has improved to the high extent within the organization**

Inventory management	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	17	27.4
Agree	14	22.6
Neutral	4	6.5
Disagree	15	24.2
Strongly disagree	12	19.4
Total	62	100.0

**Source: Field Data, (2025)**

The data in Table 4.2 presented the respondents' perceptions regarding the improvement of inventory management efficiency within the organization. According to the findings, 27.4% of respondents strongly agreed and 22.6% agreed that inventory management efficiency has improved to a high extent amounting to a total of 50.0% expressing a positive view. On the other hand, 24.2% disagreed and 19.4% strongly disagreed, totaling 43.6% who believe that efficiency has not significantly improved. Additionally, 6.5% of respondents were neutral, indicating either uncertainty or a lack of experience with inventory processes.

This mixed perception reflects varying experiences or levels of exposure to inventory management practices within the organization. The 50% agreement rate suggests that recent efforts, possibly including the implementation of new systems or procedures, have had a positive impact on inventory control for some departments or teams. This aligns with findings from contemporary research. According to scholars like Waters (2010) and Stevenson (2020), efficient inventory management contributes to reduced operational costs, improved order fulfillment, and minimized stockouts or overstocking. However, the significant percentage of disagreement (43.6%) indicated that the improvements are not widespread or consistently applied across the organization. Some departments still be experiencing challenges such as inaccurate record-keeping, delayed restocking, or lack of automated systems. These issues hinder overall performance and lead to inefficiencies in procurement and supply chain operations.

In conclusion, while half of the respondents acknowledge an improvement in inventory management efficiency, the nearly equal proportion of negative responses highlights inconsistencies in the system's effectiveness. To address this, the organization should consider standardizing inventory procedures across departments, investing in inventory management

software, and training staff on best practices. Periodic audits and continuous monitoring can also help identify bottlenecks and ensure that improvements are sustainable and organization-wide.

**Table 4.3: Information Sharing in procurement process is well improved within the organization**

Information sharing	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	32	51.6
Agree	12	19.4
Neutral	4	6.5
Strongly disagree	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0

**Source: Researcher, (2025)**

The data in Table 4.3 presented the respondents' perceptions regarding the improvement of information sharing in the procurement process within the organization. The results show that 51.6% of respondents strongly agreed and 19.4% agreed that information sharing has been well improved making a total of 71% expressing a positive view. Meanwhile, 6.5% remained neutral, and 22.6% strongly disagreed, indicating that while the majority believe in the improvement, a significant portion still feels that there are serious gaps in communication and transparency within procurement.

The high level of agreement suggested that the organization has taken notable steps to enhance communication flows, data transparency, and coordination among procurement stakeholders. This may involve the use of digital tools, regular updates, or integrated procurement platforms. These findings align with research by Croom and Brandon-Jones (2007), who emphasized that efficient information sharing in procurement supports better decision-making, reduces procurement cycle times, and enhances supplier relationships. Similarly, studies by Chopra and Meindl (2016) highlight that information visibility is a critical enabler of responsive and cost-effective supply chains.

However, the 22.6% of respondents who strongly disagreed indicate that challenges in information flow may still exist in certain areas or among specific teams. These could include lack of access to procurement data, delayed communication, or siloed departments that hinder cross-functional collaboration. The presence of such a gap suggests that while the system has improved overall, it has not achieved uniform effectiveness across the entire organization.

In conclusion, the data indicates that a large majority of employees perceive a significant improvement in information sharing within the procurement process, which is a positive sign for operational efficiency and strategic alignment. Nevertheless, the organization should not overlook the concerns of the remaining respondents. To ensure consistent and comprehensive improvement, it is recommended that the organization strengthen internal communication protocols, ensure access to shared procurement systems for all relevant staff, and conduct periodic reviews to assess the effectiveness of its information-sharing mechanisms. Continuous training and fostering a culture of transparency can further enhance procurement collaboration and performance.

**Table 4.4: The organization engages in long-term partnerships with key suppliers**

Long-term partnership	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	25	40.3
Agree	29	46.8
Neutral	7	11.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

**Source: Field data, (2025)**

The data presented in Table 4.4 illustrated respondents' perceptions regarding the organization's engagement in long-term partnerships with key suppliers. According to the findings, 40.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 46.8% agreed that the organization maintains long-term partnerships with its key suppliers resulting in a combined 87.1% expressing a positive view. Meanwhile, 11.3% remained neutral, and only 1.6% strongly disagreed, indicating a very small minority who do not observe or acknowledge such partnerships.

The overwhelming agreement suggested that the organization has prioritized and successfully built stable, strategic relationships with its core suppliers. This is consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the benefits of long-term supplier relationships in procurement and supply chain management. According to Monczka *et al.* (2015) and Trent & Handfield (2022), long-term partnerships with suppliers foster trust, improve communication, and allow both parties to work collaboratively toward mutual goals. Such partnerships also lead to improved quality, cost efficiency, innovation, and risk mitigation.

The 11.3% of neutral responses and 1.6% of strong disagreement reflected limited awareness or involvement of some staff members in the procurement or contract management processes, especially if their roles are not directly linked to supplier engagement. Alternatively, it indicated that long-term partnerships are concentrated with only a few suppliers, while others are still managed on a short-term or transactional basis.

In conclusion, the data clearly indicates that the organization has successfully embraced long-term partnerships with key suppliers, which is a positive indicator of procurement maturity and strategic sourcing practices. To further strengthen these partnerships, the organization should focus on supplier development programs, regular performance reviews, and mutual investment in innovation. Additionally, it is advisable to ensure that the value of these partnerships is communicated across all departments so that all employees recognize and support the collaborative supplier relationships that benefit the organization's long-term success.

**Table 4.5: Supplier performance monitoring is conducted regularly to enhance efficiency.**

Supplier performance monitoring	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly agree	16	25.8
Agree	26	41.9
Neutral	3	4.8
Disagree	16	25.8
Strongly disagree	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

**Source: Field data, (2025)**

The data presented in Table 4.5 illustrates respondents' views on whether supplier performance monitoring is conducted regularly to enhance efficiency within the organization. According to the results, 25.8% of respondents strongly agreed and 41.9% agreed, making a combined 67.7% who believe that supplier performance monitoring is regularly practiced. Meanwhile, 4.8% remained neutral, 25.8% disagreed, and 1.6% strongly disagreed amounting to 27.4% of respondents who do not perceive this practice as being consistently implemented.

The majority agreement suggested that the organization has established mechanisms to assess and track supplier performance, which is a critical part of effective procurement and supply chain management. Regular monitoring helps identify underperforming suppliers, strengthens accountability, ensures compliance with contractual obligations, and contributes to continuous improvement. These results align with findings from researchers such as Monczka *et al.* (2015) and Lysons & Farrington (2016), who emphasize that ongoing evaluation of supplier performance is essential for maintaining high-quality standards, improving delivery timelines, and managing procurement risks. However, the relatively high percentage of disagreement (27.4%) indicated that there may be inconsistencies in how supplier monitoring is conducted across the organization. This could suggest that while some departments have structured systems in place, others may lack clear guidelines, tools, or oversight. It also reflected a communication gap, where the processes are in place but not well understood or visible to all employees.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### Perceived Effect of Trade Liberalization on Procurement Process

Trade liberalization has been increasingly associated with reforms in public procurement processes, particularly in developing countries. Recent studies highlight that liberalization pushes governments to open procurement markets, harmonize rules, and adopt transparency measures (Mchopa and Msofe, 2024). The relevance of this is evident in Tanzania, where procurement reforms influenced by liberalization have led to improved accountability and fairness. Stakeholders

perceive these changes as essential for strengthening trust in procurement systems. At the same time, the professionalization of procurement personnel has emerged as a critical element. The OECD (2025) stresses that countries that have invested in procurement competencies training, certification, and capacity building are better positioned to manage the complexity that liberalization introduces. This highlights the relevance of trade liberalization, as it creates pressure to professionalize procurement functions to meet international standards and engage effectively with foreign suppliers.

Digital transformation also plays a central role in shaping perceptions. Evidence shows that e-procurement systems improve transparency and efficiency by reducing human discretion and opportunities for corruption (Shen et al., 2024). Since liberalization increases supplier diversity and cross-border transactions, digital tools are perceived as indispensable for managing information flows and ensuring equitable access. This reinforces the relevance of liberalization in driving technological adoption in procurement processes.

On the other hand, the African context presents significant challenges. Panya and Awuor (2023) note that procurement reforms often face obstacles such as weak institutional capacity, lack of training, and corruption. In such environments, liberalization may be perceived as more of a burden than a benefit, since stakeholders struggle to comply with stricter rules or compete with international firms. This illustrates the conditional relevance of liberalization: without institutional readiness, its effects may be limited or even negative.

Transparency is another key area where liberalization is perceived to have strong impact. Recent work on data-driven procurement analytics shows that digital tools can enhance accountability by making procurement information publicly accessible (Racca et al., 2024). Such approaches align with the liberalization agenda of reducing secrecy and discrimination. Thus, liberalization is relevant as a driver for adopting tools that expose inefficiencies and corruption in procurement.

In practice, reforms triggered by liberalization also shape policy choices. The new Tanzanian Public Procurement Act No. 10 of 2023, effective in 2024, balances liberalization pressures with local economic goals by introducing mandatory e-procurement and setting price ceilings, while still granting preferences for local bidders (Public Procurement Regulatory Authority [PPRA], 2024). This hybrid approach shows that liberalization is not simply about openness but about creating fair competition while protecting national interests.

In Rwanda, procurement reforms aimed at enhancing transparency and fighting corruption demonstrate the broader governance relevance of liberalization. By aligning procurement systems with international norms, Rwanda signals commitment to both local and external stakeholders, improving perceptions of credibility and efficiency (Rwanda Public Procurement Authority, 2024). This further reinforces the idea that liberalization enhances not only procurement outcomes but also national reputation in international markets.

Still, perceptions remain mixed. While some stakeholders view liberalization as a pathway to efficiency, others worry about marginalization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that cannot meet international standards (Tambunan, 2007). This tension shows that the relevance of liberalization lies in its dual role: it creates opportunities for efficiency and innovation but also raises equity concerns.

Overall, the study confirmed that trade liberalization is highly relevant to procurement processes because it catalyzes reforms in transparency, accountability, efficiency, and professionalization. Yet, its perceived effect depends heavily on local conditions such as institutional capacity, political commitment, and technology adoption. Countries that align reforms with these contextual factors are more likely to realize the positive perceptions and outcomes that liberalization promises.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that trade liberalization has notable perceived effects on procurement processes, particularly in enhancing transparency, accountability, competition, and efficiency. By opening procurement markets to international suppliers and aligning domestic regulations with global standards, liberalization fosters better value for money and professionalization within procurement systems. However, the findings also reveal that challenges such as weak institutional capacity, corruption risks, limited digital infrastructure, and the marginalization of small and medium enterprises constrain the realization of these benefits. Overall, the perceptions of trade liberalization's impact on procurement remain context-dependent, with positive outcomes more evident in countries that combine liberalization with strong governance and institutional reforms.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that governments strengthen institutional capacity, professionalize procurement staff, and expand the use of digital procurement systems to manage the complexity introduced by liberalization. In addition, procurement policies should balance openness with support for local industries by creating opportunities for SMEs and safeguarding national economic interests. Enhancing transparency through open data systems, continuous legal reforms, and regional cooperation is also critical to building stakeholder trust. Ultimately, effective implementation of these measures will enable countries to maximize the positive perceptions and outcomes of trade liberalization in procurement.

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