



Factors Affecting the Performance of Public Procurement in Devolved Systems of Governance: A Case of Wajir County, Kenya

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Abstract: Public procurement is a cornerstone of devolved governance in Kenya, accounting for nearly 70% of county government expenditure. This study examined factors affecting procurement performance in Wajir County, focusing on planning, staff competence, compliance with policy, internal controls, and technology adoption. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from procurement staff, suppliers, and residents. Findings revealed that weak planning, limited staff capacity, poor compliance, and inadequate management support undermine procurement outcomes. The study concludes that procurement reform in Wajir requires a holistic approach combining legal compliance, capacity building, technology adoption, and ethical governance to enhance efficiency, transparency, and value for money.

Keywords: Public procurement, devolved governance, staff competence, procurement planning, sustainable development.

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1. Introduction

Public procurement is central to sustainable development, as it determines how resources are allocated and services delivered in devolved systems of governance. In Kenya, procurement accounts for nearly 26% of GDP and up to 70% of county budgets (Ngunjiri, 2019). Despite reforms under the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (2015), counties such as Wajir continue to face inefficiencies, corruption risks, and weak institutional capacity (Kamoni, Mbaabu, & Wamitu 2024).

In an era of fiscal austerity, efficiency and integrity in public procurement are vital for effective service delivery and sustaining citizens' trust. Governments increasingly view procurement not only as a means of achieving savings and economies of scale but also as a strategic lever to advance socio-economic and environmental objectives. In

devolved systems such as Kenya, public procurement is defined as “the systematic acquisition of goods, services, and works by county governments through a formalised process” (Boykin, Lofaro, McCue & Prier, 2024). These processes are intended to ensure accountability, transparency, and alignment with public interests.

Recent World Bank statistics show that approximately 29% of Kenyans live below the international poverty line of \$2.15/day, with Wajir County recording disproportionately high poverty levels due to its arid and semi-arid conditions (World Bank, 2026). Linking procurement to poverty reduction, effective systems can ensure equitable distribution of resources, enhance service delivery, and promote sustainable development in marginalized regions. In devolved governance, such as Kenya's counties, procurement performance is shaped by decentralization, regulatory frameworks, and local challenges (Hassan & Muna, 2022). Devolution aims to enhance participation,

transparency (Njagi, Namusonge & Shale, 2021), and accountability by bringing decision-making closer to citizens (Gwidi & Kilei, 2022). Article 6(2) of the Constitution establishes distinct yet interdependent national and county governments (Zalengera, To, Sieff, *et al.*, 2020). While decentralization fosters tailored development policies (Hassan & Muna, 2022), its success depends on efficiency, accountability, and citizen participation (Mwangi, Naituli, Kilika, *et al.*, 2023).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Public procurement is a cornerstone of devolved governance in Kenya, accounting for nearly 70% of county government expenditure and serving as the primary mechanism for delivering public goods and services (Ngunjiri, 2019). The real problem lies in the persistent inefficiencies, corruption risks, weak enforcement of regulatory frameworks, and inadequate staff competencies that compromise procurement outcomes (Kamoni *et al.*, 2024; Matunga, Ngugi, & Odhiambo, 2021). Studies highlight that procurement planning is often poorly executed, leading to stalled projects, inflated costs, and wastage of scarce public resources (Mutuku, Agusioma, & Wambua, 2021; Rotich, Arani, & Ikamari, 2023). In Wajir County, logistical complexities, socio-political dynamics, and limited technical capacity exacerbate these issues, making procurement performance particularly fragile (Hassan & Muna, 2022; Adan & Ngatia, 2024).

If the problem is not resolved, Wajir County risks continued resource wastage, stalled development projects, and diminished public confidence in devolved governance. This would perpetuate inequality, weaken fiscal discipline, and hinder socio-economic development in one of Kenya's most marginalized regions (Kate, 2023). Addressing these procurement challenges is therefore critical to achieving efficient, transparent, and equitable service delivery in Wajir County. This study explored the factors affecting procurement performance in Wajir County and situates them within the broader discourse on sustainable development in devolved governance.

1.2 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to generate knowledge and literature that would help policy makers develop effective strategies to ensure efficiency and integrity in public procurement for the essential attainment of sound public service delivery and maintenance of citizens' trust in government particularly in the devolved system of governance. The general objective of the study was to establish factors affecting the performance of public procurement in Wajir County. The specific objectives were; to determine the effect of procurement planning on the

performance of public procurement in Wajir County, to examine the extent to which staff competence affects the performance of public procurement in Wajir County, to assess the effect of compliance to government policy on the performance of public procurement in Wajir County, to evaluate the extent to which internal control systems affect the performance of public procurement in Wajir County and to ascertain the influence of technology adoption on the performance of public procurement in Wajir County.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

The study faced several limitations. First, its geographic scope was confined to Wajir County, limiting generalizability. This was addressed by situating findings within national frameworks and comparative literature. Second, reliance on self-reported data introduced response bias, mitigated through triangulation with audit reports and secondary sources. Third, the sample size constrained inferential analysis, but purposive sampling ensured representation of key stakeholders. Finally, logistical challenges in remote areas were addressed by engaging local research assistants and using digital tools for data collection.

2. Literature Review

This section presents literature both theoretical and empirical literature reviewed which guided the study based on the research objectives.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was underpinned on two theories, namely the Resource based theory and Human capital theory.

According to Kraaijenbrink, Spender and Groen, (2010) Resource-Based Theory (RBT) explains the internal sources of a firm's sustained competitive advantage. RBT links firm resources, production capability, and performance, emphasizing efficient and innovative resource use (Roos & Roos, 1997). Firms are heterogeneous, even within the same industry, due to differing bundles of productive resources (Barney & Clark, 2007). Sandholm (2006) highlighted procurement's role in new product development, viewing resources and products as interdependent, with firms diversifying and accumulating resources through acquisitions.

RBT posits that valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources drive sustainable success (Hosanoo *et al.*, 2024). Globally, resources such as human capital, technology, and financial endowments underpin organizational performance (Li *et al.*, 2024). Applying RBT to Wajir's procurement entails assessing how internal

resources which includes human capital, financial resources, technological infrastructure and institutional frameworks ensures development trickles down to the populace in the context of the county's unique challenges. Developing context-specific, valuable, and inimitable resources such as strong governance capacity, community-led oversight, and tailored technological systems offers potential for sustainable improvements in procurement performance.

Human Capital Theory (HCT) posits that investments in education, training, and health enhance individual productivity, which in turn drives organizational and economic performance (Oketch, 2014). It is a key framework for understanding economic growth and development globally and locally. Applied to public procurement in devolved governance systems such as Wajir County, Kenya, HCT underscores the importance of skilled human resources for efficient service delivery (Matunga, Ngugi & Odhiambo, 2021; Omar, 2024).

In Wajir County, procurement performance is strongly influenced by human capital, and staff competency is essential for regulatory framework implementation ((Omar, 2024; Matunga et al., 2021). While PPDA (2015) provides the legal framework, its implementation relies on human capital (Ngoima & Ndeto, 2022). Similar studies in Kisumu and Nakuru show that competency, compliance, and organizational culture drive procurement efficiency (Ochieng, 2018; Moronge & Ratemo, 2022). According to Omar, 2024, Wajir county performance is highly affected by inadequate staff training and low levels of expertise. Patronage in employment compromises staff quality, undermining HCT's premise that investment improves productivity.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Public procurement is defined as the systematic acquisition of goods, services, and works by government entities (Odhiambo & Kamau, 2003). In devolved systems, procurement is not merely transactional but strategic, enabling counties to advance socio-economic and environmental objectives (Boykin et al., 2024). Key factors influencing procurement performance include: procurement planning, which aligns purchases with actual needs and prevents resource wastage (Mutuku et al., 2021). Evidence across Kenyan counties shows strong links between planning and procurement performance.

Staff competence, where training and merit-based recruitment enhance efficiency (Zhong et al., 2024). Staff competence strongly improves public procurement performance in Kenya's devolved governments, and this evidence is applicable to counties like Wajir. Several Kenyan and comparative studies consistently show that

more competent procurement staff are associated with better procurement outcomes compliance with policy, particularly adherence to PPDA 2015, which ensures transparency and accountability (Ngoima & Ndeto, 2022).

Internal controls safeguard against corruption and inefficiency (Bosire & Matayo, 2021). Research consistently shows that internal control systems and ethical practices substantially influence public procurement performance by improving compliance, cost-effectiveness, transparency, and service quality. Internal controls such as authorization, record keeping, stock control, and segregation of duties enhance compliance and outcomes in public entities, including local governments and universities (Sama & Mwalukasa, 2024; Mwaiseje et al., 2025; Laboso et al., 2024).

Technology adoption, including e-procurement platforms improve transparency and citizen oversight (Mandala et al., 2024). A growing body of literature links technology adoption in procurement especially e-procurement which aims towards improved efficiency, transparency, and corruption control in public purchasing. While little is written directly on Wajir County, global and Global South studies provide a strong conceptual and empirical base. Electronic government initiatives use information technologies to modernize public management, particularly high-spend processes such as procurement and recruitment (Hochstetter et al., 2023).

In Wajir County, socio-political dynamics such as clan patronage and infrastructural deficits exacerbate procurement challenges (Hassan & Muna, 2022). These realities highlight the need for sustainable procurement practices that integrate legal frameworks, human capacity, and technology.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted mixed methods research design because the complexity of public procurement performance in devolved governance systems requires both quantitative measurement and qualitative exploration. Quantitative methods allow for statistical testing of relationships between variables such as procurement planning, staff competence, compliance, internal controls, and technology adoption, thereby providing generalizable evidence of their effects (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). At the same time, qualitative methods capture contextual realities in Wajir County such as clan patronage, socio-political dynamics, and infrastructural constraints that cannot be adequately explained through numerical data alone (Mele & Belardinelli, 2018).

3.2 Sampling and Sample Size

The study population included 64 procurement employees and 40 suppliers. 280 residents were selected for interviews. This sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample determination, which provides a statistically adequate representation for populations exceeding 10,000. The sample was stratified across the county's wards to ensure inclusivity and representativeness of the diverse population.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect primary data. Reliability was tested through a pilot study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The overall reliability coefficient was $\alpha = 0.812$, which is above the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010), indicating strong reliability. Subscales measuring procurement planning ($\alpha = 0.78$), staff competence ($\alpha = 0.81$), compliance ($\alpha = 0.79$), internal controls ($\alpha = 0.83$), and technology adoption ($\alpha = 0.80$) all demonstrated acceptable reliability.

Primary data was collected through the help of a semi-structured questionnaire and a structured interview guide. According to Gray (2009), questionnaires are research tools through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order. The researcher used the questionnaire because they are low cost in terms of both time and money, inflow of data is quick and from many people, respondents' anonymity can be assured, there is a lack of interviewer bias, data analysis of closed questions is relatively simple and questions can be coded quickly and respondents can complete the questionnaires at a time and place that suits them.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained a research permit from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology through the National Council for Science and Technology as Evidence for proficiency to conduct research. Subsequent due processes, permissions, and notifications to conduct research were sought from relevant institutions such as the County government of Wajir and respondents. The questionnaires were self-administered, and were taken to the respondents' places of work, and then collected, after sufficient time to allow for its completion. Interviews were carried by the researcher using the interview guide designed as per the objectives of the study.

3.5 Data Analysis

Responses from the structured questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS statistical software such as. Descriptive statistics in form of means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics and procurement-related variables. Inferential statistics was used to generate multiple regression analysis to determine the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. Data from interviews for the 280 residents was transcribed and analysed thematically. NVivo software assisted in coding responses into themes such as governance challenges, clan patronage, ethical practices, and perceptions of technology adoption. Thematic analysis highlighted contextual realities and lived experiences that complement the statistical findings.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to the element of informed consent, to ensure no harm to the participants, confidentiality, voluntary participation and integrity. All participants were informed in advance that the exercise was purely for academic purpose and had the right to participate on voluntary basis and also to withdraw if so wished. All the data will be securely stored for a period of ten years.

4. Results and Discussion

Out of 104 questionnaires administered to both the county employees, suppliers and contractors (64 for employees and 40 for suppliers / contractors), 48 (32 and 16 from employees, suppliers and contractors respectively) were returned, fully filled in. This represents a significant 50% response rate from the employees, and a 40% response rate from the suppliers / contractors, for a combined response rate of 46.15%, which is considered significant. The researcher was able to conduct 166 interviews with locals who are beneficiaries of the devolved governance system within Wajir County, out of a targeted 280 interviews. This represented a significant 59.29% response rate. The overall response rate stands at 55.2%, The study examined five key variables influencing procurement performance in Wajir County: procurement planning, staff competence, internal controls, compliance with government policy, and technology adoption. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to assess their effects.

4.1 Procurement Planning

Table1. Effect of Procurement Planning on the Performance of Public Procurement

Aspect	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev
Our department prepares annual procurement plans aligned with approved budgets.	4	5	4.7813	0.4200
User needs are clearly defined before procurement is initiated.	1	5	4.2813	0.8884
Procurement plans are followed as approved with minimal ad hoc purchases.	3	5	4.5000	0.6222
Delays in procurement are often due to poor planning.	1	5	3.5938	1.3880
Quality of goods/works/services improves when procurement is well planned.	1	5	4.4688	0.9499

The respondents overwhelmingly strongly agreed that their departments prepare annual procurement that are aligned with budgets, with a mean of 4.7813 and an insignificant standard deviation of 0.42, an indication of strong institutional compliance combined with planning that is consistent. It is also a sign of budget alignment across the county.

With a mean of 4.2813 and an insignificant standard deviation of 0.8884, the majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the needs of users are clearly defined before procurement is initiated, although some level of disagreement does exist. This implies that while needs assessment is generally effective, the existing variability in results is an indication of rare gaps in both the engagement of stakeholders as well as clarity of procurement requirements.

The respondents strongly agreed that procurement plans are followed with minimal ad hoc purchases with a mean of 4.50 and an insignificant standard deviation of 0.6222. It can be averred that the execution of procurement planning in Wajir County is disciplined, although the moderate deviation as shown by the standard deviation is an indicator of some exceptions where on occasions, ad hoc purchases might actually occur.

The interviewees indicated the following aspects: cost effective management has been applied in the projects; well budgeted and all timelines reached hence well planned; procurement planning is excellent; procurement planning is fairly good and improving over time; well planned, for instance, proper budgets for county projects; following IFMIS helps a lot in procurement activities; and many may be well planned through money which benefits both contractors and the people. This shows that procurement planning practice is strong, which means that budgeting, timelines and IFMIS are highly adopted. There is recognition of improvements over time and benefits to both contractors and citizens. Under needs assessment and

forecasting, the following examples were provided: forecasting needs and needs assessment; and market research. The interviewees acknowledge that procurement planning involves proactive forecasting and market research, showing awareness of structured approaches to anticipating project requirements. Challenges and weaknesses include planning is poor and inconsistent; budget delays and approvals at times affect project implementation; poor time management; and procurement planning is okay but inconsistent. Despite positive feedback, there are clear concerns about inconsistency, delays in budget approvals, and poor time management. These weaknesses undermine otherwise strong planning efforts.

The high scores for budget-aligned annual plans and for following approved plans fit what Mutuku et al. (2021) and Rotich et al. (2023) reported for Machakos and Nairobi counties, where sound procurement planning went with better performance of the county government. The positive link found in Wajir ($r = 0.642$ in Table 6 and a coefficient of 0.127 in Table 7) therefore adds to what is already known from other counties. The interview responses, however, qualify the questionnaire results. Questionnaire respondents rated planning highly, while interviewees spoke of budget approvals that come late, poor time management, and plans that are good in some departments and weak in others. This gap between planning on paper and planning in practice is the same weakness that Mutuku et al. (2021) and Rotich et al. (2023) associate with stalled projects and higher costs. The mean of 3.59 (SD = 1.39) for the statement that delays are due to poor planning also suggests that planning is only one of the causes of delay in Wajir. The conditions described by Hassan and Muna (2022) for Wajir and by Adan and Ngatia (2024) for neighbouring Garissa, namely long distances, socio-political pressures, and limited technical capacity, are other likely causes.

4.2 Staff Competence

Table 2. Competency and Training of Procurement Personnel

Aspect	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
Procurement staff in my organization possess adequate professional qualifications.	1	5	4.3333	0.8337
Staff are knowledgeable about the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (PPDA) and related regulations.	1	5	4.1020	1.0256
Regular training and capacity-building programs are provided for procurement staff.	1	5	3.6667	1.2262
My organization allocates sufficient resources (budget/time) for procurement training.	1	5	3.7292	1.2332
Competent procurement staff contribute significantly to improved procurement performance.	1	5	4.3958	0.9165

As shown in Table 2 above respondents strongly agreed that procurement staff at Wajir County possess adequate professional qualifications, as was supported by a mean of 4.3333 and a moderate standard deviation of 0.8337. Employee qualifications can be explained to provide a strong foundation for the effective public procurement management at Wajir County. The relatively low variability shows consistency across staff, that is a high level of attainment of professional qualifications across departments, which reinforces institutional capacity.

Majority of the respondents strongly agreed that staff are knowledgeable about Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act and related regulations, as was supported by a mean of 4.102 and a significant standard deviation of 1.0256. The awareness by employees of the legal and regulatory foundations of procurement practice is strong, which indicates few problems related to compliance. The high variation may suggest uneven knowledge levels among staff, which is a potential to exposing the county to compliance risks.

With a mean of 3.6667 and a significant standard deviation of 1.2262, there were mixed responses among respondents, with some agreeing, others neutral while others disagreed that regular training and capacity building programs are provided for procurement staff. This shows that there are either limited or inconsistent training opportunities availed to staff members. This gap undermines continuous professional development, which leaves staff members at Wajir County less prepared to adapt to the ever-changing and evolving procurement practices.

The respondents generally agreed that Wajir County allocates sufficient resources for procurement training as was supported by a mean of 3.7292 and a significant standard deviation of 1.2332. Resource allocation is perceived as either inadequate or inconsistent, hence the

low mean. The training programs are sporadic due to poor or lack of a dedicated funding a time allocation, which only acts as to weaken staff competency and capacity. A majority of the respondents strongly agreed that competent procurement staff contribute significantly to improved procurement performance (mean of 4.958 and a standard deviation of 0.9165). This shows a direct link between staff competency and better procurement outcomes of efficiency, compliance, and value for money. This underscores the importance of investing in staff development.

The respondents were asked about the level of knowledge and skills for procurement staffs at Wajir County, necessary for handling procurement rules, contract management and supplier relations. Most respondents emphasize poor skills, weak contract management, and poor supplier relations pointing to gaps in practical application. The most consistent theme is variation in skill levels, suggesting uneven capacity across staff. Reliance on national systems and rules provides structure, but individual expertise and management skills remain uneven. The first category of staffs has low knowledge and skills. Time management was cited as an area which needs improvement. This implies that there is a significant group of employees at the County procurement department who lack sufficient knowledge, skills, and time management. These weaknesses are prevalent in contract management and supplier relations, even when there is a clear comprehension of the rules.

Respondents rated staff qualifications and knowledge of the PPDA 2015 highly, but the two items on training and on funding for training scored lowest (means of 3.67 and 3.73). Human Capital Theory expects better productivity from investment in education and training (Oketch, 2014). The Wajir result fits that expectation in a particular way: the county has people with the right qualifications, but without regular training and budget support their skills do

not reach the same level across the department. The finding is in line with Matunga et al. (2021), who studied staff competency and how well the procurement regulatory framework is implemented in devolved governments, and with Ngoima and Ndeto (2022), who tie the working of the PPDA 2015 to the people who apply it. It also agrees with Omar (2024), who reported that patronage in government employment weakens service delivery in Wajir. The interview comments on uneven skills, weak contract management, and poor supplier relations suggest that hiring practices may explain why a county with qualified

staff on paper still has capacity gaps. Patronage was not measured directly in this study, so this explanation needs to be tested in later work. In terms of Resource-Based Theory, staff whose skills vary widely are not yet a resource that is valuable and hard to copy (Barney & Clark, 2007). They become one only when the county builds the skills on purpose through training and merit-based recruitment.

4.3 Internal Controls

Table 3. Controls, Ethics, Transparency and Accountability

Aspect	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
There are clear internal controls guiding the procurement process in my organization.	1	5	3.9167	1.1999
Segregation of duties (e.g., requisition, approval, payment) is enforced.	1	5	3.7708	1.2922
Procurement records are properly maintained and easily accessible for audit.	1	5	4.1250	0.9593
Ethical standards (e.g., code of conduct) are communicated to staff and suppliers.	1	5	4.0417	1.2021
Cases of conflict of interest in procurement are effectively managed.	1	5	3.8333	1.0176
Internal controls enhance transparency and accountability in the procurement process.	1	5	4.2500	0.9785

The respondents moderately agreed that there are clear internal controls guiding the procurement process at Wajir County as was supported by a mean of 3.9167 and a significant standard deviation of 1.1999. This finding implies that there are internal controls in place at the county although their application is not uniform. Weaknesses in enforcement can expose procurement to such risks as irregularities and inefficiencies.

With a mean of 3.7708 and a significant standard deviation of 1.2922, the respondents agreed that segregation of duties (e.g. requisition, approval, payment) is enforced. This shows that segregation is indeed recognised as an internal control measure to enhance procurement performance. However, the high spread suggests a lapse in actual practice. Whenever there is weak enforcement of segregation of duties, the risk of fraud increases, as well as reduced accountability. The respondents strongly agreed that procurement records are properly maintained and easily accessible for audit, as was supported by a mean of 4.125 and an insignificant standard deviation of 0.9593. This underlines the importance of records management to enhance transparency while enabling effective oversight. The relatively low spread is an indicator of consistent record management across departments.

Further, the respondents strongly agreed that ethical standards (e.g., code of conduct) are communicated to staff and suppliers with a mean of 4.0417 and a significant

standard deviation of 1.2021. This is a testament as to the presence of ethical frameworks in place at Wajir County, but the variability suggests gaps in awareness or enforcement. These gaps may lower the effectiveness of the ethical standards in eliminating malpractices. With a mean of 3.8333 and a significant standard deviation of 1.0176, the respondents agreed that cases of conflict of interest in procurement are effectively managed. This implies the existence of mechanisms but they are inconsistently applied. When conflict management is weak, fairness and trust in procurement processes in devolved systems can be undermined. There was a strong agreement level, with a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.98, that internal controls enhance transparency and accountability in the procurement process. Internal controls contribute positively to governance, but the variability of 0.98 shows that not all processes achieve the same level of transparency. Overall, by strengthening the enforcement of internal controls, institutionalizing the segregation of duties, and reinforcing ethical practices, transparency, accountability and efficiency in devolved systems’ procurement systems will be enhanced.

The interviewees identified delays in procurement and project implementation as a major challenge. If internal controls are effectively monitored, delayed contract implementation will come to an end. The delays are common and can be traced to inefficiencies by the county

staffs as well as challenges borne of suppliers. Poor planning practices, poor project monitoring, and delayed tender applications cause delays in project commencement hence missed deadlines.

Another challenge cited is related to communication and decision-making. This, as revealed by the study, include poor communication with suppliers; and slow decision making and processes. This challenge adversely affects effective supplier relations and contract management. This results in lost trust, emergence of disputes, hence elongated procurement cycles. The final challenge under the internal controls theme relates to weak contract monitoring. When there is insufficient monitoring capacity, project implementation is normally poor. This reduces project quality, delays, and weak enforcement of contract terms.

Respondents agreed that internal controls improve transparency and accountability (mean = 4.25). This supports the view that controls such as authorisation, record keeping, and segregation of duties improve compliance and cost-effectiveness in public bodies

(Mwaiseje et al., 2025; Laboso et al., 2024) and protect against corruption and inefficiency (Bosire & Matayo, 2021). Internal controls also had the strongest correlation with procurement performance in this study ($r = 0.789$). The weak points were segregation of duties (3.77) and the handling of conflicts of interest (3.83), both with wide variation in answers. The pattern is that controls and records exist but are enforced unevenly from one unit to another. Bawole and Adjei-Bamfo (2019) describe public procurement in Africa as shaped by public financial management practices and by wider influences beyond the written rules, which is consistent with this pattern. In Wajir, clan patronage (Hassan & Muna, 2022; Omar, 2024) is one possible reason why controls are applied unevenly, because a staff member who owes a post to patronage may find it hard to enforce controls against those who helped to place them. The interviewees' complaints about late projects, slow decisions, and weak contract monitoring show what uneven control looks like in daily work.

4.4 Compliance with Government Policy

Table 4. Laws, Policies and Oversight Bodies

Aspect	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
Procurement activities in my organization comply with national procurement laws and county policies.	1	5	4.3125	0.9710
External oversight bodies (e.g., PPRA, Auditor-General, county assembly) effectively monitor procurement processes.	2	5	4.2292	0.7506
Regulatory requirements are clear and easy to interpret.	1	5	4.2708	0.9618
Oversight mechanisms help to reduce corruption and malpractice in procurement.	1	5	3.7500	1.0818
Compliance with procurement regulations sometimes delays procurement processes.	2	5	3.2292	1.1530

As shown, the respondents generally strongly agreed that procurement activities at Wajir County comply with procurement laws and county policies, as is supported by a mean of 4.3125 and a moderate standard deviation of 0.9710. The results show a strong compliance, which ensures procurement accountability and transparency. The moderate spread of observations from the mean, however, indicate occasional lapses or uneven enforcement across departments.

With a mean of 4.2292 and an insignificant standard deviation of 0.7506, the respondents strongly agreed that external oversight bodies and County Assembly effectively monitor procurement processes. This implies that the available oversight mechanisms in place are trusted and are effective, generally, and this is further supported by the low variability. This trust enhances governance and reduces incidences of procurement malpractice. As supported by a mean of 4.2708 and a standard deviation of 0.9618, the respondents generally strongly agreed that regulatory

requirements are clear and easy to interpret. This indicates that whereas ambiguity may exist, when rules are clear, this is no longer the case. This clarity also boosts compliance. The spread of observations was moderate which means that some respondents perceive challenges in the interpretation of regulatory requirements, which points to the necessity for continuous sensitisation and training.

There were mixed responses on the fact that oversight mechanisms help to reduce corruption and malpractice in procurement, which received an agreement rating with a mean of 3.75 and a significant standard deviation of 1.0818. This underlines the need for compliance, which is very beneficial to effective procurement performance for county governments, although it is undermined by the high variance that suggests gaps in enforcement or the lingering perceptions of malpractice. There is, thus, need for stronger anti-corruption frameworks and the consistent application of sanctions to overarching parties. There was an agreement with the assertion that compliance with

procurement regulations sometimes delays procurement processes, which was supported by a mean of 3.2292, and a significant standard deviation of 1.1530. these results can be interpreted to imply that, while compliance to laws and regulations protects and enhances process integrity, the existence of bureaucracy in the procurement procedures can slow the process, which increases the timeliness for project completion. Delays may, however, not be universal across projects, but may exist in some specific contexts as shown by the high standard deviation.

Respondents reported high compliance with procurement law (mean = 4.31) and confidence in the oversight bodies (4.23), and compliance was strongly related to performance ($r = 0.734$; coefficient = 0.173). This agrees with Ngoima and Ndeto (2022), who link adherence to the PPDA 2015 with procurement performance. The scores on two other

items temper the picture. Respondents were less sure that oversight reduces corruption (3.75) and were split on whether compliance steps delay procurement (3.23). Compliance and speed seem to pull against each other in Wajir. Patrucco et al. (2020) studied how centralisation, standardisation, and digitalisation shape procurement performance in local governments. Their focus on how procedures are structured suggests that delays can be reduced by simplifying and digitalising the steps rather than by relaxing the rules. One caution applies to all the compliance results: they are self-reported by the officers and suppliers whose work is being assessed and may be more favourable than actual practice

4.5 Technology Adoption

Table 5. E-procurement, Efficiency and Transparency

Aspect	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
My organization uses electronic procurement systems (e-procurement) for key processes.	1	5	3.0000	1.6264
E-procurement has reduced paperwork and manual errors.	1	5	3.8125	1.4466
Use of technology has shortened procurement cycle times.	1	5	3.8438	1.1390
E-procurement platforms enhance transparency (e.g., open access to tender information).	1	5	3.9688	1.1212
Staff are adequately trained to use e-procurement systems.	1	5	3.5313	1.2948
Poor ICT infrastructure or connectivity affects effective use of e-procurement.	1	5	3.5938	1.5421

As demonstrated above, the respondents to some extent agreed that there is use of e-procurement systems for key procurement processes at Wajir County with a mean of 3.00 and a significant standard deviation of 1.6264. This indicates that e-procurement has been adopted in some procurement processes, with some units still being highly reliant on manual systems, but largely remain inconsistent or non-uniform application as given by the high variability. The respondents agreed that e-procurement has reduced paperwork and manual errors with a mean of 3.8125 and a standard deviation of 1.4466. The total application of e-procurement reduces the amount of paperwork significant, which reduces resource wastages. In addition, due to the speed of filling in the paperwork, and the ability to self-check in a short duration, manual errors are also reduced. There are gaps in user training and application of e-procurement as shown by the high spread.

Further, the respondents agreed that e-procurement platforms enhance transparency, like open access to tender information, as was supported by a mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 1.12. the use of technology is understood to promote fairness and accountability, a fact that makes procurement decisions more visible. This promotes stakeholder comprising suppliers, contractors and the general public confidence in public procurement. There was a general agreement from the respondents that staff are adequately trained on the use of e-procurement systems, with a mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 1.29. This shows the existence of training gaps at Wajir County on the use of e-procurement and other related technologies. Without the benefit of consistent capacity building, staff may struggle to maximize system benefits. Finally, with a mean of 3.59 and a significant standard deviation of 1.54, the respondents agreed that poor infrastructure or connectivity affects use of e-procurement.

As such, weak infrastructure undermines system reliability, especially in remote areas of Wajir County. The high variability suggests that some departments and units experience severe infrastructure challenges, while others operate smoothly.

Use of e-procurement had the lowest mean in the study (3.00, SD = 1.63), so e-procurement is still used unevenly in Wajir. Respondents nevertheless agreed that it reduces paperwork and errors, shortens cycle times, and improves transparency (means from 3.81 to 3.97). These are the benefits the literature attaches to e-procurement. Hochstetter et al. (2023) link electronic procurement and e-government to transparency and sustainable development, Mandala et al. (2024) associate e-procurement platforms with transparency and citizen oversight in Kenya, and Patrucco et al. (2020) treat digitalisation as one of the features of local procurement systems that bear on

performance. The Wajir results add that the gains depend on conditions the county has yet to meet. Training of staff on the systems (3.53) and ICT infrastructure and connectivity (3.59, SD = 1.54) were the weakest items, and the wide variation suggests that units in towns and in remote areas do not have the same experience. This agrees with the Resource-Based Theory position that a single resource, here technology, gives little advantage unless it is combined with other resources such as skilled staff and supporting infrastructure (Barney & Clark, 2007).

4.6 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients revealed strong positive relationships among the variables and procurement performance:

Table 6: Correlation Table

Variable	Correlation with Procurement Performance (r)	Significance (p)
Procurement Planning	0.642	< 0.01
Staff Competence	0.711	< 0.01
Internal Controls	0.789	< 0.05
Compliance to Policy	0.734	< 0.01
Technology Adoption	0.615	< 0.05

These results confirm that all five variables are positively correlated with procurement performance, with compliance to policy and staff competence showing the strongest associations.

A multiple regression model was applied to determine the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. The R² was 0.465, indicating that 46.5% of the variation in procurement performance could be explained by the five predictors.

4.7 Regression Analysis

Table 7. Model Summary

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.6820042
R Square	0.4651297
Adjusted R Square	0.4199620
Standard Error	0.9398533
Observations	48

ANOVA					
	Df	SS	MS	F	Sig. F
Regression	5	292.4497	58.48994	3.39772	0.0452
Residual	42	723.0082	17.21448		
Total	47	1015.4579			

Coefficients				
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	1.376	1.0684	1.2879	0.2813
Procurement planning	0.127	0.0597	2.1273	0.0024
Staff competence	0.158	0.0724	2.1823	0.0009
Compliance	0.173	0.0836	2.0694	0.0037
Internal control systems	0.149	0.0674	2.2107	0.0006
Technology adoption	0.177	0.0718	2.4652	0.0001

Regression Model:

$$Y = 1.245 + 0.127X_1 + 0.158X_2 + 0.173X_3 + 0.149X_4 + 0.177X_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where: X_1 = Procurement planning, X_2 = Staff competence, X_3 = Compliance to Policy, X_4 = Internal control systems and X_5 = Technology adoption

The five factors together explained 46.5% of the variation in procurement performance ($R^2 = 0.465$), which leaves more than half of the variation to factors outside the model. Likely candidates from the literature are clan patronage and socio-political pressure (Hassan & Muna, 2022; Omar, 2024), delays in budget approval, and the wider public financial management environment (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2019). The order of the coefficients differs from the order of the correlations, with technology adoption moving from last place to first. One reading is that the units that use e-procurement gain a good deal from it, in line with studies that link digitalisation to procurement outcomes (Hochstetter et al., 2023; Patrucco et al., 2020), and that the room for improvement is greatest where use is lowest. The coefficients are close to one another and the sample is small ($n = 48$), so the ranking should not be over-read. The safer conclusion is that all five factors matter and that a reform plan for Wajir should deal with them together.

The results support the two theories that guided the study. Under Resource-Based Theory, the items that scored lowest, namely regular training, ICT infrastructure, and even enforcement of controls, are the internal resources the county has not yet turned into a lasting advantage (Barney & Clark, 2007; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). The positive coefficients for all five factors show that procurement performance in Wajir rises with the quality of the county's human, technological, and institutional resources. Under Human Capital Theory, qualifications alone did not give even performance across staff, because training was irregular and under-funded and because hiring was reported to be affected by patronage (Oketch, 2014; Omar, 2024).

Compared with earlier work, the main difference is one of emphasis. Studies in other counties have concentrated on procurement planning and staff competence (Mutuku et al., 2021; Matunga et al., 2021; Rotich et al., 2023). In Wajir, internal controls, compliance, and technology adoption

carried at least as much weight. The remote setting, limited ICT infrastructure, and patronage pressures described by Hassan and Muna (2022) and Omar (2024) may explain this, since they make enforcement and technology more decisive than planning. This explanation was not tested here and could be examined in comparative studies of other arid counties.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study draws the following conclusion and recommendations from the findings.

5.1 Conclusion

1. Overall, the findings demonstrate that procurement performance in Wajir County is shaped by a combination of institutional, human, and technological factors. All five factors studied were positively related to procurement performance and together explained 46.5% of its variation. Strengthening these areas can enhance efficiency, transparency, and value for money in devolved governance.
2. Procurement planning: Annual plans are prepared in line with approved budgets and are mostly followed. Late budget approvals, poor time management, and uneven planning between departments still cause delays.
3. Staff competence: Procurement staff are generally qualified and know the PPDA 2015, but training is irregular and under-funded, so skills remain uneven, especially in contract management and supplier relations.
4. Internal controls: Controls and record keeping are in place and were seen to improve transparency and accountability, but segregation of duties and the handling of conflicts of interest are enforced unevenly. Internal controls had the strongest correlation with procurement performance ($r = 0.789$).
5. Compliance with policy: Compliance with procurement law is high and the oversight bodies are trusted. Some respondents, however, think that oversight does little to reduce corruption and that compliance steps slow down procurement.

6. Technology adoption: E-procurement is used unevenly across the county, but where it is used it reduces paperwork, shortens cycle times, and improves transparency. Weak staff training and poor ICT infrastructure limit its use, and technology adoption had the largest regression coefficient (0.177).
7. The findings agree with global literature that effective procurement performance depends on procurement planning, staff capacity building, compliance, internal controls, and technology adoption (Patrucco, Agasisti, & Glas, 2020; Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2019). Because weak procurement leads to weak service delivery, the weaknesses found in this study are likely to affect poverty reduction in Wajir, where poverty levels are high, although the study did not measure this link directly.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The Procurement Unit should prepare a needs assessment report at the start of each financial year and update it during the year, and the County Treasury and the County Assembly should approve budgets early enough to prevent late starts to projects.
2. The County Government should fund regular training for procurement staff and the County Public Service Board should recruit procurement staff on merit, while the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) and the County Assembly should step up oversight and enforcement of the PPDA 2015.
3. The Procurement Unit and the Internal Audit function should enforce segregation of duties, require declaration and management of conflicts of interest, and strengthen contract monitoring, since internal controls had the strongest relationship with procurement performance.
4. The county should extend e-procurement to all key procurement processes, train staff to use it, and improve ICT infrastructure and connectivity, especially in remote sub-counties. Ethical practices and internal controls should be built into the platforms to reduce corruption.
5. Once these basic weaknesses are addressed, the county can build sustainability principles such as supplier capacity building and lifecycle costing into procurement, so that procurement supports inclusive growth and poverty reduction in a marginalized county like Wajir. These practices were not tested in this study.
6. The county should align its annual procurement plans with its poverty-reduction and development priorities so that spending on infrastructure,

education, and health reaches the intended communities, including remote wards.

5.3 Areas for Further Research

Further studies could use a larger sample and include other arid and semi-arid counties so that results can be compared across counties. They could measure patronage and political influence directly and look at factors outside this model that account for the remaining 53.5% of the variation in procurement performance. They could also measure performance with objective records such as audit findings, delivery times, and cost overruns, rather than relying on perceptions alone.

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