Advancing a conceptual model for procurement management, service delivery and value for money optimisation in Rural District Councils.

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommended to the Graduate Business School, Chinhoyi University of Technology, for acceptance a dissertation entitled, "***Advancing a conceptual model for procurement management, service delivery, and value for money optimisation in Rural District Councils",*** submitted by ***David Chikwere (C211147795K)***, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Supply Chain Management.

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ABSTRACT

In many countries across the world, local governments play a critical role in maintaining and improving the livelihood of societies in their localities through procurement and provision of goods, services and construction works. The research's primary objective was to enhance a conceptual model that addresses procurement management, service delivery, and optimisation of value for money in the 60 rural district councils of Zimbabwe. A positivist philosophy was employed to enable a quantitative research methodology in the analysis of data. The data for this research were collected from June to October 2023. The study adopted a probability sampling technique where the population was initially stratified according to 8 non-metropolitan provinces which allowed for capturing geographic diversity. Further stratification was conducted based on professional roles involved in public procurement processes and service delivery where simple random sampling method was employed to draw a sample of 300 respondents from the selected Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. Using the SPSS program version 21, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was carried out for factor reduction and dimensional groups to simplify the complex datasets, identifying patterns, and facilitating further analysis. The study's major findings reveal significant relationships and challenges in the current public procurement practices of Zimbabwe's RDCs. These challenges include inadequate financing, shortage of skilled personnel, delays in procurement processes, lack of autonomy, and a lack of transparency contributing to poor service delivery and unattainable value for money outcomes. Further, it identified significant relationship between procurement objectives and service delivery with efficiency, economy, and transparency as critical objectives. It also established a positive association between procurement process, procurement expertise, procurement management and service delivery in rural local authorities. Additionally, it established a positive linear association between service delivery and value for money. On the contrary, the study established an inverse relationship between procurement management and value for money which were pointed to some underlying challenges embedded in the public procurement. In conclusion, this dissertation underscores the critical role of procurement objectives, processes, and expertise in improving service delivery and attaining value for money in the context of Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. The implications of the research extend beyond the immediate case study to inform policy makers, practitioners, and scholars interested in improving public procurement practices in developing countries. By addressing the identified challenges, this study contributes to the broader discourse on enhancing rural local authorities' governance and public procurement management for more effective and equitable service delivery.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ARDCZ	-	Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe
BATNA	-	Best alternative to a negotiated agreement
CFA	-	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CIPS	-	Chartered Institute of Procurement Supply
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
MEAT	-	Most economically advantageous tender
MLG	-	Ministry of Local Government and National Housing
NDS1	-	National Development Strategy 1
PCA	-	Principal Component Analysis
PMU	-	Procurement Management Units
PPDPA	-	Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act
PPPs	-	Public Private Partnerships
PRAZ	-	Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe
RDC	-	Rural District Councils
RDDC	-	Rural District Development Committee
SEM	-	Structural Equation Modelling
SPB	-	State Procurement Board
UCAZ	-	Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe
UNCITRAL	-	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNSDG	-	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
VFM	-	Value for Money
ZACC	-	Zimbabwe Anti - Corruption Commission

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Globally, procurement plays a vital role in the functioning of governments as it serves as a cornerstone for delivering essential services and fostering economic development (Nurmandi, & Jovita, 2023; Panya, & Awuor, 2023; Obura, 2024). Procurement is a comprehensive process of acquiring goods, services, or construction works, from identifying needs to contract fulfilment (Tripathi & Gupta, 2021). In Zimbabwe, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act [Chapter 22:23] (2018) defines it as the acquisition of goods or services through various contractual arrangements such as purchasing, leasing, or hiring which aligns with the broader definition by Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS) (2015). The key steps in procurement include supply market analysis, supplier selection, contract negotiation, and ongoing contract management (Guarnieri & Gomes, 2019; Lenderink, Halman, & Voordijk, 2022). Therefore, effective management of procurement processes is crucial for improving service delivery and optimising value for money in public institutions (Nurmandi, & Jovita, 2023; Panya, & Awuor, 2023).

In public sector procurement, the term public procurement instead of just procurement is commonly used. However, in some countries such as the USA, it is referred to as government contracts, while in the United Kingdom, it is known as public contracting (Bosio, Djankov, Glaeser, & Shleifer, 2022). Despite the circumstances in which it is used or the name which is applied to it, public procurement remains the cornerstone of service delivery system to several governments (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020; Obura, 2024). OECD (2019) affirmed that public procurement accounts for 18.2% of global GDP, which is a substantial fraction of the total expenditure. In OECD-EU nations alone, the proportion of public procurement relative to GDP rose from 13.7% in 2019 to 14.8% in 2021 (OECD, 2023). Additionally, in developing countries public procurement is increasingly recognised as a critical pillar of service delivery (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). Fourie and Malan (2020) highlighted that public procurement is a key driver of economic growth and emphasised that it constitutes 15 to 20% of GDP in developing countries, positioning it as a significant component of government expenditure.

In the Southern African region, South Africa's public procurement accounted for around 11.74 per cent of GDP in 2017 (OECD, 2019; Fourie, & Malan, 2020) while in Zambia it accounted for 15% of the GDP in 2020 (Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA), 2020). Additionally, public procurement operations in Malawi account for more than 70% of the government budget (Nyasulu, 2019). In Zimbabwe, the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) (2018) posits that public procurement accounted for 20 to 25 per cent of the $4 billion national annual budget in 2018. Out of these national budgets procurement expenditure figures, the local authorities are responsible for almost 50% of the procurement decisions (Macarthur Foundation, 2022). In 2021 alone, the local authorities (sub-national level) accounted for 61.2% of the procurement spending in OECD countries (OECD, 2023). The magnitude of these figures places local authorities in an interesting position in the whole public procurement expenditure equation. Therefore, it is crucial for countries to prioritise vigilant oversight, transparency, and accountability to optimise the value for money in public procurement processes (Obura, 2024).

On the other hand, public procurement has proved to be a springboard for economic growth, innovation, job creation, social welfare when it is properly administered (Bernal, San-Jose & Retolaza, 2019). To reinforce this assertion, the European Union procurement in 2017 accounted for approximately 16% of the trading volume (Becker, 2019). Additionally, the acquisition of electric powered ferries in Norway resulted in a 95% emissions reduction and an 80% decrease in costs while Spain allocated €160 million for the development of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology (Uyarra, 2022). Thus, public procurement ensures the success and effectiveness of government productivity enhancing innovations through rewarding more innovative vendors which can strengthen innovative practices (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). However, Nyasulu (2019) noted that poor public procurement processes cost developing countries between 20% and 40% of their annual GDP. It can also be noted that understanding procurement procedures is the cornerstone of government service quality, and successful execution of the procurement function (Martin-Ortega & O'Brien, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative that public procurement is carried out by knowledgeable, economically, and socially responsible personnel (Fourie & Malan, 2020).

Dzuke (2015) posits that obtaining products and services that satisfy specified quality requirements is the main objective of public procurement. This ensures the usefulness of goods and services acquired through public procurement by meeting a predetermined standard.

Munyede, and Mapuva (2020) contend that encouragement of fair and open competition among suppliers is another crucial goal of public procurement. This encourages efficiency and keeps out monopolies which improves value for money outcomes for the government or the organisation executing the procurement operations. Augustine, Victor, and Gabriel (2019) also noted that the public procurement's central mandate is to fulfil the responsibility of government and their respective entities through provision of goods and services which improves the welfare of the society. To accomplish this milestone, government institutions require organisational structures as well as appropriately qualified personnel who must be supported in delivering the services which they are accountable for (Fourie & Malan, 2020). This critical objective should be achieved with the value for money concept in mind to ensure sustainable service delivery (Helby-Petersen, 2019).

Cities around the globe encounter significant difficulties in delivering services due to the swift growth of their populations (Jachi & Mandongwe, 2019). Addressing the challenge of service delivery is imperative given the substandard quality of services offered and the urgent requirements of the less affluent, especially in developing nations (Fourie & Malan, 2020). The country's residents and businesses see the government as a provider of services for which they pay taxes and they expect better services delivered (Munyede, & Mapuva, 2020). In most nations, effective and efficient public administration changes with a stronger customer focus are becoming increasingly important as user expectations and demographics change, frequently in tandem with budgetary restrictions (Bernal, San-Jose & Retolaza, 2019). This position is in line with Ishak, and bin Zainol (2021) who earlier observed that Malaysian local governments face pressure to enhance service performance owing to population increase.

Enhanced education among the population has led to a more expressive and perceptive public that anticipates higher quality services and increased accountability from its municipal government (Martin-Ortega & O'Brien, 2019). Furthermore, countries' growing industrialisation and urbanisation have created a difficult environment for local authorities to deal with (Munyede, & Mapuva, 2020). The fact that people still face many obstacles to obtain government services indicates a problem with service delivery that must be addressed.

Delivering efficient services to residents in developing nations poses a significant challenge, and enhancing service quality is an even more formidable task (Jachi & Mandongwe, 2019). Given the low quality of service provision and the pressing needs of the poor in many nations,

particularly emerging countries, service delivery is a challenge that must be tackled (Bakana, 2020). On the other hand, Ishak, and bin Zainol (2021) noted that local governments in Malaysia are still under pressure to enhance their service delivery. Similarly, Bakana (2020) argues that municipalities in South Africa confront significant obstacles in implementing service delivery alternatives that can enhance quality in local government. Thus, indicating the need for a shift in service delivery strategies.

The need for dependable and effective public procurement has come up in several national discussions since it is anticipated that sound public expenditure results in better value for money (Lindholm et al., 2019). Value for Money (VfM) refers to the prudent, cost effective, and efficient use of government resources (Helby-Petersen, 2019). In procurement circles, the term value for money is used to describe the best mix of total cost of ownership against the quality of products or services over time (economy, efficiency, and effectiveness), rather than the lowest launch price (Nsiah-Asare & Prempeh, 2016). Therefore, value for money does not mean that the lowest bidder should win a tender, even though it is often confused with simply paying less for goods, works, and services (Botlhale, 2017).

It should be noted that the parameters to achieve value for money by a government or its entity lies in a well-functioning public procurement system (Nsiah-Asare & Prempeh, 2016). To ensure the most effective use of the government's limited budgetary resources, establishing VFM in procurement has become essential given the limited resources available to it and the country's rapid growth and development (Sifile, Madzorera & Chavunduka, 2015). The personnel charged with conducting public procurement must examine proposals against VfM utilising the 3 E's that is efficiency, effectiveness, and economy as a benchmark before any project approvals may be granted (Botlhale, 2017). Thus, selecting a product with a higher total cost of ownership should be acceptable only if there is a clear and justified added value advantage (Munilla, Isabel & Brophy, 2018).

However, most developing countries are experiencing socio-economic challenges because of the public sector's inefficiency and lack of VfM (Marendi, 2015). Inefficiencies, contract price inflation, unaudited government programs, contract delays, and numerous project duplications have all led to a loss of value for money in public spending (Iyoha et al., 2015). Jacobs (2017) also averred that the public sector is ineffective and pathetic in achieving VfM. As a result, it is important to comprehend how VfM in public procurement can be optimised.

Zimbabwe like many other countries in the Global South has most of its population residing in the rural areas. In 2022, the ratio of rural to urban residents was standing at 61.4% for rural and 38.6% for urban (Zimstat National Census Report, 2022). This position was also affirmed by the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (2022) when it posits that 60% to 75% of the Zimbabwean population lives in rural areas. This population's welfare and general socioeconomic development are the responsibility of the 60 Rural District Councils (RDCs) in Zimbabwe. It is therefore evident that RDCs should be astute in their planning, developing policies, implementation, as well as for monitoring and evaluating projects to enhance socio-economic welfare and the environment.

The stakeholders use population status and their residence location dynamics to inform their strategic direction from the national, regional to international levels, including the Zimbabwe National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). However, there is a gap in service provision as this excessive population residing in the rural areas has not been without challenges. The residents are experiencing rising rate of poor infrastructure and diminishing service delivery quality by Rural District Councils. All these are characteristics of expanding population in the countryside and the way to effectively deal with these challenges become imperative. The products and services to cater for this population in the countryside by the rural local authorities are satisfied through public procurement. Hence, the need for smooth procurement processes which correspond to improved service delivery performance and value for money in Zimbabwe's RDCs becomes imperative.

The 20th amendment to the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) in section 14, mandates the creation of local authorities which comprises of the Urban and Rural District Councils. According to the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), RDCs have the authority to engage in public procurement activities on behalf of the central government. This empowerment enables RDCs to meet the service delivery needs of residents within their designated areas of authority. As the RDCs are closer to the communities, they were therefore primarily established to ensure that social, environmental, and infrastructural services to the rural public within their areas of jurisdiction are satisfied (Madzimure, 2021). The local government has structures created through democratic means by residents and these structures are responsible for recognising the needs of the population in their locality as well as ensuring that those needs are translated into projects and programs to provide basic services (Mutandwa,

2020; Munyede, & Mapuva, 2020). It is therefore evident that RDCs play a big part in service delivery as well as the general development of rural communities.

The Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ) (2022) and Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDCZ) (2022) postulate that the country has a total of thirty-two (32) urban and sixty (60) rural district councils which make up the local government. The RDCs are essentially decentralised central government institutions with administrative authority delegated by the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works, and Urban Development (MLG). The local governments are subordinate to the central government authority comprising of Urban Councils (UCs) and RDCs which are the primary institutions at this level. The main Acts that provide guidelines for both Zimbabwe's urban and rural district councils' institutional structure and management are the Rural District Councils Act, 1988 (Chapter 29:13); Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15); Traditional Leaders Act, 1998 (Chapter 29:17); Communal Land Act, 1982 (Chapter 20:04); Provincial Councils and Administration Act, 1998 (Chapter 29:11); Customary Law and Local Courts Act, 1990 (Chapter 7:05); and the Chiefs and Headmen Act, 1983 (Chapter 29:01).

For the RDCs to have infrastructure and service delivery expectations satisfied there must be acquisition of goods, construction work and services, (Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act, Chapter 22:23, 2018). As noted by Idasa (2018), the effectiveness of sound local governance should be assessed based on the capability of local government structures to implement an integrated development approach to address social and economic issues. This includes providing essential services that align with the needs and preferences of local communities (Munyede, & Mapuva, 2020). Thus, local authorities need to assess and prioritise local community needs, establish suitable service levels, and allocate resources necessary to procure requirements to service those needs.

The period succeeding 2018 saw the procurement regulation in Zimbabwe becoming decentralised making the individual local authorities to exercise autonomy on most of their procurement requirements. The Constitution, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) are the primary sources of regulation for public procurement in Zimbabwe which provides the regulation of procurement in local authorities (Madzimure, 2021). The Act establishes the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ), which is charged with overseeing public procurement, ensuring compliance with the Act,

advising, and assisting procuring bodies, issuing directions and guidelines, and maintaining relevant databases. By providing the necessary resources, public procurement plays a crucial role in supporting the local authority's service delivery mandate.

To provide effective service delivery and value for money, which are essential for gaining residents' satisfaction and confidence in the local authority, an effective procurement management system is essential (Ghossein, Hoekman, & Shingal, 2021). Consistent with Estache and Kouassi (2020), the effectiveness of procurement is determined by the timely, adequate, cost effective, and locational availability of resources. Procurement should adhere to two principles of professionalism and value for money to achieve its objectives (Ghossein, et al., 2021). They suggest that professionalism is the astute procurement management by knowledgeable and accountable procurement officers who can make right procurement decisions. Lindholm, Korhonen, Laine, and Suomala (2019), also aver that functional public procurement system ensures value for money in public procurement which is essential for a long-term service delivery operations. Unfortunately, these objectives are not being achieved in Zimbabwe's RDCs, hence this study examine how procurement management, service delivery and value for money can be optimised to achieve the intended objectives.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a backdrop of poor service delivery by Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. Clean water supply has been a real problem with the sewer system extremely bad and deterioration of road networks (Marumahoko, Afolabi, Sadie & Nhede, 2020). The poor service delivery is also demonstrated by the erratic rubbish and refuse collection that is currently posing a health risk. Construction of roads, bridges, water and electricity systems, sewage reticulation, and solid waste management infrastructure are either taking a long time or are never finished thereby compromising the residents' welfare (Muchadenyika, 2017; Zikhali, 2018; Rori, 2020, & Marumahoko et al., 2020). Residents have also expressed outrage over the inefficiencies of the local authorities' procurement procedures and inconsistencies in the tendering processes. There is no open, real time, and quality public procurement data which impedes efforts to increase competition and hinders effective oversight to reduce fraud and corruption. Although the "Second Republic" emphasise timely completion of projects in the country (Rori, 2020), it appears not achievable in the RDCs owing to inherent procurement challenges. The Senate President, Mrs. Mabel Chinomona, echoed similar sentiments, pointing out inefficiency in rural district councils as a hindrance to progress, citing Mutoko Rural District Council as an

example (Rori, 2020). Zimbabwe's RDCs face numerous procurement obstacles and controversies despite existence of clear procurement laws, Munyede and Mapuva (2020), and often overlooking value for money in public sector procurement decisions. This shows that there are real challenges facing rural local authorities which if not addressed may get out of control. Smooth procurement processes and efficient service delivery are crucial for Zimbabwe's RDCs considering that 60% to 75% of the population resides in rural areas (ARDCZ, 2022). While relevant studies have investigated procurement management in local authorities, particularly Nyikadzino, and Nhema, (2015); Dzuke (2015), Dzuke and Naude (2016); Makunde et al. (2018); Muchadenyika, and Williams, (2018); Marumahoko (2021); Maregere, (2021), their focus was on urban councils. Unfortunately, there are no known studies that have holistically touched on public procurement management and value for money in Zimbabwe's RDCs. Besides the procurement regulations, there is no known procurement model to provide specific guidelines to RDCs in their daily procurement operations. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by establishing public procurement best practices through a conceptual model aimed at improving service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe's RDCs. Failure of such intervention is feared to perpetuate poor service delivery and worsen procurement problems particularly in resource constrained environments common in most developing countries' rural areas.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of the research is to enhance a conceptual model that addresses procurement management, service delivery, and optimisation of value for money specifically tailored for rural local authorities in Zimbabwe by June 2024.

1.3.2 Secondary Objectives

To achieve this primary objective, the following secondary research objectives are formulated:

1. To establish the effect of procurement objectives on service delivery.
2. To determine whether procurement process influence service delivery.
3. To determine whether procurement expertise affect service delivery.
4. To examine the effect of procurement management on service delivery.
5. To establish the relationship between service delivery and value for money.
6. To examine the effect of procurement management on value for money.

1.4 Research Questions

To expand knowledge needed on procurement management best practices which improve service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe's RDCs, this research study has responded to the questions below:

1. What is the effect of procurement objectives on service delivery?
2. What is the influence of procurement process on service delivery?
3. What is the effect of procurement expertise on service delivery?
4. What is the effect of procurement management on service delivery?
5. What is the relationship between service delivery and value for money?
6. What is the effect of procurement management on value for money?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H_{1a}: Procurement objectives positively influence service delivery.

H_{1b}: Procurement process has a positive influence on service delivery.

H_{1c}: Procurement expertise has positive effect on service delivery.

H_{1d}: Procurement management positively influence service delivery.

H_2: Service delivery has a positive influence on value for money.

H_3: Procurement management positively impacts value for money.

1.6 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research variables of this study are conceptually depicted on the research conceptual framework on the figure below.

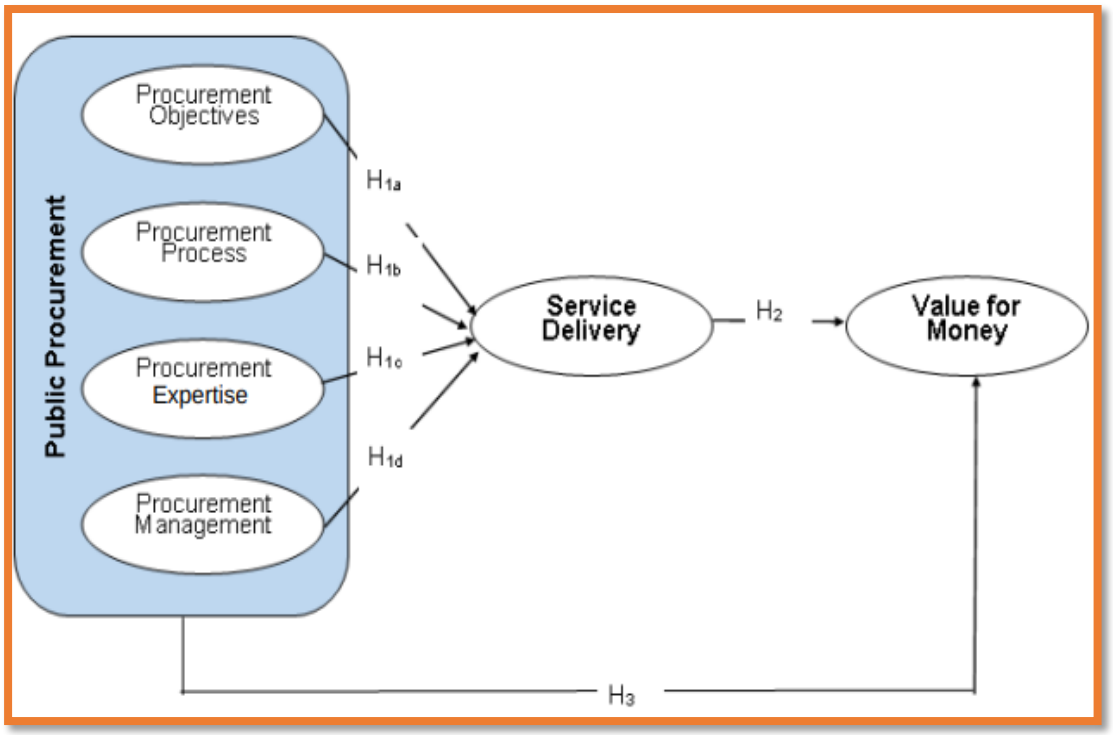

Figure 1.1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's Compilation (2021).

The diagram depicted in Figure 1.1 illustrates the six proposed linear connections among the six latent variables investigated in the research which are procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery and value for money. In this conceptual framework, procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise and procurement management are the predictor variables while service delivery is the mediator variable and finally value for money is outcome variable.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to enhance understanding of how procurement management affects service delivery and value for money in RDCs while offering potential solutions to improve public procurement practices. The findings hold significance for policy, practice, and academia, as they can provide a basis for evaluating the current procurement landscape and assist in developing strategies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public procurement.

1.7.1 Significance to Policy

Research findings on service delivery and value for money in public procurement can significantly influence policy creation and implementation in the local authorities and the

public sector in general. Policymakers can utilise empirical data to design procurement processes that can enhance service delivery and ensure optimal value for money. For example, policies could be developed to promote competition, transparency, and ethical conduct in procurement processes. This study's emphasis on value for money and service delivery may lead to the adoption of performance-based contracting, where policies shift from focusing solely on inputs and processes to incentivising contractors based on achieving the specified contractual outcomes.

1.7.2 Significance to Practice

It is hoped that the study could provide the researcher and other public procurement practitioners with novel knowledge and propagate awareness about optimising procurement management, service delivery and value for money. The study findings may benefit the public sector management in making informed procurement decisions as sound public procurement management is an important pillar for both central and quasi-government organisations, which determines their efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, public institutions may benefit from the study through its novel insights on the fundamental elements that improve public procurement management.

1.7.3 Significance to Academia

It is envisaged that the study may help academia and research institutions who want to delve deeper into the research problem as it illuminates the necessary techniques, procedures, and measurement tools for their projects. Scholars may use the findings of this research as a source of information and a foundation for filling in the gaps left by the investigation, or other similar areas may consult the research report. The research is also hoped to assist future researchers in avoiding unnecessary duplication, demonstrating familiarity, and establishing a framework for interpreting future research findings.

1.8 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Theory and evidence show that public procurement management challenges that militate against service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe's RDCs have not been evidently assessed. While relevant studies have investigated procurement challenges in local authorities, their prime focus was on urban councils. For example, some authors such as Nyikadzino, and Nhema, (2015) "The implications of centre-local relations on service delivery in local authorities in Zimbabwe: the case of Chitungwiza.", Dzuke (2015), "Public Procurement-

Panacea or Fallacy: A Case of Public Service, Dzuke and Naude (2016), "Problems affecting the operational procurement process: A study of the Zimbabwean public sector", Makunde, et al. (2018) "Local governance system and the urban service delivery in Zimbabwe: Issues, practices and scope."; Muchadenyika, and Williams, (2018) "Politics, centralisation and service delivery in urban Zimbabwe.", and Maregere, (2021) "Factors Influencing Service Delivery Challenges and Trends in the City of Mutare in Zimbabwe;" have made contributions on public procurement management in local authorities but focused on the urban councils only.

However, for those focusing on RDCs such as Zikhali, (2018) "Capacitating Nkayi rural district council in Zimbabwe: exploring solutions to challenges in service delivery"; Uzhenyu, (2019) "Remuneration challenge: An obstacle to conducive employment relations and a trigger for poor service delivery in a local authority in Zimbabwe"; Munyede (2020), "Exploring Public Procurement Reforms in Rural Local Authorities in Zimbabwe", touched a little on the RDCs by only focusing their studies on one aspect of service delivery. Unfortunately, their research did not holistically address the procurement management issues faced by RDCs in service delivery and achievement of value for money. As a result, it became apparent that rural district councils must be studied separately from the umbrella organisation of local authorities in Zimbabwe in pursuit of comprehending fully the nature of public procurement management challenges impacting on service delivery and value for money in RDCs. This study therefore sought to fill the gap by contributing to the procurement knowledge and strategies that enhance economy, effectiveness, and efficiency in service delivery by RDCs in Zimbabwe through a conceptual model.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Delimitations are the boundaries that the authors have consciously established (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). In this context, one could contend that researchers have influence over delimitations. It is further asserted that delimitations pertain to the definitions researchers establish as the boundaries or constraints of their work, ensuring that the goals and objectives of the study remain achievable. Therefore, this study established some geographical and content delimitation.

Geographical delimitation

The sixty (60) Rural District Councils from Zimbabwe's eight (8) non-metropolitan provinces participated in the survey.

Content delimitation

This study was limited to public procurement management as independent variable. Service delivery which was measured through the achievement of service delivery objectives and value for money comprised the dependent variable. The period covered by the research was from 2018 at the inception of Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) to June 2024.

1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The different perspectives on how public procurement challenges affect procurement management, service delivery and value for money in the Rural District Councils is discussed in the following chapters. The importance of the public procurement function in improving service delivery and value for money is examined as well as how Rural District Councils may benefit from adopting procurement best practices. The thesis has been organised in such a way that each chapter may be read alone.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides the study introduction covering the background of the problem, a statement of the problem, objectives of the research, research questions, assumptions of the study, delimitation as well as definitions of the main concepts of the study.

Chapter 2: Synopsis of Zimbabwe's public procurement and local authorities

This chapter explores Zimbabwe's public procurement by providing a thorough perspective that delve into the institutional, legal, and historical factors influencing the environment of procurement. It reviews the specific environment in the Zimbabwe's local authorities setting, where public procurement dynamics are intimately woven into the fabric of environmental, economic, and social development.

Chapter 3: Literature review

This chapter reviews related literature on public procurement management within the local authorities in the Global South. The primary objective was to enhance a conceptual model that addresses procurement management, service delivery, and optimisation of value for money specifically tailored for rural local authorities in developing countries. The study delved into the conceptual and strategic organisation of procurement functions and the corresponding

adherence levels to established protocols. It explored theories related to public procurement, underscored the significance of adhering to public procurement procedures, investigated issues concerning corruption and fraud, and assessed the influence of adopting best practices in procurement. Drawing from existing scholarly work and identifying areas where knowledge is lacking, this chapter sought to establish theoretical frameworks and pose research questions for the present study.

Chapter 4: Empirical literature and development of research hypotheses and research model

The chapter focuses on the formation of hypotheses, the research model, and the empirical literature's findings. The information in this chapter covers the influence of procurement management and how value for money in rural local authorities is facilitated by service delivery.

Chapter 5: Research design and methodology

This chapter reviews the research philosophies, design and methodologies which are used in the study. The primary arguments for using a quantitative research method and a Case study strategy to gather data is also discussed.

Chapter 6: Research analysis and findings

Data analysis is presented in this chapter using quantitative analysis theory. The chapter establishes whether the findings and the literature studied have conceptual linkages. The data analysis is hoped to aid in the development of a set of frameworks intended to offer implications for the use of specific procurement management practices by Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, Summary, and Recommendations of the study

The theoretical and practical implications of the study were summarised in this chapter. The implications of the findings were also critically discussed. The study's contributions to the improvement of public procurement management processes, service delivery and value for money were also explored. The findings' limitations were also examined. Finally, the chapter made recommendations and identified some areas that require additional examination.

1.11 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

For this study, the key concepts were defined as below:

Conflict of interest: It involves a clash between the official responsibilities of a public servant and their personal interests, potentially leading to an improper influence on the discharge of their official duties and obligations.

Efficiency: The level of performance in a procurement process that creates the most amount of output with the least number of employed resources such as labour, time, money, and information.

Global South: These are less economically developed regions with lower income levels, standards of living, and higher poverty and inequality compared to more developed regions. It includes countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania.

Integrity: It is the act of being truthful and adhering to strong moral and ethical beliefs and values in a consistent and unwavering manner.

Local authority/ local government: It is an organisation (usually a pubic or quasi-government organisation) that is officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area.

Procurement planning: The predetermined course of action to meet procurement goals in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible as well as the creation of procurement decisions in local government that specify what should be accomplished in the future.

Procurement: The acquisition of goods, construction work or services to satisfy the needs of an organisation.

Public procurement: The process of recognising the need by a public entity and determining the right supplier to fulfil the need at the correct place, at the right time, at the right price, and that everything is done fairly and openly.

Resident: Any citizen, organisation or individual who resides in the local authority's jurisdiction and requires some assistance or its services.

Rural District Council (RDC)/ Rural local authority: It is a local government body responsible for governing rural areas within their jurisdiction by managing local infrastructure, community development, public health, education, and environmental conservation. They operate under national laws to address rural community needs effectively.

Service delivery: It is the provision of amenities by a local authority to its citizens in the form of an act or performance considering where, when, and how a service product is delivered to the residents.

Service: Customer demands or wishes that are met through fundamentally intangible advantages that are separated into several activities.

Value for Money (VFM): The most cost-effective, high-quality, and long-term solution to suit customer needs looking at economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

1.12: CHAPTER SUMMARY

The first chapter provided an overview of the research and study concepts. The study's introduction, background on the concepts of public procurement, service delivery, and value for money as well as the study's motivation, were all covered. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. The research hypotheses and conceptual framework were also articulated. The thesis's framework has been established. Chapter one also discussed the study's significance, scope, and limitations. The review of literature specific to the Zimbabwean setting is the subject of the second chapter.

CHAPTER 2
SYNOPSIS OF ZIMBABWE'S PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was grounded on the discussion of the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and research questions, research hypotheses, significance of the study and delimitations of the study. As a result, it is appropriate to begin reviewing the specific environment in the Zimbabwean setting, where public procurement dynamics are intimately woven into the fabric of economic and social development. This chapter explores Zimbabwe's public procurement, providing a thorough perspective that delve into the institutional, legal, and historical factors influencing the environment of procurement. The analysis of Zimbabwe's public procurement system becomes essential as the rural district councils attempt to improve public service delivery and attain value for money while navigating the intricacies of the national public procurement framework. The chapter establishes the context by stating the reasoning behind the study and highlighting the importance of closely examining the legal framework governing public procurement on a national and local level. This chapter tries to lay a strong foundation for the subsequent analysis by tracing the historical development of Zimbabwe's public procurement procedures and analysing the legal foundations that support the system.

2.2 BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT LAW IN ZIMBABWE

The procurement legal framework encompasses rules and processes, procurement and contract administration manuals and guidelines, as well as standard solicitation documents for soliciting bids from contractors, suppliers, and service providers (Fourie & Malan, 2020). In Zimbabwe, the language used in public procurement policies which include procedures, guidelines, manuals, and standard solicitation documents must conform to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) which is the primary legal framework in place. The public procurement law should be always followed, and any breach is punishable by law.

There was no official procurement policy framework in Zimbabwe until 2013 that defined the major pillars and technical features of its public procurement (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). The absence of comprehensive procedures and guidelines that govern public procurement in

Zimbabwe made it very difficult to achieve fair and cost-effective procurement processes. This position was confirmed by then Minister of Finance (Chinamasa P.) who indicated the need to overhaul the public procurement system when presenting 2014 National Budget. The Minister argued that this was necessary to promote accountability, value for money, professionalism, transparency, and efficiency in the public procurement system. Munyede and Mapuva (2020) also voiced the concern after observing that Zimbabwe's public procurement system was opaque, particularly when it comes to the tendering process.

The study identified the main legal texts governing public procurement in Zimbabwe, from 1980 when the country gained independence to the current period which are outlined:

- The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No: 20 of 2013).
- The Procurement Act Chapter 22.23 (number 2 of 1999).
- The Procurement Regulations, (2002).
- The Procurement Regulations, (No.2. of 2003).
- The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15.
- The Rural District Council Act Chapter 29:13.
- Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23).

The Procurement Act (Chapter 22:14) (Zimbabwe Government Act number of 2 of 1999) and the Procurement Regulations, Statutory Instrument 171 of 2002, were the instruments governing Zimbabwe's public procurement processes and procedures (Zimbabwe Government, 2002). This Act was aimed at establishing the State Procurement Board (SPB), defining its functions as well as making provisions for the state, statutory bodies, and other persons responsible for procuring goods, construction work, and services.

As noted by Dzuke (2015) the responsibilities of the SPB were among others to approve the contracts to procure goods and services that may be included in the procurement act's policies and procedures. It also laid out the steps and procedures that each prospective company must take to be eligible to bid on and possibly win government contracts. The legislation outlines what the governing agency that administers the contract for some local or central government are supposed to do (Jachi & Mandongwe, 2019). Procurement regulations are a set of rules, policies, and procedures established to govern the acquisition of goods, services, or works by

parastatal entities and must be followed when awarding public contracts to private companies in terms of Section 33 of the Procurement Act 2002 (Chapter 22:14).

The main public procurement's goal is to ensure that governments award contracts in a fair and cost-effective manner to achieve value for money. This is made possible by the public procurement regulations which assist in the prevention of erroneous awarding of public contracts and ensuring that governments spend taxpayer money economically. In terms of Section 33 of the Procurement Act 2002 (Chapter 22:14), procurement regulations are the rules that local and central government ministries and parastatal entities must follow when awarding public contracts to private companies.

In line with the Procurement Act (Chapter 22:14), (Act No. 2 of 1999) (Zimbabwe Government, 1999), a procurement act is the primary law that governs how local authorities (urban and rural district councils), central governments (ministries and departments), and parastatal entities acquire goods, services, and construction works. However, Jachi, and Mandongwe (2019) observed that in practice, these guidelines often provide opportunities for procurement officials to abuse and commit fraud. This position was also averred by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) when they noted that the old legal and institutional arrangements for Zimbabwe's public procurement posed a significant risk of corruption in the public sector. Public funds were frequently diverted for other purposes combined with irregular payments and governance issues in connection with the awarding of public contracts, as well as favouritism in government officials' decisions were common.

As the public's interest in public procurement was growing, the need for reforms and reorganisation of the whole procurement process became apparent (Chikwere et al., 2023). This led to Zimbabwe's public procurement reforms which were ushered in to transform the country's procurement by replacing the country's outdated public procurement framework with a modern, accountable, and more transparent system (Nazaneen, 2019; Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). As observed by Dzuke (2015) the reform agenda was not peculiar to Zimbabwe as other countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria are among the countries that have made significant efforts to reform their procurement laws and regulations to improve transparency and accountability.

The government of Nigeria passed the public procurement act in 2007, primarily to address corruption, red tape, and delays in awarding tenders in the centralised system. Nigeria's new procurement act was a proactive reform agenda aimed at strengthening institutions so that they can deliver services more efficiently and contribute to the country's rapid development. In Kenya, the evolution of public procurement resembled that of Zimbabwe, as it progressed from being unregulated to being centralised, constitutionalised, and finally the enactment of the Public Procurement and Disposal Act of 2005. Kagume and Wamalwa (2018) as cited by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) observed that Kenya implemented public procurement reforms because the country's centralised system was corrupt and no longer met the needs of the country's development.

In contrast, Zimbabwe, like South Africa, witnessed a transformation in its public procurement system. Initially centralised and restricted, it exclusively benefited the privileged white minority. However, in 1996, the system underwent constitutionalising, aiming to eradicate segregation and tackle socioeconomic inequalities (Anthony, 2019). This achievement was realised by enacting a series of policies, such as the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act. Subsequently, the decentralisation of procurement to local governments was undertaken to expedite implementation, enhance transparency, and foster accountability (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). The cited cases are an indication that a better way to speed up the procurement process was to decentralise the procurement function. As noted by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) significant implementation of public procurement reforms in central government ministries was a top priority. Nevertheless, the reforms faced challenges in gaining momentum within local authorities in Zimbabwe due to deficiencies in institutional capacity, political determination, and an inability to properly interpret the new laws (Sylvester, 2024).

The Government of Zimbabwe then discarded the Public Procurement Act number 2 of 1999 and replaced it with the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) to reform public procurement (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). They noted that the reforms were additionally implemented to align public procurement laws with the provisions of Section 315 of Zimbabwe's constitution. Through a variety of public procurement reform program actions and a two-million grant from the World Bank's Zimbabwe Reconstruction Fund, the government made significant strides in advancing reforms (Nazaneen, 2019). The completion of the reforms by the government of Zimbabwe culminated in the enactment of Act number 5

of 2017 which is the new Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act of 2018 (Chapter 22:23). This act was meant to establish the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe to control and regulate public procurement and the disposal of public assets to ensure that such procurement and disposal are done in a transparent, fair, honest, cost-effective, and competitive manner (Zimbabwe Government, 2013).

As a result, Zimbabwe shifted away from the centralised procurement system managed by the State Procurement Board (SPB) and decentralised procurement activities to individual public entities. In this new arrangement individual public entities became autonomous in execution of their procurement activities translating the responsibility for the success or failure of service delivery entirely in their hands. However, Munyede and Mapuva (2020) noted that out of the 92 local authorities in Zimbabwe, more than 70 entities which translate to 76% were resisting the implementation of the new procurement Act of 2018 which poses some efficiency challenges in their service delivery.

The adoption of this new Public Procurement Act (Chapter 22:23) in January 2018 made it the legal framework's cornerstone which provided for the creation of practical tools for enforcing the law such as standard bidding and contract documents. As noted by Nazaneen (2019) the Act also provided for the creation of an Electronic Government Procurement strategy or (e-GP) strategy with e-GP Guidelines and a Business Process Re-engineering report being developed. There are some notable achievements made in modernising Zimbabwe's public procurement system. Pursuant to the new system, January 2018 saw the establishment of the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ). It featured a board of directors that included representatives from various regions of the country, along with individuals from both the public and private sectors. The board of directors had quite a good number of women representations clearly demonstrate the cultural changes in Zimbabwe's public sector. The procurement regulations, Standard bidding documents (SBDs), and guidelines were developed and promulgated. Nazaneen (2019) observed that the adoption of a new procurement legal framework in Zimbabwe seen some course materials for Training of Trainers being developed. This marked the implementation of the training program as well as the development of a professionalisation and certification module.

The public procurement legislative framework development and modifications of the Zimbabwe's public procurement system was the beginning of a new error. As highlighted by

Jachi and Mandongwe (2019), the revision of procurement legislation aimed to expedite procurement processes, ultimately leading to improved delivery of public goods and services. The holistically implementation of the of the legislative framework meant that there was going to be an improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the procurement processes of the public procurement entities and the local authorities.

2.3 THE NATURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN ZIMBABWE

In its broadest sense, the term local authority refers to directly or indirectly elected public governing bodies at sub-national level possessing within a given territory (Beshi & Kaur, 2020). On the other hand, the European Commission (COM/2013/280) (2013, p.2) define local authority as "directly or indirectly elected public governing bodies at sub-national level possessing within a given territory, as defined by law, a degree of autonomy from the central government and a set of competences to deliver public goods and services to citizens". Local authorities are viewed in this study within the framework of the European Commission's definition as it acknowledges that although they are a component of a state system beneath the central government, local authorities are quasi-government agencies with status of legal personality. The definition also acknowledges that the public is also responsible to local government through their elected representatives upon which the local authorities are governed and administered.

The local authorities in Zimbabwe derive their powers to exercise their duties from the central government through the responsible parent ministry (Chakunda, 2023). However, for these local authorities to deliver their mandate they are supposed to have some independence in their operations. This should also be complimented by a set of competences to deliver public goods and services to the residents effectively and efficiently. Consistent with Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution, the country's government is divided into three tiers with the top tier being the central government, followed by the metropolitan and provincial councils and the bottom tier is made up of the urban and rural councils (Zimbabwe Government, 2018). The metropolitan tier in this regard comprises of two, Harare and Bulawayo's councils which are classified as provinces in Zimbabwe. The metropolitan and resident ministers were replaced by province governors and ministers of state for provincial affairs with the ratification of the new constitution, Amendment Number 20 of 2013.

The adoption of the Zimbabwean Constitution of 2013 meant that there was now a metropolitan council responsible for the administration of each of the two metropolitan provinces. However, it was argued by Chigwata, Marumahoko and Madhekeni (2019) that the introduction of ministers of state for provincial affairs was a ploy to reinstate provincial governors in the shape of such officials with just new titles. Their argument was premised on the net effect which was the maintenance of the status quo. This assertion was remarked by Mutandwa (2020) who opined that the establishment of the Harare metropolitan province was more of a political decision than a reasonable one. The assertion suggest that it was a mere consolidation of political power at the expense of effective governance.

In line with constitution, the bottom levers of government comprised of the urban and rural councils (here in after called the local authorities) (Zimbabwe Government, 2018). The urban and rural councils comprise of various local authorities which vary in terms of a wide range of factors including population, size, functions, capital, and revenue sources. According to the Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15), there are twenty-eight urban councils established nationwide, and the RDCs Act calls for the establishment of fifty-eight rural district councils nationwide which increased to 60 (Association of Rural District Councils (ARDCZ), 2022). In Zimbabwe, the local authorities are administered through five local boards, eleven town councils, nine municipalities, and eight city councils (Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ), 2022). The local boards were constituted in some towns where there is very little population or in places where the local administration cannot sustainably support itself without the assistance from the central government (Chakunda, 2023).

Table 2.1: Categories of Local Authorities in Zimbabwe

Category	**Name of Local Authority**	**Total**
City Councils	Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Mutare, Kwekwe, Kadoma, and Masvingo	**7**
Municipalities	Kariba, Gwanda, Chitungwiza, Redcliff, Marondera, Bindura, Chegutu, Chinhoyi and Victoria Falls.	**9**
Town Councils	Karoi, Chipinge, Gokwe, Plum Tree, Norton, Zvishavane, Rusape, Shurugwi, Chiredzi, Beitbridge and Buhera.	**11**
Local Boards	Ruwa, Chirundu, Epworth, Hwange and Lupane	**5**
Rural District Councils	Beitbridge, Bikita, Bindura, Binga, Bubi, Buhera, Bulilima, Chaminuka, Chegutu, Chikomba, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Chirumanzu, Chiredzi, Chivi,	**60**

	Gokwe North, Gokwe South, Goromonzi, Guruve, Gwanda, Gutu, Hurungwe, Hwange, Hwedza, Insiza, Kadoma, Kusile, Makonde, Makoni, Manyame, Marondera, Masvingo, Mazowe, Mbire, Mhondoro, Mberengwa, Mudzi, Murewa, Mutare, Mutasa, Mutoko, Muzarabani, Mwenezi, Ngezi, Nkayi, Nyaminyami, Nyanga, Pfura, Runde, Rushinga, Sanyati, Tongogara, Tsholotsho, Umguza, Umzingwane, Uzumba-MarambaPfungwe, Vungu, Zaka, Zivagwe and Zvimba.	

Source: Adapted from the Association of Rural District Councils (ARDCZ) (2022); Urban Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ) (2022).

2.3.1 Accountability of local authorities in Zimbabwe

In line with the Zimbabwe constitution, the local authorities are self-governing through some democratically elected councillors who oversee the running of daily operations in the areas under their purview. The Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15), and Rural District Councils Act, (2002) (Chapter 29:13), provides for the levying of fees and charges on ratepayers by local authorities which forms the primary source of their funding. These funds are expected to bank roll the services and infrastructure requirements of the ratepayers and some other activities that can be regulated by local authorities through the creation of bylaws (Chakunda, 2023).

However, the direction and operations of the local authorities are not entirely the decision of councils due to their limited autonomy. It can be observed that the local governments are supposed to be answerable to the Minister of Local Government and Public Works through provincial administrators and district administrators as espoused by the Urban and Rural District Councils Act. The existing literature also affirms that the oversight and control of local authorities effectively falls under the purview of district and provincial administrators (Mutandwa, 2020; Madzimure, 2021; Nyamudzodza et al., 2021). The external control of local authorities also comes through the board members chosen by the Minister whose approval is required for the appointment of directors to local governments. It has been suggested that this scenario compromises the directors' autonomy in the execution of their duties as they hold office at the Minister's whim. Mutandwa (2020) also noted that the responsible minister has excessive influence over local government operations in Zimbabwe owing to the excessive central executive intervention. This position was also averred by Madzimure (2021) who

acknowledged that the central government still has a lot of power over some operations of the local authorities despite the adoption of the new constitution.

As the minister plays an oversight role in the rural and urban councils, the minister may deliberately decline some council motions for political reasons especially against the background of political contestation that characterises Zimbabwe's local authorities. Mutandwa (2020) highlighted that the oversight function can be interference in local authorities' affairs owing to the discretion given to the Minister. This is a result of the Minister's freedom granted by the Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15), and the Rural District Councils Act, 1988 (2002) (Chapter 29:13). For example, Section 314 of the Urban Councils Act, 2015, grants the Minister the authority to "direct a council to reverse suspend or rescind any of its resolutions or decisions if he considers the resolutions or decisions are not in the interest of the inhabitants of the area, or in the national or public interest."

There are various sub-committees in the council with the Rural District Development Committee (RDDC) being the primary coordination mechanism at the district level. This is a RDC committee that also includes all other district stakeholders, such as central government officers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), parastatal entities, and the corporate sector. Despite the committee being that of the RDC, the RDDC is chaired by the district's most senior government official who is usually the District Administrator (DA). This results in lack of autonomy in rural and urban local authorities' administration, and this has the potential to threaten equitable service delivery (Chakunda, 2023).

The interference of the local government parent ministry in the activities of the local authorities compromises the service delivery. The minister of local government in 2013 for example absolved all the obligations that the public owed to urban local governments prior to the 2013 general elections (Madzimure, 2021). This was accomplished through directing the local authorities to cancel all the outstanding utility and water arrears from the years 2009 to 2013 which the residents had with their respective councils. That ministerial decision left the local authorities without a source of funds to finance their service delivery operations. Although some defaulters supported the decision which was aimed at winning political support, the move undermined the local government efforts to improve, expand, and provide residents with service delivery expectations (Sylvester, 2024).

2.3.2 Zimbabwe's local authorities' decentralisation

Moyo and Ncube (2014) defined decentralisation as the process of transferring legal and political control over planning, decision-making, and the administration of public affairs from a central government to sub-national entities, such as local governments, municipalities, or regional authorities. The objective is to disperse governance, allowing local entities to have more autonomy in managing their own affairs, making decisions that directly affect their communities, and addressing local needs (Sylvester, 2024). On the other hand, devolution is typically regarded as the most extensive type of decentralisation, distributing significant amounts of governmental authority, power, responsibility, and resources to local entities (Madzimure, 2021; Kaponda, 2024).

Local governments, provincial and metropolitan councils, and the central government are all significantly impacted by the devolution clause in the national constitution amendment number 20 of 2013. Since the national government continues to be the highest tier of government, the Constitution gives it the authority to assess whether a particular province has the necessary skills to effectively manage local affairs and implement locally relevant socioeconomic development interventions for the benefit of the local population (Sylvester, 2024).

The Zimbabwe constitution (2013) outlines the goals of transferring governmental authority to local governments section 264 (1) of the constitution. The governmental powers and responsibilities were devolved to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities which were expected to competently carry out those responsibilities. However, the devolved entities do not hold the same type of position in respect to the central government as federal systems do, where the regions or provinces keep their own autonomous power while transferring or receiving some authority from the central government (Chigwata, 2019). Such entities have a certain amount of autonomy, which is the extent to which local governments have discretion in carrying out their duties and obligations (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019; Kaponda, 2024).

The decentralisation of local authorities was mainly aimed at handing over of political authority from central governments to sub-national ones, with the localisation, administration, finances, politics, delegation, and de-concentration being some of the characteristics of devolution (Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, 2019). The devolution idea strives to establish local governments that are autonomous, independent, and typically have sole jurisdiction over

clearly defined functions. However, Nyamudzodza et al. (2021) argue that without substantive economic autonomy, which includes the capacity to generate and allocate funds, the political autonomy becomes useless. This assertion was remarked by Madzimure (2021) who viewed decentralisation as mere theory to increase the public sectors' responsiveness and efficiency. The author posits that effective decentralisation should be in form of political, administrative, and fiscal. The political decentralisation being the transfer of power, control, and resources from the central government to local, regional, or other decentralised units, such as regional or functional authorities, semi-autonomous public companies, or local governments.

2.3.2.1 Rationale for local authority decentralisation

The decentralisation of local authorities was aimed at maximising social welfare, and fiscal autonomy with a combination of economic stability with allocative efficiency as well as the distributive equality (Chigwata, de Visser, & Ayele, 2021). The delegation of powers and authority to local governments, institutions, and procedures is expected to ensure the freedom of association and engagement of civil society organisations in public decision making. This includes facilitating the delivery of socially beneficial services and mobilising both social and financial resources to impact political processes (Madzimure, 2021). Thus, effective devolution encompasses institutions and processes designed to enhance residents involvement in choosing political representatives and shaping public policy.

The decentralisation of power and responsibilities to local governments provides an opportunity for residents' associations and watchdog organisations to hold the local authorities on accountability, transparency, and integrity as well as the simplification of information exchange between local authorities and the public (Nyamudzodza et al., 2021). The local pressure groups can pressure the local authorities to respond to inquiries about how they exercise their authority, their usage of available resources, and evaluation of their accomplishments on a regular basis. This position was reinforced by Chigwata et al. (2021) who noted that the strengthening of decentralisation and administrative autonomy for local governments requires the strengthening of local government accountability. The assertion by these scholars suggest that the checks and balances are necessary to ensure that the quality of public services and access to local government services are not jeopardised, particularly for the poorer portions of the community (Sylvester, 2024).

The decentralisation of local authorities in Zimbabwe was also pushed owing to several challenges facing the residents of local administrations which they had to deal with, such as uncollected garbage, broken sewers, inconsistent water supply, and roads covered with potholes. Chigwata et al. (2021) argue that the rationale for giving local governments more authority and responsibility stems from their closeness to their constituency which give them a leverage to meet their requests and requirements. Kaponda (2024) highlighted that when the local authorities deliver their mandate, the residents can consequently reciprocate by paying for the services they receive from local governments which completes the service delivery matrix.

Nyamudzodza et al. (2021) averred that decentralisation allows for greater residents' involvement in the local government affairs which promote local democracy. Chigwata, de Visser and Ayele (2021) also added that through decentralisation the residents of the local authority are empowered which give them control over their service delivery rights. This position was also supported by Madzimure (2021) who opined that the participation of residents in the local affairs fosters positive feedback that ensures the needs of the majority are met. However, the politicians usually ignore the public opinions when making some important decisions on local authorities which defeats the whole objective of decentralisation (Chigwata et al., 2021). This implies that local governments and provincial committees must be answerable to people if the goals of decentralisation system are to be realised (Nyamudzodza et al., 2021).

2.3.3. Urban local authorities in Zimbabwe

The cities, municipalities, towns, and local boards are the several classifications of urban councils based on their population, size, and stages of their development. Electing a chairperson from among the council members to oversee council activities is how towns and local boards manage their smaller populations compared to cities and municipalities, which are headed by full time elected mayors (Mutandwa, 2020). This position was also shared by Madzimure (2021) who posits that town councils and local boards are led by chairs and secretaries, while mayors and town clerks lead decision-making bodies and management, respectively, in towns and cities. The mayor occupies office full-time, in contrast to the local board and town council chairs. The elected councillors vote for the mayor who leads the council business every five years. Under the Urban Councils Act of 2015, town secretaries and town clerks are appointed as heads of administration by different heads of department. The executive

is made up of the council staff, which is led by the town secretary. The responsibility of the executive management is to oversee execution of council decisions and managing council business daily.

The constitutionalising of local governance in Zimbabwe ushered a positive change in the administration of urban councils as opposed to the past when it was controlled by numerous pieces of law. Mapuwa and Takabika (2020) contended that while the Rural and Urban Councils Acts served as the main regulations for local government administration. It operated with powers delegated by the central government with the incorporation of the 2013 Constitution which established a constitutional framework, particularly through Section 274, for overseeing provinces and metropolitan areas.

2.3.3.1 Responsibilities of urban local authorities

The urban councils in Zimbabwe were granted a wide range of functions under the Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15). These functions which are collectively referred to as the service delivery functions in this study are supposed to be executed effectively and efficiently to the satisfaction of residents.

i. Construction and maintenance of drains, sewers and refuse disposal.

The urban councils provide sewerage reticulation and drainage facilities which is subject to the provisions of section 180 of the Act. It entails that a council may take the actions and build the infrastructure it deems necessary for the collection, transportation, treatment, and disposal of sewage or storm water, whether inside or outside the council area. This is aimed and maintaining healthy surroundings and ensuring safe disposal of the affluent by the local authority.

ii. Construction and maintenance of parking space

According to the Urban Councils Act, a council has the authority to establish or form and manage areas for parking motor vehicles on land they have purchased, leased, or set aside for that purpose, as well as on any road. Subject to section 189, a local council may build, buy, or lease structures to provide space for public parking of motor vehicles on land designated aside for the purpose. It can achieve this by purchasing parking meters and other parking-controlling equipment, installing, and maintaining such meters or other equipment in any location designated by the council for the parking of motor vehicles, and doing so on any road.

iii. Controlling of public streams

In terms of the provisions of section 181 of the Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15), a council has the duty and authority to canalise, control, define, deepen, broaden, or narrow the course of any public stream that partially or entirely flows through the council territory or any other area under the council's administration and control. In fulfilling this mandate, the urban council should build any aqueduct, artificial water course, wall, or other structures that it deems necessary in the area under its purview.

iv. Providing water for domestic, commercial, or industrial areas

An urban council is expected to provide and maintain a supply of water inside or outside the council area in line with section 183. In pursuit of this objective, the council has the authority to implement measures and construct necessary facilities, whether inside or outside the council area, to ensure the provision and upkeep of a water supply intended for public consumption, industrial use, or any other commercial purpose.

v. Providing omnibus services and stations

A council has the authority to create and manage areas for omnibus parking, bus stop shelter, and standing on any road and on land it has purchased, leased, or set aside for that purpose; (b) establish an omnibus service within the council area or any other area that is administered and controlled by the council; or (c) enter into an agreement with any person for the establishment or acquisition of any omnibus service or for the construction or laying down of any works for such service or for the equipment, maintenance, carrying on, and working of such service.

vi. Provision of transport services

Without limiting the generality of providing stations and consistent with section 197, a council may enter into agreements for the provision and operation of a transport service for the carriage of passengers other than an omnibus service. Conditional upon agreements made by the council, it is permissible for the council to expend funds related to the transport service or any associated matters. This includes but is not restricted to guaranteeing the capital cost and interest, as well as providing subsidies for the same.

vii. Provision of fire brigade services

In accordance with the provisions of section 200 of the Urban Councils Act, 2015 (Chapter 29:15), a council is authorised to establish and uphold a fire brigade and a fire protection

service. This includes all essential personnel, vehicles, machinery, equipment, appliances, and associated items required for use within or outside the council area. The purpose of this provision is to ensure the protection and preservation of life and property in the event of a fire or other emergencies.

2.3.3.2 The management of urban local authorities

Section 274 (1) of the Zimbabwe Constitution (2013) provides for control of residents' affairs in urban areas. This was ushered in by the adoption of the new 2013 constitution which brought about some democratic prospects in local governance. The councillors' responsibilities who reside in the affected urban districts is described in section 274 (2), together with other features and mechanisms related to urban management (Chigwata et al., 2021). Given the high rates of poverty, unemployment, and substandard service delivery, local authorities would be managed by councils under the current constitutional arrangement as well as metropolitan areas. Urban areas have historically served as the country's economic centre, generating job opportunities, providing, and improving services.

In accordance with subsection 5, the executive status of a mayor or local authority chairman may be decided by Parliament. However, the word "may" leaves room for the mayors or chairpersons to be denied executive authority especially in the current scenario where opposition comprise the majority while the parliament majority is enjoyed by the ruling party. The administrative challenge is that the mayors and chairpersons who are the elected officials are not given executive powers as they have been reduced to ceremonial authorities which compromise their effectiveness (Chigwata, Marumahoko & Madhekeni, 2019). Therefore, the central government's jurisprudence may be a factor in how local authorities conduct their business as non-elected central government appointees like town clerks or chief executive officers would effectively be running the operations through their executive powers.

2.3.3.3 Implications of the current management system

While the local authorities are responsible for the administration of the urban areas, the problem lies interference by politicians in the affairs of the local authorities which encourages corruption and financial mismanagement. The external influence in the operations of councils comprise service delivery. Mapuwa and Takabika (2020) noted that most local authorities have been dented by corruption allegations and functioning without critical personnel. Chigwata et al. (2019) also brought to light that there has been a lot of political meddling in municipal

government. Chirisa (2021) argue that there is an urgent need for a seamless management system to be implemented, especially for the purchase of commodities to address any irregularities which compromise service delivery in the urban councils.

The activities of municipal councils and local government have been significantly impacted by the election of council members (Chigwata et al., 2019). Local authority management history has proven that the system is susceptible to political manipulation, with local government ministers having the authority to oust elected council members chosen by the people thereby paralysing decision-making and local authority operations (Mapuwa & Takabika, 2020). Therefore, it is critical that there be increased political will and commitment to overseeing a new generation of accountable and transparent urban councils (Sylvester, 2024). This approach is hoped to go a long way in improving service delivery by the local authorities to the residents in the areas of jurisdiction.

Chigwata et al. (2019) stipulated that the office of the Minister of Local Government and National Housing should be compelled to recede interfering in the internal affairs of urban councils following the adoption of the 2013 constitution. Chigwata et al. (2019) argue that those unwarranted delays by interferences are detrimental to service delivery as the local authorities' procurement requirements cannot be obtained at the right price as well as delivering them at the right time and place to the residents. Hence, there is need to expedite such processes to enable smooth operations of local authorities.

2.3.4. Rural local authorities in Zimbabwe

The rural local authorities are established in accordance with section 275 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe to handle the social and economic issues of residents in rural areas. A two-strand, multi-tiered administrative system that is hierarchical and complex distinguishes local administration in rural areas. The central government appoints traditional leaders and representatives in one part, while elected local government councils make the other part. They have a responsibility to provide social services like health and education, as well as build and maintain various facilities like roads, dams, and sewerage systems, and to keep an eye on development within their respective spheres of influence. There are 60 Rural District Councils (RDCs) in Zimbabwe, each of which is responsible for fostering socioeconomic growth and enhancing the welfare of its residents (Association of Rural District Councils (ARDCZ), 2022).

Whenever they want to create their strategic plans, rural district councils conduct consultation exercises in various areas under their purview (Nyamudzodza et al., 2021).

The Rural District Councils Act of 2002 (Chapter 29:13) grants traditional leaders some administrative responsibilities. These include the collection of taxes, levies, rates, and charges owed to Rural District Councils (RDCs), promoting the upkeep of health and education standards in their communities, maintaining records of residents within their jurisdiction, and ensuring the sustainable utilisation of resources. In addition to their traditional roles of preserving and promoting culture and moral values, traditional leaders also play a critical role in rural administrative issues (Nyamudzodza et al., 2021). Although in principle, the institutions and procedures are designed to be inclusive and participatory, most decisions at the village level are made by traditional leaders, and only a limited number of assemblies are operational.

RDCs were created to effectively serve communities by offering services at reasonable costs, promoting public participation in government to empower and motivate residents to exercise their rights and responsibilities as residents, and policing behaviour of people and organi sations within their sphere of influence (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). Mutandwa (2020) cited that there has recently been a backlash against RDCs, especially about inadequate corporate governance practices and poor community service delivery. Therefore, it is critical that the rural district councils' operations are run smoothly as there is a direct relationship on how well rural local government's function and the standard of living of the residents (Kaponda, 2024). Munyede, Mazambani and Maja (2021) averred that several factors such as clinics without medication, potholed roads, inconsistent water supply, burst sewer lines, uncollected refuse, and dysfunctional streetlights have influence on residents' wellbeing.

2.3.4.1 Zimbabwe's RDCs legislative framework

Consistent with Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution, local governments must be guided by the regulations which are created by the national legislature, which is the primary legislative body. Zimbabwe's rural local councils use a range of legal tools to manage their affairs and offer services to the surrounding people (Kaponda, 2024). This section discusses some of the important legal frameworks utilised by rural local government in Zimbabwe.

i. Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17)

The roles and duties of traditional Zimbabwean leaders, including their participation in local government and the management of rural areas, are defined under this act. The decision-making process and execution of development initiatives frequently involve traditional leaders and rural local administrations.

ii. Provincial Councils and Administration Act (Chapter 29:11)

The Provincial councils are established through this law, and they have a part to play in organising and fostering the growth of rural areas. The act provides that the Provincial councils collaborate closely with local governments in rural areas to provide efficient service delivery and development planning.

iii. Water Act (Chapter 20:24)

In Zimbabwe, this piece of legislation controls how water resources (surface or underground) are managed and supplied. The establishment of water management committees is one way that rural local authorities use this legislation to control water supply, usage, and conservation in their areas.

iv. Public Health Act (Chapter 15:09)

The legislation that underpins public health services in Zimbabwe, including in rural regions, is provided by this act. To safeguard the health of the surrounding communities, rural local authorities oversee enacting and enforcing public health standards, such as those governing sanitation and waste management.

v. Environmental Management Act (Chapter 20:27)

This law covers sustainable development and environmental preservation in Zimbabwe. The law is used by rural local governments to manage natural resources, enforce environmental laws, and encourage environmentally beneficial behaviour in rural areas.

vi. Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13)

This is the main piece of legislation in Zimbabwe controlling rural local governments. It provides for the creation, management, responsibilities, and authority of rural district councils, which oversee offering a variety of services in rural areas.

The mentioned legislation outlines the duties of local governments, establishing both the legal and practical dynamics among the different participants in local governance. Essentially, these entities play a crucial role in facilitating development by ensuring secure support for all development initiatives (Munyede, Mazambani, & Maja, 2021). These legal provisions are integral to overseeing the daily operations of rural district councils. When considering the complex governance and administration of the RDCs, the legal instruments offer a precise structure for the creation and functioning of rural local authorities by outlining their duties, functions, and powers under each act (Chigwata et al., 2019). These different laws lay down the procedures for decision-making, resource distribution, and public participation, thereby contributing to ensuring transparency, accountability, and good governance by the rural local authorities.

Regarding service delivery and other related activities, the legal tools give rural local authorities the authority and direction in the provision of vital services to the residents under their jurisdiction. This aligns with the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), which, among various services, encompasses responsibilities like public safety, waste management, education, and the development of infrastructure such as roads, water supply, and sanitation. These efforts aim to meet the needs of the residents. The legislative framework ensures that these services are efficiently planned, handled, and provided (Chigwata et al., 2019). In terms of land development and management, Chirisa (2021) opines that the rural communities commonly have economies which are centred on agriculture and natural resources. In this regard, rural local authorities are guided by the legal framework to facilitate the management of land use, planning, and its development. The management include providing systems for zoning laws, environmental protection, and sustainable land use (Chirisa, 2021). This is critical in supporting agricultural productivity, and resource preservation to sustain the rural livelihoods.

The different legislative instruments give rural local governments the ability to levy taxes, impose fees, and otherwise raise money which finances the service delivery activities. The collected money is used to pay for infrastructure upkeep such as roads, bridges, community halls as well as to fund community development initiatives. The structure for law enforcement, accountability, and tax collection in the rural communities is established by the law. These different laws promote adherence by the rural authorities to central government policies, strategic direction, and policy harmonisation (Chigwata et al., 2019). This encourages

uniformity in the way rural authorities operate and coordination efforts to enhance rural areas across the country. The various laws facilitate the coordination between provincial councils, central government agencies, and rural local governments thereby fostering cooperation and collaboration in undertaking rural development issues (Munyede, Mazambani, & Maja, 2021).

The legal tools provide for the community involvement and traditional leadership participation by outlining their roles and responsibilities in rural local governance. This position was also averred by Chigwata et al. (2019) where they highlighted that legal instruments offer a forum for communities to participate in decision-making to support rural development projects as well as ensuring accountability. Rural communities draw their peace and harmony from the leadership provided by the traditional leaders through social cohesiveness, conflict resolution, and cultural heritage preservation. Therefore, the availability and implementation of the various legislative instruments in Zimbabwe is critical for efficient development, governance, and providing basic services in the rural local area.

2.3.4.2 The management of rural local authorities

Rural councils are governed by the Constitution (Amendment number 20) of 2013 through an act of parliament, the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13). Executive officials of rural district councils lead the organisation, with department heads providing support. In a typical council, these officers include the treasurer, executive officers for administration, health, and projects (Mutandwa, 2020). Leadership from the local community, non-governmental groups, and government officials are involved in the operation of RDCs in Zimbabwe. Rural district councils (RDCs) are operated with the assistance of local leaders and community members who actively participate in the planning of development projects that specifically address the needs and challenges of rural communities (Munyede, Mazambani, & Maja, 2021).

The Zimbabwean Constitution (2013) and the RDC Act (Chapter 29:13) provides for the management of rural authorities through outlining rights and responsibilities based on their initiatives in the areas under their purview. The local authorities can make and implement their own local laws to effectively manage their operations through by-laws and other self-regulatory measures that comply with the legislatures of the provinces and parliament. Part (xv) of the RDC Act, 1988 (2002) (Chapter 29:13) authorise rural district councils in Zimbabwe to create local regulations which addresses various local development issues.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is appointed by a Council and must receive approval from the Minister of Local Government (Mutandwa, 2020). The CEO is responsible for the upkeep of the Council's minutes and records and handle all notifications. In accordance with the RDC Act and other applicable laws, the RDCs operate through a committee structure comprising of finance, personnel, planning, audit, housing, health, roads/works, environment, and social/community services (Munyede et al., 2021). Each committee should be made up of several council members and the appropriate executive personnel. Consistent with the Rural District Council Act (29:13), the council elects one of its members to serve as chairperson of the proceedings on every sitting. All council members are required to attend Full Council meetings where committee recommendations are discussed.

Rural District Development Committee (RDDC) is also one of the most powerful committees involved in the management of council affairs. The district heads of the government ministries, the chairs of the various committees of the RDC and the district chiefs of the national security agencies make up the strong RDDC. The District Administrator, a bureaucrat who represents the Minister of Local Government and National Housing, serves as its leader consistent with the Rural District Council Act (29:13). Thus, the RDDC is underrepresented in council representatives from grassroots communities, yet it is tasked with combining different ward-level plans into the district's annual and five-year plans (Munyede et al., 2021). The RDDC is intended to carry out its duties in an advisory setting, but it typically acts in a directive style. Without being accountable to council, the RDDC only reports unilateral resolutions (Mutandwa, 2020). Therefore, despite the possibility that the RDDC could serve as a venue for fusing sectorial and community goals, it stifles the spirit of public engagement and ignores community plans and visions.

On the other hand, political democracy and administrative bureaucracy characterise the internal environment of rural local administrations (Bojang, 2017). Fourie, and Malan, (2020) posit that bureaucracy is defined by distinct lines of accountability and authority based on control and power, stated norms, hierarchy, caution, and solidity, and methodical and ordered work. It implies that public administration which is fundamentally a bureaucracy is preoccupied with deliberate and rational planning and functions through formal institutions that preserve the division of labour through the performance of specialised tasks (Mutandwa, 2020).

The definitions of democracy and bureaucracy also show that each office is under the supervision of offices with higher levels of authority and that staff members adhere to a complex system of rules and regulations. Mutandwa (2020) argue that technical proficiency is valued while the administrative staff is charged with overseeing the efficient operation of the business. However, critics of bureaucracy have noted its inefficiency, ineffectiveness, rigidity, and oligarchical nature (Bojang, 2017). The author stressed that laws in bureaucracies permit authorities to continue taking resources from society arbitrarily and without due process. Mutandwa (2020) contend that in fact, corruption that is pursued for purely personal benefit is linked to bureaucracy.

2.3.4.3 Implications of the current management system in RDCs

Due to their operational environment, RDCs find it challenging to carry out their service delivery plans in an efficient manner, which leads to substandard service provision. The provision of quality services in rural local authorities is dependent on the successful implementation of their operational strategies (Mutandwa, 2020). However, rural local authorities in Zimbabwe have riddled by allegations of corruption in their activities. These unethical behaviours significantly undermine the local governments effort in delivering services in an effective and efficient manner (Marongere, 2015).

As stated by Machinjike and Bonga (2021), political and administrative corruption, makes it difficult for the central government to allocate resources meant for the RDCs effectively. In addition, some privileged groups of people in the positions of authority tend to sway political and economic decisions for their personal benefit at the expense of the welfare of the public (Marenger, 2015). The author also highlighted that the mandate of RDCs prohibits them from operating on a full commercial rate basis to provide the services to the general residents in their communities. However, the financial restrictions limit the rural local authorities the capacity to generate revenue which prevent them from effectively carrying out their service delivery functions as specified by the Rural District Council Act (29:13). Machinjike and Bonga (2021) noted that several obstacles prevent RDCs from being able to raise, manage, and distribute their revenue effectively such as central government control, lack of technical expertise and the absence of legislative instruments to support their activities.

The absence of administrative expertise is ingrained in the RDCs' structures which make it difficult for them to charge and mobilise their revenue from different revenue streams in their

areas of jurisdiction. There are some RDCs staff members who face allegations of engaging in corrupt activities owing to non-payment of reasonable living wages on time and at competitive rates (Machinjike & Bonga, 2021). This situation needs to be addressed to avoid undermining the service delivery effort.

2.3.4.4 Significance of rural local government in fostering accountability

Due to its democratic processes and ability to involve residents in the decision-making process, local governance has come under significant scrutiny and grown in significance (Mutandwa, 2022). This perspective holds that accountability is a necessary precondition for stopping the government from abusing its political authority and for using it to advance residents' rights (Okeke & Agub, 2016). In Zimbabwe, every public entity is expected to have an accounting authority, in terms of Section 41 of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23). Furthermore, according to section 44 of the Act, these authorities are obligated to create and sustain financial records, risk management systems, and an internal auditing system that are effective, efficient, and transparent to prevent improper procurement.

The other supporting regulations include sections 42 and 49 of the Public Finance Management Act (Chapter 22:19) which requires accounting authorities (RDCs) to guarantee appropriate record preservation and to maintain complete records of public entities' financial activities to ensure transparency in its activities. To avoid unauthorised access and destruction of confidential documents by the government agencies, the storage, preservation, and disposal of government records are provided for by the National Archives Act (Chapter 25:06). This rule was strengthened by sections 135 - 138 and 180 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (Chapter 9.23). These sections criminalise the fabrication or destruction of records, and individuals can face legal consequences if such actions lead to fraud, forgery, obstruction of justice, or the provision of false information to public authorities. Thus, all these legal instruments are used as a defence mechanism against the unethical contact by government agencies in this case rural local authorities and promote accountability.

Mutandwa (2022) assert that when responsibility becomes more apparent in local government, an improved scale of accountability can be attained through participation of the community. Accountability in local administration thus entails the monitoring and countering of possible abuses of authority by public servants, thereby reducing the possibility of public office and official corruption. Chikwere et al. (2022) noted that there are various comprehensive

procurement processes in Zimbabwe's public procurement and the RDCs to ensure transparent procurement process and service delivery. Therefore, such legal instruments are critical in the rural local authorities as there are the most adaptable and dependable vehicle in most developing nations for promoting and facilitating good governance and public accountability.

However, there are still some irregularities within the procurement procedures owing to institutionalised corruption which has the potential to compromise the provision of service in RDCs (Nemukuyu, 2021). The fact that some rural district councils are still riddled by institutionalised mis-procurement and absence of proper controls implementation is assumed to be creating a gap between the procurement process and service delivery is one of the areas the study attempts to interrogate. Against this background, it is also imperative to ascertain whether the service delivered by rural district councils translate to the realisation of value for money that is the employed resources against the output.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter emphasises the complex nature of public procurement in Zimbabwe, recognising its significance for equity, accountability, and transparency in addition to its contribution to economic growth. The objective was to decrypt the complexities of Zimbabwe's public procurement, providing insights that help guide policy changes, increase institutional effectiveness, and contribute to a larger discussion on the governance of procurement and provision of services. The succeeding chapter reviewing the general literature relevant to the study.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was grounded on the discussion of the Zimbabwe's public procurement, providing a thorough perspective that delve into the institutional, legal, and historical factors influencing the environment of procurement. As a result, it is appropriate to begin reviewing the general literature relevant to the study. A literature review entails gathering pertinent published materials to evaluate the extent of existing publicly available works in connection with the importance of a proposed research project (Paul & Criado, 2020). The significance of conducting a literature review lies in its ability to furnish the researcher with an understanding and knowledge of crucial studies conducted previously.

Taking everything into account, the focus of this chapter is on what other writers have discovered regarding value for money and service delivery in public procurement. This was done pursuant to laying a firm theoretical foundation for this research. As corroborated by Kumar, Paul, and Unnithan (2020), a good study's foundation is grounded in good literature. The chapter provides an overview of several research on public procurement management in the developing countries. This chapter demonstrates theories underpinning the study and the limited studies on the procurement management effect on service delivery and value for money in local authorities.

3.2 THEORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

For research to be strong, it must be rooted in a theory (Kumar, Paul, & Unnithan, 2020). Consequently, this study was guided primarily by Institutional Theory and complemented by Public Value Theory. They collectively provided a comprehensive and holistic framework for understanding the complexities of procurement management in Rural District Councils (RDCs). Institutional Theory, as highlighted by Gatobu (2020), is specifically useful for explaining the difficulties faced in the procurement processes within the rural local authorities. It helps in analysing how institutional pressures, such as regulatory requirements and resource constraints create challenges that impede organisational performance. However, while Institutional Theory provides insight into the structural and procedural challenges, it has

limitations in addressing how these challenges impact public welfare and the broader societal goals of the rural local authorities.

Public Value Theory, on the other hand, addresses the limitations of Institutional Theory by focusing on the needs and expectations of the public as both residents and consumers within a local authority's jurisdiction. Whereas Institutional Theory explains why the procurement process can be problematic, Public Value Theory provides a framework for understanding how these processes can be reoriented to generate public value. Instead of focusing solely on meeting organisational objectives, Public Value Theory emphasises the importance of creating value for the community which is central to improving service delivery by RDCs. The element of deliberation as highlighted by Turrell (2017), plays a crucial role in determining what constitutes public value which ensures that the needs of the public are prioritised. Thus, the two theories complement each other whereby Institutional Theory addresses the structural challenges while Public Value Theory focuses on the outcomes for the public thereby providing a more balanced approach to enhancing effective procurement management in RDCs.

3.2.1 The Institutional Theory (IT)

Institutional theory is a conventional method for scrutinising components of government procurement (Augustine, Victor & Gabriel, 2019). Public entities as organisations are regarded as actors in their areas of concern and they thrive to promote values and interests that are entrenched in the local communities where they operate, rather than simply as machines carrying out the principals' goals and values (Nyasulu, 2019). The author further highlighted that public management is more than just the art of designing formalised structures, but it rather considers how those informal structures influence, transform, and complete participants. This theory is ideal for this study as it emphasise the effect of the public procurement management on the livelihoods and satisfaction of the residents in the RDCs jurisdiction.

According to Kostova et al. (2020) institutions are resilient social structures made up of cultural, cognitive, and regulative elements that, when combined with related activities and resources give life meaning. The author highlighted further that the backbones of any institution are regulatory, normative, and cultural cognitive elements with regulatory referring to rules and laws as well as the enforcement mechanism while referring normative to norms and values, and cultural cognitive referring to shared beliefs. The regulatory pillar emphasises

the use of rules and sanctions as enforcement mechanisms, with the basis for compliance being expediency. The normative pillar placed a strong emphasis on norms and values, as well as social obligations, as a foundation for compliance. By stressing shared understanding of shared symbols, and common values, the cultural cognitive pillar prioritises conformity (Kostova et al., 2020).

In line with this theory, all rural district councils and other public procuring entities working within the institutionalised public procurement system in Zimbabwe are governed by the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22.23). This is followed by the attendant regulations, and guidelines that guide the execution of procurement processes and activities within the institutionalised public procurement system in Zimbabwe. The regulatory drivers of the institutional theory are the key element in putting pressure on the public institutions to comply with the guidelines of public procurement. As noted by Gatobu (2020), public procurement process stretching from need identification to disposal should be viewed as an institutional framework for any government entity's intended goals. As a result, the achievement of key government objectives whose pillars are based on public entity performance will be aided.

The normative pillar which emphasises on norms and values, as well as social obligations are the cornerstone for alignment with the traditional organisational practices. These norms influence the rural district councils to consult some committees of councillors whenever they want to make a major procurement decisions to attain social legitimacy in line with the normative pressures. This assertion aligns well with Reay et al. (2019) who affirmed that normative pressures influence businesses to adopt organisational practices to conform to social legitimacy. Some pressure groups like the Residents and Rate Payers Associations who represent the residents can also influence the rural district councils to act in a certain way or to comply with public procurement requirements.

Finally, the cultural cognitive pillar rests on mutual understanding of common beliefs and symbols that influences the behaviour of individual employees within the public procurement set up. Doraiswamy, as cited by Musa, Ntayi and Muhwez (2016) highlighted that individual intentions and attitudes towards whistleblowing are influenced by cultural cognitive. This implies that individual employees and RDCs can follow the public procurement regulations. Whistleblowing involves reporting illegal practices to those who can effect change (Musa et

al., 2016). In RDCs, whistleblowers can report malpractices to the Council chairperson, the Minister of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, or the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC). Reay et al. (2019) highlight that whistleblowing and peer reporting are crucial for detecting management fraud and employee theft. These mechanisms foster individual responsibility and ensure organisational accountability, leading to improved service delivery and value for money, as compliance is essential for meeting these objectives.

3.2.1.1 Typical institutional procurement framework and responsibilities

A discussion on the Public Procurement Procedures of Belize in North America was put forward to demonstrate the operationalisation of the institutional theory framework. The rural district councils of Zimbabwe's procurement institutional framework align with that of Belize. Therefore, it is a critical component of the reform process in many countries in the developing world that seek to enhance and modernise the procurement management system in line with national budget and financial management system.

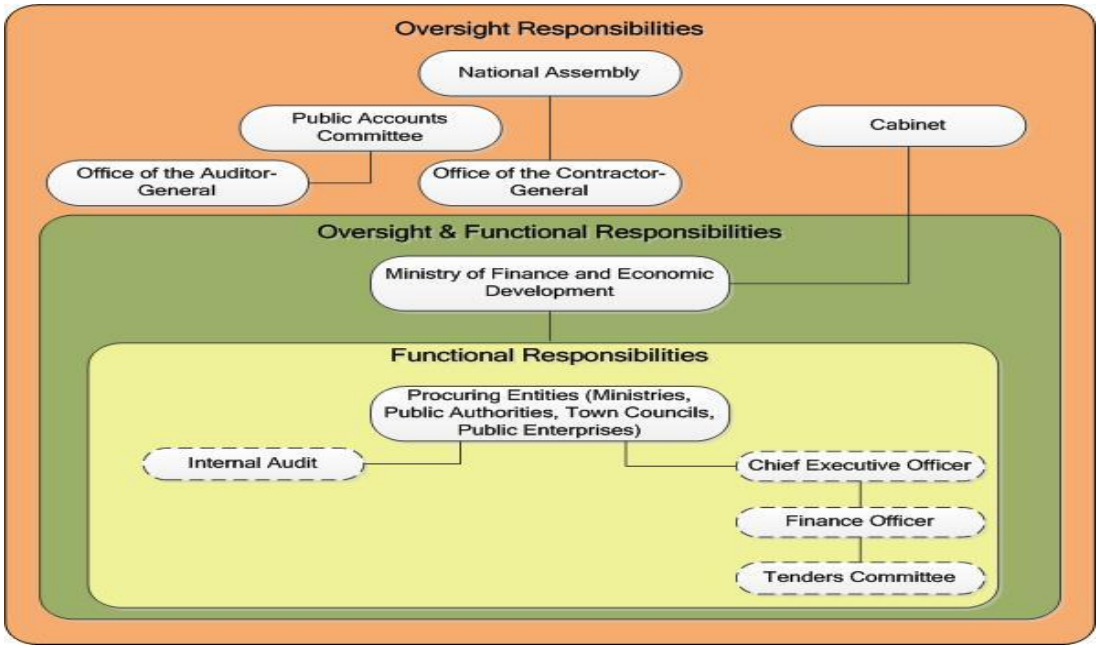

Figure 3.1: Institutional Framework for Public Sector Procurement in Belize

Source: Public Procurement Procedures Handbook (Belize) (2013).

3.2.1.2 Organisational Framework

Belize operates on a decentralised public procurement system where different levels of authority and control are granted to each procuring entity to run their sourcing activities. Public

officials and workers who are directly or indirectly involved in the purchase of products, services, or works should do their jobs diligently and correctly. To achieve this goal and reduce the risk of unethical acts, functional tasks such as transaction authorisations, transaction recording, asset custody, and reconciliations should be executed by various work units or individuals within the same unit whenever possible (Reay et al., 2019).

3.2.1.3 Oversight and functional responsibilities

The Belize Public Procurement Procedures Handbook (2013) states that the National assembly is the ultimate oversight authority of public procurement activities. The Auditor General is mandated with auditing and certifying accounts of the procuring entities and reporting to the National assembly. On the other hand, the Cabinet is the principal executive instrument of policy with general direction and control of the government, while the Ministry of finance's functional responsibilities lies in governing the public procurement performance.

Jachi and Mandongwe (2019) contend that the central government in Zimbabwe often involves itself in the activities of local governments to provide oversight due to the hierarchical structure of local authorities. They observed that the extent of these interventions varies, with some being highly intrusive, replacing council decisions with directives from the Minister, while others are less invasive. The assertion is affirmed by section 313 of the Urban Councils Act [Chapter 29:15], which states that the national government can intervene in local government affairs to address detected flaws. Both the UCA and the RDCA give the government of Zimbabwe the right to meddle in local government activities. It includes the authority to issue ministerial instructions, make or approve bylaws on behalf of councils, reverse, suspend, or rescind council resolutions and decisions, suspend or fire councillors, and designate caretakers to operate as council (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019).

The Contractor general's role is overseeing and supervising the award and execution of public contracts in Belize. It also investigates any cases of fraud or mismanagement, develops policy standards, and assesses program effectiveness. Chief Executive Officers or Accounting Officers are appointed as administrative heads of Ministries. Paragraph 115 of the Control of Public Expenditure manual of Belize state that they are responsible for controlling financial management in government departments, directly controlling the procurement process, and arranging internal audits or controls. Similarly, each Procurement Management Units (PMU)

of Zimbabwe's RDCs is expected to form its own Tenders Committee, which should evaluate and review tender documents before making a recommendation to the head of the Procuring Entity who is usually the Chief Executive Officer for final approval. The head of department, and the Finance officer should make up the Tenders Committee.

3.2.2 The Public Value Theory (PVT)

Public value is an approach to administering public services with an emphasis on generating broader societal value. This involves public managers envisioning ways to create value that aligns with residents' needs as outlined in their organisation's strategy and goals. This process occurs within a political environment where authority is obtained. Turrell (2017) supplements this by highlighting the importance of ensuring the appropriate operational tools and resources are in place to guarantee the delivery and measurement of public value.

The top management in the public sector are there to link their performance to residents', regulators', and clients' goals (Moore, 1995). Under the public value paradigm, public managers aim to achieve diverse objectives, encompassing specific service targets, broader outcomes, and the cultivation of trust and legitimacy (Torfing & Sørensen, 2019). Emphasising that public value assessment involves both outcomes and the strategies employed to attain them, the authors underscore the importance of evaluating public sector performance regarding issues of trust and legitimacy.

Public value theory by Moore (1995) suggest that public value can only be created by the public entity if they put in place all the three elements of the strategic triangle. The three elements are strategic goals and values, the authorising environment and operational capability (Moore, 1995). In analysing Moore's strategic triangle, it is possible to pinpoint some elements which are most relevant to this study and transferable aspects of public value theory to public procurement.

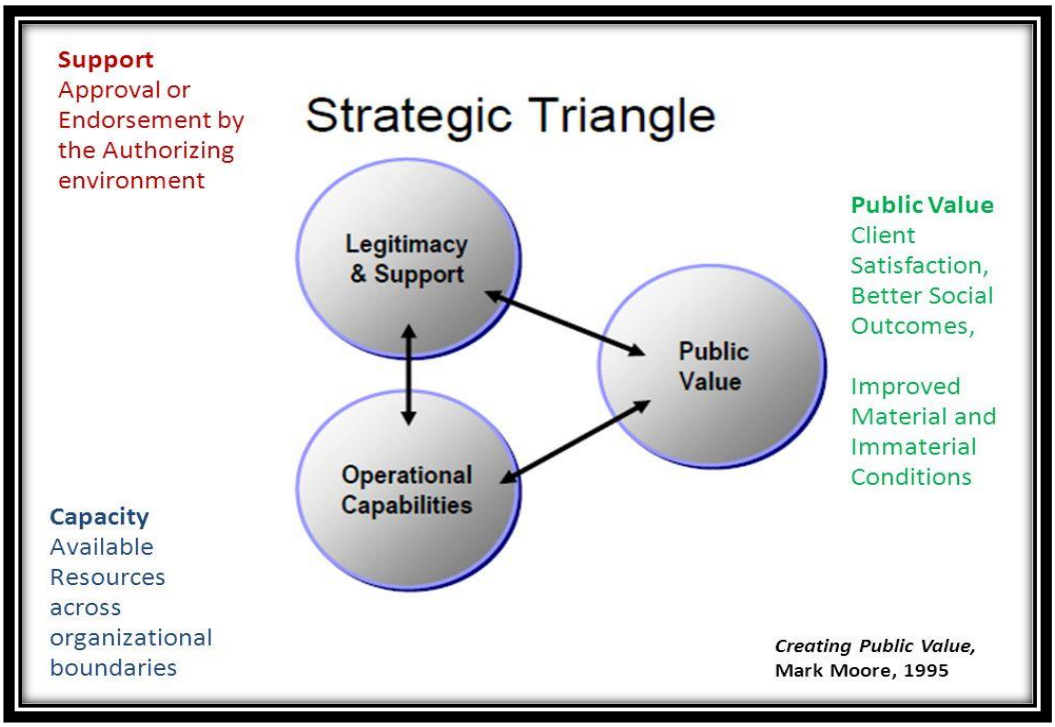

Figure 3.2: The Strategic Triangle.
Source: Adapted from de Jong (2017).

To formulate a strategy for the public sector, a manager must satisfy three criteria: efficiently deliver valuable outcomes to overseers and clients with minimal costs in terms of both finances and authority; consistently garner support and resources from the political authorising environment; and successfully execute these valuable and authorised activities within the existing organisation, enlisting the cooperation of others willing to contribute to the organisation's objectives (Torfing & Sørensen, 2019).

3.2.2.1 Strategic goals and values

These are the guiding principles, outcomes and laid down approach to public procurement system. Turrell (2017) provides that procurement operations are guided by the organisation's overall strategy, values, objectives, and priorities for the benefit of the local community, which includes using selection and award criteria that consider value compatibility, as well as providers' general promotion of a public service tenets. Similarly, the RDCs in Zimbabwe operate under some guiding principles, and outcomes laid down by the relevant statutes and Acts of Parliament. Turrell (2017) believe that public organisations should provide broader public value such as economic, social, and environmental benefits to the local community, while also delivering high quality, cost-effective services, and give feedback through the publication of annual public value accounts. However, Nyasulu (2019) argues that the

relationships between government agencies and contractors are an area of public provision that not only reflects public values, but also presents challenges in terms of accountability and transparency. Nyasulu (2019) contends that this zone of intersection from the perspective of public value theory, which is largely defined by contracts necessitates analytic attention.

3.2.2.2 The authorising environment

Public Value Theory suggests that the allocation of resources must be made by balancing the needs of all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process. Sørensen, Bryson and Crosby (2021) posit that the concept of "authorising environment" entails that the decision-makers understand all aspects of the public and must be able to manage the conflicting interests of stakeholders, as well as provide appropriate strategies and resources if required. On the other hand, Turrell (2017) posits that the authorising environment pertains to the acquisition of the legal authority to carry out specific projects. The legal authority of the rural district councils in Zimbabwe is obtained from the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) and from the supreme law the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment number 20/2013). Consequently, the authorising environment must consider a wide range of stakeholders including residents, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), businesses in the RDCs jurisdiction and the central government. Additionally, the decision-makers must be knowledgeable about the public policies, regulations, and resources that are available to them to make the best decisions for the public good.

Furthermore, the authorising environment must be able to foster collaboration and dialogue between stakeholders to ensure that objectives are met in an equitable and sustainable manner (Sørensen, Bryson & Crosby, 2021). Similarly, the RDCs authorising environment consist of various stakeholders who include the head of Procurement management unit, Council chairperson and the head of Procuring Entity (Chief Executive Officer). Stakeholder engagement, which necessitates political management skills, is the focus of this segment. It is also focuses on strategic relationship management centred on relational contracting, encouragement of co-production of service planning and delivery by providers and the purchasing organisation (Turrell, 2017).

3.2.2.3 Operational capability

The concept of operational capability pertains to the financial, material, and human resources competence. Turrell, (2017) contends that the segment requires that all personnel involved in procurement activities possess the necessary skills and competencies, that the best procurement structure be in place, and that the sourcing strategy be determined in a clear manner. The procurement function's primary role is to assist the organisation in achieving its strategic objectives, enforcing its values, and promoting a public service ethos, regardless of whether the provider is public or private (Turrell, 2017). The author argues that this philosophy must be built into purchasing procedures, including evaluation criteria and performance measurement.

Within the realm of public procurement, the generation of public values involves possessing procurement competence. This encompasses adhering to guiding policies and applying values transparently throughout the procurement process. Furthermore, the importance of fostering a shared culture, building networks, and cultivating organisational collaborative capabilities should not be overlooked (Turrell, 2017). Nonetheless, the author contends that contracting strategy is influenced by values, institutions, and markets. The public value failure concept can arise when there is a failure to articulate public values, a shortage of service providers, or challenges to human dignity. The rural district councils in Zimbabwe, being spatially focused organisations add value by planning, managing, and delivering various services, socio economic and environmental projects. The primary interface between the rural district councils and its external providers is to coordinate and consolidate internal customer (residents) requirements to avoid spending fragmentation thereby bringing value to the stakeholders.

3.3 BROAD CATEGORIES OF PROCUREMENT

There are three broad classes of procurement which are public, private, and not-for-profit procurement. These procurement categories are about brought about by supplier relationship management style, the nature of organisation’s stakeholders, focus of procurement, sources of financing and how they are regulated. The variances between these broad procurement classes are worth noting as they influence the agility, efficiency, and effectiveness of the procurement process.

3.3.1 Public procurement

Public procurement is defined by United Nations Procurement manual (2020) as the purchasing of products, services, and works with public monies by government agencies or civil service organisations. As noted by Thai (2017), it pertains to all the procurement requirements by a public institution which draws its funding from the central government. World Bank (2020) posits that public procurement is the method used by government organisations to obtain products, services, or labour from outside vendors. It entails the purchase of a variety of goods and services, including construction of infrastructure, tools, software, and consulting services (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020). Gabela and Okeke-Uzodike (2020) posited that some specific guidelines and procedures are followed during the procurement process to guarantee fairness, openness, and accountability.

Thai (2017) defines public procurement as the acquisition of works, supplies, and services by public bodies using publicly sourced funds, whether under formal contract or otherwise. The author observed that it involves the purchasing, hiring, or obtaining by any contractual means of publicly needed goods, construction works and services by the public sector. Guarnieri, and Gomes (2019) highlighted that public procurement also covers situations where public funds are used to procure works, goods, and services, even if the government is not directly involved. Public procurement is also the acquisition of products and or services at the lowest feasible cost of ownership, in the correct quantity and quality, at the right time and in the right place, for the direct benefit or use of government, corporations, or individuals (Thai, 2017; Guma, 2018). This study understands public procurement as the process of creating, managing, and completing contracts for the supply of products, services and construction works to government departments to satisfy their service delivery requirements.

The public procurement definitions provided elucidate various issues that are under the armpit of public procurement. If different people or entities can give different commodities, services, or works, they must be aware that they can compete to deliver them. Guma (2018) affirm that the entities or communities also need to know the specific need that has to be addressed, as well as any requirements that must be satisfied. To meet these requirements and adhere to these standards, stakeholders must share information in a transparent manner (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019).

3.3.1.1 The role of public procurement

Public procurement plays a vital role in the functioning of economies worldwide. It serves as a mechanism through which governments procure the necessary products and services to effectively deliver public services while promoting competition, efficiency, and value for money, as noted by Gabela and Okeke-Uzodike (2020). It also fosters economic inclusivity by providing opportunities for businesses including small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to participate in public sector initiatives and secure government contracts (Bawole and Adjei-Bamfo, 2020). This dual function of public procurement not only supports the effective functioning of government but also contributes to economic growth, job creation, and the development of vibrant and competitive markets.

Akenroye, Owens, Elbaz and Durowoju (2020) content that public procurement provides effective deployment of resources through obtaining commodities, services, and labour at the best price. This can also be enhanced by holding open bidding procedures, assessing proposals, and choosing the best suppliers based on quality, cost, and other important factors. Vluggen, Gelderman, Semeijn and Van Pelt (2019) emphasised that the promotion of accountability and openness in government transactions is one of the primary functions of public procurement. The integrity of public expenditure is ensured through fair and open procurement procedures, as well as by assessment standards and reporting procedures that are clear and unambiguous (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). The public is more likely to trust and have faith in government decision-making when procurement procedures are transparent and are yielding best possible outcome (Akenroye et al., 2020).

Accountability in public procurement entails interactions between people and the organisations which serve them (Kohler & Dimancesco, 2020). They posit that bureaucratic, legal, professional, and political accountability are some of the numerous forms of accountability included in the public sector accountability system. Thus, to encourage accountability and openness and maybe even as a means of preventing corruption, international institutions and the states that make up such institutions have come to recognise good governance as a conceptual framework (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). The underlying premise is that if international organisations are responsible and transparent in their procurement methods, the possibility of corruption is diminished or even eliminated (Vluggen, Gelderman, Semeijn & Van-Pelt, 2019). Additionally, it calls on institutions to implement punishments when performance is subpar and to defend their actions to internal and external stakeholders.

The emergency preparedness and resilience building are critically dependent on public procurement. Effective procurement procedures facilitate the prompt acquisition of necessary products and services for emergency management during emergencies like natural disasters or pandemics (World Bank, 2021). Planning and preparation for strategic purchases aid in improving catastrophe response and societal recovery falls among the prime performance functions of government procurement. For example, in the COVID-19 epidemic period, public procurement had a crucial role to play to sustain the population through the provision of medicinal and food requirements (OECD, 2021). In their analysis of crisis-related policy solutions put in place by various nations, Hoekman, Shingal, Eknath and Ereshchenko (2022) highlighted the significance of successful procurement strategies for maintaining the availability of necessary products and services in critical periods.

Public procurement plays a critical role to solve social and environmental concerns in terms of social and environmental responsibility (Hoekman et al., 2022). Governments are usually known for encouraging fair and inclusive practices by including social factors into the procurement process, such as labour laws and diversity requirements (Pouikli, 2021). By considering aspects like energy efficiency, waste reduction and environmentally friendly sourcing, sustainable procurement procedures are also aimed at achieving environmental objectives through green procurement. Green procurement involves public institutions purchasing products, services, and projects with lower environmental impacts over their lifecycle compared to alternatives (Hoekman et al., 2022). It is a key tool for public authorities to use greener goods and services, helping them achieve environmental policy objectives related to climate change, biodiversity loss, resource efficiency, and sustainable production and consumption.

Public procurement is also critical to attaining goals for sustainable development (UNDP, 2020). Hoekman et al. (2022) posit that the inclusion of sustainability factors into the procurement processes by developing nations underlines the significance of public procurement as a vehicle to advance environmental, social, and economic goals. The adoption of the pertinent pieces of legislation by various governments to encourage the integration of green procurement criteria into the various stages of the procurement process at the national level necessitates a sustained commitment to strategic decisions regarding the administration of green procurement, including the administration of green training, counselling, and monitoring of public procurers (Sönnichsen & Clement, 2020).

In terms of innovation and technical development, technology progress and innovation can be stimulated through public procurement initiatives (Caravella & Crespi, 2021). Governments encourage vendors to create novel goods, services, and technology by stipulating requirements for creative solutions in their procurement contracts (World Bank, 2021). This can stimulate cooperation between the public and commercial sectors, promotes research and development and aids in the adoption of cutting-edge technologies for use by the public. The empirical study by Caravella and Crespi (2021) supports the contribution of public procurement of the value of technology push tools in maintaining companies' innovativeness.

Caravella and Crespi (2021) found that adopting supply side policies and incorporating creative demand in public procurement can drive innovative investments which enhances connectivity and collaboration in R&D. Bleda and Chicot (2020) emphasised that government R&D contracts help small businesses access innovation ecosystems, expand expertise, and explore market routes. Public procurement also allows organisations to engage innovative small businesses, gaining their skills and concepts and understanding the strategic importance of procurement. As promotion of economic growth is a key function of public procurement, Estache and Kouassi (2020) acknowledge that public procurement can drive economic development by encouraging entrepreneurship, creating jobs through various projects. This aligns with Uyarra et al. (2020) noted that by supporting local industries with contracts, effective procurement methods can foster a flourishing economy, promote innovation, and increase market competitiveness.

Estache and Kouassi (2020) postulate that due to its direct impact on government expenditure, stimulation of business activity, and influence on market dynamics, public procurement is fundamental to economic growth. Governments may support a range of economic goals, stimulate competition, assist innovation, and increase efficiency by carefully deploying procurement procedures. Uyarra et al. (2020) underscored that by stimulating demand for products and services, public procurement may serve as a significant economic development engine. Governments can deliberately craft their procurement laws to support local companies, especially small and medium sized firms (SMEs), in bidding on public projects. This might support local industries, provide employment, and encourage economic growth.

3.3.1.2 The nature of public procurement

Public procurement is defined as any procurement that involves the use of public funds, (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). Public procurement makes up a large amount of government spending globally. It accounts for an average of 15% to 30% of GDP in many countries, making it a crucial sector for efficient government and economic growth (World Bank, 2020). In Zimbabwe, public procurement accounts between 20% and 25% of the annual national budget, Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ), (2018). This makes public procurement one of the major cost centres in the country and top on the government agenda.

Public procurement employs public funds, so it generates interest from many stakeholders who seek transparency and accountability in the public procurement processes, (Hlope & Bimha, 2020). The government establishes principled methods, procedures, laws, and statutes to control procurement processes in public institutions, which in turn characterises public procurement. Guarnieri and Gomes (2019) assert that public procurement regulations are based on international trade rules for consistency and smooth procurement between countries. Guma (2018) adds that good governance requires effective procurement regulations and practices. Hence, public sector organisations should procure information systems like the Procurement Management Information System (PMIS), which stores and shares procurement information as mandated by regulations in many African countries. Implementing these systems enhances transparency and accountability in public procurement (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020).

In terms of regulation, public sector procurement is held to a higher standard of scrutiny, and its organisations are bound by different laws ranging from local, regional, national, or international level which are supposed to be complied with (Surbhi, 2018). Public sector procurement is more procedurally demanding due to the regulatory system and the requirement that they account for their spending, (Lindholm et al., 2019). However, some of the regulations are rigid and the procurement process is frequently hampered by their protocols and procedures. Nevertheless, public procurement can employ procurement software which allows it to follow all the necessary procedures without stopping the procurement process.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on government procurement (GPA) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) are the most extensively utilised international public procurement frameworks which public institutions employ when creating or changing public procurement laws and procedures, (Hlope & Bimha,

2020). To align the public regulations with international trade law dictates, numerous nations have enacted reforms in public procurement with the aim of fostering efficiency, achieving value for money, ensuring equality and fairness, upholding integrity within the procurement system, promoting vendor competition, ensuring accountability, and facilitating the effective implementation of industrial, social, and environmental policies in procurement, (OECD, 2018; WTO, 2019).

3.3.1.3 Inflexibility of public procurement procedures

The public procurement system in most developing countries is known for being rigid owing some rigorous protocol procedures which must be observed during the procurement process. This position was also averred by Manyathi (2019) when posited that the inflexibility in defining tender terms, specifications, and requirements within public sector procurement is well-known. This rigidity often restricts service providers from freely suggesting or proposing alternative and innovative products. Consequently, this limitation hinders the potential for introducing solutions that could better cater to the needs of residents and yield cost savings (Hossain & Islam, 2021). Emerging service providers find it difficult to do business with the government because of the inflexibility of public procurement rules (Schiele, 2020).

Hossain, and Islam (2021) posit that public sector procurement is characterised by process inflexibility. As noted by Surbhi (2018), the challenge with public sector organisations when it comes to budget amendments is that they do not have the flexibility to align with the prevailing economic situation due to bureaucracy. On the other hand, procurement managers in the public sector have limited control over the procurement process since they must wait for the government to allocate and release the funds. The procurement budget and program can change quickly if a government department decides to cut funding to a specific component of the public sector, putting a procurement team under a lot of pressure in terms project completion and other pressing requirements (Bawole, & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020).

Budget cuts or delays can quickly halt procurement, leading to supply problems and strained supplier relationships (Hossain & Islam, 2021). These constraints hinder innovation, causing the public sector to fall behind the private sector (Schiele, 2020). Such scenarios create budget gaps, putting pressure on procurement teams and the services they provide. While public procurement is widely regulated with policies cast in stone, private procurement is relatively flexible (Hossain, & Islam, 2021). In contrast to the public sector, the private sector allows

more flexibility for innovative service providers to propose alternatives, with discussions often encouraged. Schiele (2020) noted that public procurement often prohibits negotiations due to concerns about corruption and fraud. Therefore, public procurement practitioners should adopt greater flexibility to ensure optimal value for government funds.

Schiele (2020) argues that some upcoming suppliers have low level of confidence in the government procurement system because they believe that procurement practitioners do not always treat bidders fairly. Hossain, and Islam (2021) posit that the focus on price by public sector reduces its achievement of value money. Contrary, the private sector focus is on the best quality and value of the product or service acquired rather than on the cost alone. The focus on price as selection criteria open the risk for established suppliers to win most tenders at the expense of rising suppliers as these established suppliers can use some unethical methods to win the tenders (Manyathi, 2019).

3.4.1.4 Predictability of the public procurement process

The predictability of public procurement process remains a cause of concern in most government related institutions (Hossain, & Islam, 2021). The opaqueness of the procurement system makes it difficult to make objective projections (OECD, 2018; WTO, 2019). There is a strong belief that future public sector tenders and procurement plans are kept hidden from the public thereby reducing the predictability of upcoming tenders and services demands in the public sector (Schiele, 2020).

In some complex products, services and industries, prior investment in research and development is required (WTO, 2019). This is because forward thinking service providers aim to deliver the highest quality at the most economical price, a goal achievable only through advance investment in anticipation of future tender prerequisites. Manyati (2019) suggests that innovative service providers are reluctant to invest in the future needs of the public sector due to the uncertainty in predicting the government's objectives. Better predictability will help service providers better prepare for upcoming tenders and ensure that they meet all the requirements.

In his research, Manyati (2019) found that most service providers in South Africa usually encounter challenges in the submission of their bids, as the tender period is typically short. All the same, if procurement entities publicise their future needs and plans, most service providers

would have ample time to prepare for impending tenders. One of the greatest ways to inform service providers about upcoming government goals and needs is to publish each procuring entity's annual procurement plans and then monitor authorities of provincial and national treasuries to guarantee the procurement plans are followed through (Schiele, 2020).

3.3.1.5 Performance award in public procurement

Performance or contract award refers to the diverse criteria employed by a contracting authority to ascertain which proposal is the most economically advantageous, signifying the one that provides optimal value for money (Lindholm et al., 2019). When employing the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) criterion, a contracting authority has the flexibility to evaluate factors like quality, delivery time, and after sales services, either in conjunction with or as alternatives to price considerations (Lindholm et al., 2019). The contracting authority assigns each criterion a relative weighting that reflects its relative relevance. The MEAT criterion is used in public procurement to determine which tender is the most cost-effective.

In situations where quality is crucial to the contractual authority, the MEAT criterion is frequently used as it enables contracting agencies to evaluate some quality features (Caranta, 2016). It also enables contracting authorities to consider innovation or new solutions. This is especially crucial for SMEs, which are significant sources of innovation, research, and development. As noted by Lindholm et al. (2019) it permits the contracting authority to consider the life cycle costs of the requirement acquired rather than just the direct purchase price or the initial purchase price within the defined specifications for those requirements with a long working life.

However, Dzuke (2015) noted that there is a dominance of price as a criterion for awarding tenders in most public entities particularly in developing areas. Schiele (2020) argues that such a price driven approach runs the risk of overlooking critical factors like flexibility, quality, and on-time delivery. The excessive price concentration combined with extensive tender specifications might lead to wasteful, expensive procurements. Most public procurers have no idea which aspects of a requested service are the most expensive (Lindholm et al., 2019). Buyers may be able to better match preferences to actual provision costs if they have more information through a seamless communication system in the public sector procurement.

3.3.2 Private Procurement

Procurement within private enterprises involves the acquisition of goods and services for the advantage of a non-governmental entity, typically a business (Lynch, 2021). These acquired goods and services play a crucial role in the operational processes of the business or are utilised in the production of goods and/or services for the company's customers. As outlined by Mangan and Lalwani (2016), private sector procurement predominantly focuses on recognising and securing commodities, works, and services in the context of sourcing and purchasing. This encompasses all activities from identifying potential suppliers to delivering the final product to the customer.

Private procurement entails all procurement effort which draws its funding from the sales, investments, and other business-related activities (Prince, 2021). The private sector organisations can shift money about their companies quite fast in reaction to changing economic conditions or company needs (Surbhi, 2018). This makes the private sector procurement more efficient compared to the public sector procurement. Mangan and Lalwani (2016) observed that to stay afloat, private corporations are guided by business strategies endorsed by their boards of directors in the private sector, as well as market forces of demand and supply. This makes private procurement more proactive and efficient compared to public procurement.

When private sector businesses experience financial challenges, they have more funding choices than public sector businesses and can typically swiftly make up the difference (Prince, 2021; Manyathi, Burger, & Moritmer, 2021). The number of stakeholders in the private sector is substantially few comprising mainly of the owners, investors, shareholders, and customers (Lindholm et al., 2019). These stakeholders are mainly concerned with goods and services, as well as the financial performance of the organisation. Private businesses are profit driven and strive to expand profit margins on a regular basis hence the need to strive on finding the most efficient and effective procurement process.

In terms of regulation, the private sector is subject to various restrictions, particularly regarding anti-discrimination and anti-bribery regulations; it nevertheless enjoys far more legislative independence than the public sector (Lindholm et al., 2019). The legal and shareholder monitoring that apply to private sector businesses are generally less burdensome and have less impact on the procurement process. Private procurement operates under institutional policies

that are geared towards achieving their business objectives and this allows them to identify suppliers quickly and execute contracts even without having to go through a bidding process.

Transparency of procurement activities in not over emphasised in private procurement as the organisations are more profit driven and focused on maximising returns for their owners or shareholders, hence their procurement activities are kept secret. Most businesses would be quite concerned if competitors obtained knowledge that may help them save money (Schiele, 2020). This position was also shared by Surbhi (2018) who observed that in the private sector, procurement professionals are under more pressure to procure with a profit-driven attitude to boost margins, generating profitability, and improving the organisation's competitiveness.

Manyathi, Burger, and Mortimer (2021) observed that the private sector thrives on collaboration and long-term partnerships with suppliers, benefiting from less strict rules and regulations. This allows the private sector to leverage its purchasing and negotiating power. Lindholm et al. (2019) also noted the private sector's success in communication and negotiation with suppliers. Manyathi et al. (2021) noted that the private sector emphasises supplier and customer relationship management to expand market share, viewing procurement as part of a broader supply chain management strategy. They also highlighted that technology enhancements, privacy measures, and strong strategic ties with stakeholders aid the private sector in fostering collaborations that enhance their operations.

Table 3.1: Differences between public sector and private sector procurement

Public sector	Private sector
Delivers services to the population	Supply the business entity with inputs.
Needs to meet social and political objectives besides the economy	Strives for efficiency and quality: relates to the firms profit and value proposition
Avoids being locked in relationship while seeking competition	Seeks stable, long-term relationships with the buyers and sellers
Often acts as an agent, buying for others	Attempts to balance prices, quality and flexibility of rules
Considers full compliance with the rules, exact terms of contract and accountability	Owner of the firm dictates terms of conditions based on the situation
Financial accountability Keeps strict control on budgetary obligations and expenditures	**Financial accountability** Observes basic business audit standards
Transparency Buys openly under scrutiny of elected officials and the press. Transparency is part of democracy.	**Transparency** Buys in "closed" situation of the firm and answers corporate officers only.

Source: Adapted from Nyasulu (2019).

The table above shows that whatever the government obtains comes from taxes or public investments. Nyasulu (2019), claim that the people are the government's main source of funding. For this reason, governments are required to inform the resource's owners of how those resources are being used and what has been accomplished. Manyathi et al. (2021) also argued that because public sector procurement is so complex, it is essential for procurement officials to have enough training for them to be productive. To be able to identify reputable suppliers, procurement officials must create workable contract awarding criteria.

3.3.3 Not-for-profit procurement

This is a type of procurement which generate from charities, philanthropists, and other generous sources. Mwende (2015) notes that not-for-profit organisations focus on development and humanitarian assistance programs aimed at preventing disease, alleviating poverty, promoting economic and social growth, advancing human rights, and protecting the environment. Examples include volunteer organisations, labour unions, schools, and churches, prioritising community growth and social good over profit. Their funding comes from the donor community, corporate sponsors, philanthropists, and community fundraising. However,

not-for-profit organisations face stronger regulatory constraints on changing goals from host governments, funding limitations, and the need to adhere to their declared purpose. Their budgets are set annually with specific allocations for stated initiatives and goals (Herget, 2023).

Rourke (2019) highlights that funds for non-profit organisations are often pre-assigned and earmarked for specific purposes, with limited flexibility in their usage due to the source of funding. Budgets are set annually with highly specific allocations to stated initiatives and objectives (Herget, 2023), severely limiting the flexibility of funds. Not-for-profit organisations may opt to appoint term contractors for regular purchases, saving time and money by avoiding the need for tendering with each purchase and preventing favouritism towards specific suppliers. Rourke (2019) posits that hiring contractors for services involves close monitoring of their performance to prevent collusion between staff and contractors to conceal poor quality work.

Regulations governing procurement in not-for-profit organisations vary widely. Herget (2023) averred that different funders impose specific procurement policies for projects they support, necessitating careful documentation and compliance with sponsor standards. Stakeholders in not-for-profit organisations, including board members, funders, and community members may influence spending decisions and supplier selection (Rourke, 2019). Therefore, establishing and implementing a comprehensive procurement policy helps ensure that spending aligns with organisational values and stakeholder interests.

Overall, the procurement sectors (public, private, and not-for-profit) all aim to provide goods and services and often negotiate cost cutting arrangements with vendors. The key difference lies in their objectives whereby the public sector and not-for-profit organisations focus on social welfare, while the private sector prioritises profit. Herget (2023) also notes that private organisations measure success by generating monetary value for investors, prioritising cost savings and self-motivation while public entities focus on high level service delivery and allocating funds to public interests.

3.4 PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

A public service is a government provided service to the inhabitants of a certain jurisdiction. Faseluka (2010) defined public service as a collection of services aimed at managing the state's

people, material, and financial resources to provide welfare services to the general population. The government may provide services directly or pay for them to be provided by a commercial entity (Madzimure, 2021). On the other hand, Shittu (2020) defines public service as the activities and services performed in any government role in the public interest and for the benefit of the public with police, defence, healthcare, and education falling into this category. In a broad sense, public services are those that are sponsored by money raised from the public through taxation and are provided for the public's benefit.

The government's duty to provide high quality public services is essential for residents' welfare and ensuring their availability is crucial. This is known as effective service delivery, where services meet or exceed residents' expectations while remaining economically viable (Madzimure, 2021). The concept stems from the idea that the public should be treated similarly to private sector clients when accessing government services (Osborne, 2020). Public service, found in every country embodies the government's role in formulating and implementing public policies, transforming them into tangible commodities and services for residents to consume (Shittu, 2020). Thus, public service and service delivery are closely intertwined.

Madzimure (2021) highlighted that residents and civil society play significant roles in enhancing and delivering public services and achieving social objectives which indicates that governments do not act alone in this regard. Chigwata (2019) emphasises that people perceive local government contribution by meeting their needs if the services are valuable and satisfying. Value is therefore explained as the ratio between what a consumer receives against payment. Relationship marketing, as suggested by Shittu (2020), aims to establish long lasting, mutually satisfying relationships with essential partners, customers, and suppliers to sustain long-term preference and business. Therefore, local government authorities must offer top-notch services and build strong relationships with residents.

3.4.1 Public service delivery characteristics

Public service is the provision of services to the public by a government or other organisation (Osborne, 2020). The author noted that public services include healthcare, education, public safety, transportation, and other important infrastructural services. As noted by Madzimure (2021) public services have four key characteristics that is the public policy, service relationship, redistribution, and trust management. The sensation of difference is heightened

by redistribution and the non-commercial nature of many transactions, but both characteristics can be accommodated within an economic preference model.

Public services operate on a service relationship model, aiming to serve users, yet operate as a trust, implying a non-financial relationship with consumers (Madzimure, 2021). Unlike private services, public services are not profit driven as they seek to fulfil social and/or moral responsibilities to the public (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020). Public service is therefore characterised by core values such as integrity, impartiality, and dedication (Lapuente et al., 2020). Integrity entails acting ethically in the public's best interests without bias while impartiality involves providing fair and equal services to all without discrimination (Osborne, 2020). Dedication on the other hand signifies commitment to delivering high quality services and going the extra mile to ensure public satisfaction (Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020).

Public service involves a high degree of accountability, with governments and public services organisations being held accountable to both the public and the law (Lapuente, & Van de Walle, 2020). On the other hand, Rana, Ali, Riaz, and Irfan (2019) highlighted that it is essential for public services to retain the trust of the public, as it is only through trust that the public will continue to support the services with their taxes. It is a privilege to serve the public, and those doing so should always strive to live up to the values of integrity, impartiality, and dedication in all that they do.

3.4.1.1 Public policy

There are various policy approaches which can be employed by the government and its quasi-government entities in the distribution of resources and provision of services to residents. In this context, public policy refers to the government's actions and inaction in response to residents' needs (Knill & Tosun, 2020). This brings forth the definition by Hupe and Hill (2021) who posit that public policy is the set of rules, regulations, and principles governing the actions of the public service. These authors agree with Knill and Tosun (2020) where they highlighted that public policies aim to guide the public service to better serve its residents, protect the rights of individuals, and promote the public good. On the other hand, Shittu (2020) defines public policy as the sum of all government programs and tactics aimed at meeting residents' needs.

Shittu (2020) posit that public policy enhances security, welfare, education, healthcare, roads, water, and sanitation services were all first developed as policies which were then executed by

the government administration and its agencies. As a result, one of the distinguishing characteristics of public service is the implementation of public policies in the form of service delivery to the broader public (Knill & Tosun, 2020). It is worth noting that public policy is often based on fundamental values such as justice, democracy, and freedom, as well as economic and social objectives. Hupe and Hill (2021) emphasise that public policy is designed to provide guidelines for administration at all levels of government. Public policy is also part of the administrative framework in which public services are organised, managed, and monitored.

Public policy is often shaped by public opinion and by the ideas and interests of interest groups and other stakeholders (Knill & Tosun, 2020). To ensure that public policy is effective, it must take into consideration the legal, economic, and social realities of the country. Public policy is also subject to a variety of external pressures, such as international agreements, the media, technology, and public opinion (Hupe & Hill, 2021).

3.4.1.2 Redistribution

Redistribution of resources is a critical component of public service, as an equitable distribution of resources, such as income and wealth, among the people is necessary to guarantee a decent standard of living for all members of society (Keller, 2019). Redistribution as a characteristic of public service aims at reducing disparities in income and wealth between the rich and the poor by providing financial assistance, in the form of social benefits, to the lower income groups (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020). The author further highlighted that redistribution policies promote economic growth, as they increase the disposable income of lower income individuals which can then be used for consumption, investment, and saving, thus increasing economic activity.

Public service performs a redistributive function since it is meant to service the public without the intention of making profit which in some cases make those who would have paid for services receive or not receive the services (André, Germain, & Sicsic, 2023). Condon and Wichowsky (2020) argue that because the government allocates resources to balance resource distribution inequalities with the goal of protecting the poorest of the poor in society, redistribution is an unavoidable function of public service. Shittu (2020) stressed that the purpose of the public sector doing this duty is to ensure that the country's development is

balanced between the haves and have-nots. This is a method of ensuring the public's socio-economic justice which can also be helped by private and charitable organisations through philanthropy.

Redistribution has become increasingly vital in public services, with governments worldwide focusing on providing equitable access regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or gender (Condon & Wichowsky, 2020). It aims to create a fairer society by ensuring all residents have access to essential services and resources. André, Germain, and Sicsic (2023) note that redistribution takes various forms, such as direct government funding, tax credits, or increased service access based on specific criteria. For instance, in the United States, Pell Grants provide college tuition assistance based on financial need, ensuring access to education for all residents regardless of financial status. Thus, redistribution of public services has broader societal impacts (André, Germain, & Sicsic, 2023). Governments seek to provide access to services like healthcare, education, and housing to those unable to afford them to reduce inequality and promote a fairer society (Keller, 2019). By directing resources to those most in need, redistribution fosters productivity and prosperity (André et al., 2023), benefiting the labour market by increasing job opportunities for lower-income individuals. Moreover, it helps alleviate poverty by narrowing the wealth gap and providing financial security to those in need.

3.4.1.3 Trust management

Trust management is a key element of public service as it is the foundation upon which services are provided (Fledderus, 2015). It is built upon three core components which are integrity, competence, and responsiveness. Integrity refers to maintaining high ethical standards and being trustworthy (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019). To be considered competent, public workers must possess the abilities and know-how needed to properly serve the public. Responsiveness requires public servants to be open to dialogue, to listen to and consider the opinions of residents, and to address any complaints quickly and efficiently. These components, when combined, help to ensure that public services are delivered to the highest possible standard (André et al., 2023).

The government is responsible for the residents' needs, which must be met through public service. Shittu (2020) highlighted that people may lack the ability to make informed or reasonable decisions for themselves thus the government must make a good decision on their behalf. This was dubbed a paternalistic role by some academics. Governments create

accommodations for residents without their agreement, making it paternalistic (Shittu, 2020). Lanin and Hermanto (2019) posit that this is done to avoid the dangers and consequences that could result from people's freedom to make erroneous decisions or choices of their own.

3.4.1.4 Service delivery relationship

Public service provision by the government typically does not only involve direct client payments as services like education, healthcare, water, and national identification cards are often subsidised or free (Shittu, 2020). However, assessing the value of these services relative to government expenditure which is funded by residents' taxes poses a challenge. While residents may access services for free, the government incurs significant costs in their creation and delivery (André et al., 2023). To reduce service delivery costs, governments often partner with the private sector, utilising blended financing models such as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to improve cost efficiency.

The differences in service relationship between public and private sector are the reason why private-sector value differs significantly from public-sector value. Shittu (2020) noted that in private sector services, there is a highly direct interaction between the service provider and the service recipient. It is against this background that Shittu (2020) stressed that clients have direct authority to hold private service providers accountable for the value of the services they provide unlike in the public sector. In private sector service delivery, the clients are promiscuous nomads. That is, they cease patronising businesses when they learn that the value of the service offered does not match the price paid and they hop to the next best alternative provider (André et al., 2023). However, in a public service set up, this level of responsibility is difficult if not impossible to achieve.

3.4.2 Efficient Service Delivery Concept

The primary responsibility of local government, which is provision of effective service delivery to the general populace, is so crucial that it should take precedence over other duties, such as ensuring democratic involvement in the political process (Madzimure, 2021). Thus, Shittu (2020) argue that the local government by its very nature, puts governance closer to the people, increasing the likelihood that community preferences will be translated into responsive policy and programs. In such a situation, the provision of local public goods and services will more closely reflect local preferences and tastes (Osborne, 2020). Given that not all problems are

central in nature, those whose incidence is not central must be decided how to be addressed by those who reside in the region where the incidence is most acute.

The goal of efficient service delivery is to provide the public with goods and services at the appropriate location and time (Maseko, 2018). This is accomplished through government mechanisms which are put in place at each government entity. On the other hand, Reddy (2016) defined service delivery refers to the provision of essential communal needs and services, such as housing, water and sanitation, land, energy, and infrastructure that local people rely on for their daily survival. This definition was also shared by Manyathi, Burger, and Moritmer, (2021) when they posited that service delivery is the execution or provision of public services such as sewerage, streetlights, public health, and public education. Nonetheless, they also pointed out that depending on the kind of public service under consideration, service delivery might be based on user-pay principle.

The government through the national, provincial, or local authority can provide public services to the residents or contract a private organisation to do so on its behalf. Gwiriri and Bennett (2020) assert that government provides public services as the main reason why residents pay taxes when the service cannot be supplied or purchased by an individual, but they still benefit from it. This argument was buttressed by Shittu (2020) when he posits that the civil service and other arms of the state oversee administering and controlling the state's resources on behalf of the general population, who are the true owners of the resources. The author stressed that government officers, whether elected or appointed, operate, and control the delivery of these services and that these services could be managed by the federal, state, or municipal government depending on the country.

Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) contend that an effective public service is that which provides products, information, and advice tailored to the unique needs of users. Public service delivery has become extremely important because it reflects the essential framework of nation-building, serves as a physical link between government and residents, promotes national ideals to residents, and finally serves as a bridge between the state and residents (Kostova et al., 2020). However, most developing countries are concerned about the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of public services because of the mechanisms used to deliver them, such as the South African public tendering system (Manyathi et al., 2021). Hence the service delivery objectives of the local authorities are meant to satisfy the expectations of the users in their areas of jurisdiction.

3.4.2.1 The Relationship Model in Service Delivery

The bureaucracy's ability and capability to carry out the prescribed work depend on the relationships and motivation in place. There are numerous models that can be used to ensure that bureaucracy is functioning properly to give successful services.

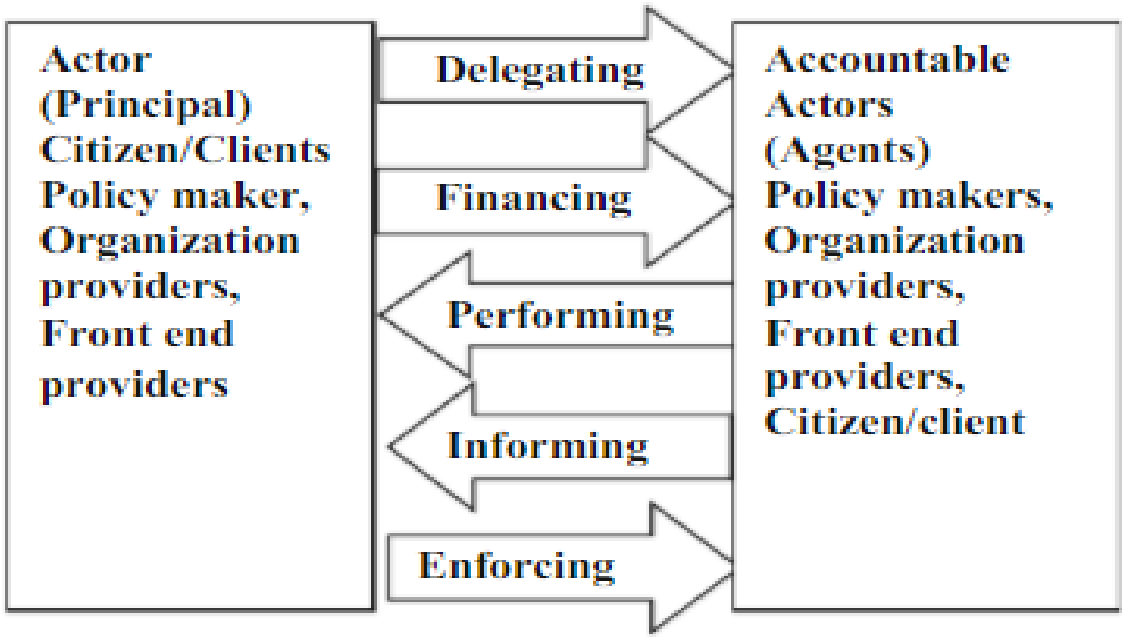

Figure 3.3: Public Service and Service Delivery Model.

Source: Adapted from Shittu (2020).

The elements such as financing, delegation, performance, performance information, and enforceability are the five primary aspects identified in this model for effective service delivery (Shittu, 2020). As a result, four separate actors are identified, each with their own specific functions in the direction of service delivery. Shittu (2020) posits that the residents or clients, legislators or policymakers, organisational providers, and frontline workers are all examples of accountable actors.

The residents or customers represent a wide range of service beneficiaries, including patients, students, traders, pensioners, and others. Political executives at different levels of government, including ministers, commissioners, and elected public officials, are known as politicians or policymakers. Organisational providers are high ranking public servants who have the authority and duty to direct frontline service providers, but frontline professionals are the ones who really carry out the task (Rana, Ali, Riaz & Irfan, 2019).

While organisational providers represent civil servants at the top echelon who have the power and authority to command frontline service providers such as police officers, medical practitioners, and teachers, frontline professionals are the people who perform the function of service delivery to the public (Shittu, 2020). All the above performers play their parts according to a predetermined relationship process and procedure. The entire cast of characters revolves around a reciprocal relationship between two performers, one of whom is the lead and the other his agent.

3.4.3 The residents' service delivery point of view

The issue of service delivery has grown so important since the development of civil society, when men engaged into an agreement with the government based on a social contract (Shittu, 2020). As a result, public service has served as a bridge for government to respond to the needs of the broader public, or residents. In other words, public service function is responsible for developing and implementing policies and programs with the ultimate purpose of providing critical welfare services and products that improve the general public's standard of life (Shin & Jhee, 2021).

Customers' expectations are the primary focus of service delivery. This is how the government agency tries to make sure the consumer is happy with the products or services. The speed with which a service is delivered to customers is the major dimension of service delivery (Martemyanova, 2018). In many instances, customers seek a combination of good value for their money and prompt, efficient service (Zyad, Ali, Bang-Nguyen, & Chanaka, 2018). In addition, Martemyanova (2018) observed that the timeliness of service delivery plays a crucial role in determining its satisfaction level. A delay in delivery suggests subpar service, while swift delivery of ordered goods and services indicates a satisfactory or good level of service delivery.

From the customer's perspective, service delivery involves fulfilling their expectations by providing the precise products they requested. As noted by Service Futures, (2015) customers should obtain the exact products and services that they ordered when it comes to service delivery. Delivering products of inferior quality indicates a low standard of service, while delivering products and services of high quality signifies outstanding service delivery. It also entails ensuring that the desired service is provided. It is deemed bad service delivery if it does not include the element of meeting customers' expectations (André et al., 2023).

3.5 The nature of local governance

In its broadest sense, the term local authority refers to directly or indirectly elected public governing bodies at sub-national level possessing within a given territory (Beshi & Kaur, 2020). Africa's rural local governance is characterised by a wide variety of institutions, practices, and difficulties that differ between nations and areas. Examining the institutions, participants, decision-making procedures, and dynamics that influence the governance environment in rural areas is necessary to comprehend the nature of local governance there (Bawole, & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020). The central governments of several African nations had some of their central government responsibilities devolved to local areas known as the local authorities through decentralisation initiatives (Chigwata, 2019). Although the decentralisation initiatives are adopted at regional level across nations, they vary greatly in terms of their effectiveness.

Chigwata, (2019) posits that different countries have different rural local governance arrangements determined by their history and culture. There may be district councils, village councils, or traditional authorities in some circumstances. These organisations' tasks and responsibilities differ as well, depending on historical, cultural, and administrative aspects. In rural governance, traditional leaders frequently play a crucial role, hence, their inclusion in rural local governance. Rural governance frequently involves prominent traditional leaders. Chiefs, monarchs, and other traditional leaders may have both formal and informal power, particularly when it comes to issues of land, culture, and the settlement of neighbourhood disputes (Mutandwa, 2020).

African rural areas are frequently home to a variety of cultural and ethnic groups. Local government structures and dynamics may be impacted by this variety, which can occasionally result in issues with representation and inclusivity (Manggat, Zain & Jamaluddin, 2018). Since agriculture dominates many rural economies, concerns about climate change, sustainable farming practices, and resource management are crucial to rural local government. Technology adoption particularly introduction of mobile phones and digital platforms is increasingly changing rural local governance through simplifying communication, data collecting, and service delivery (Chigwata, 2019).

3.5.1 Accountability of local authorities

As a complex and essential component of governance, accountability in rural local authorities in Africa has a direct impact on the efficiency of public service delivery, sustainable development, and social well-being of the residents (Mutandwa, 2020). Accountability is the need that institutions and public authorities provide justification for their decisions and actions to ensure openness, responsiveness, and responsibility in the administration of public funds (Rana, Ali, Riaz & Irfan, 2019). When examining accountability in rural local governments in Africa, it should entail considering a variety of factors, difficulties, and potential solutions.

Mutandwa (2020) acknowledges that when it comes to insufficient institutional capacity, some rural local governments do not have the abilities and knowledge necessary to put accountability measures into place and enforce them. Decision-making is also influenced by political influences, which may result in corruption and a lack of accountability. However, individuals in rural areas may only have limited access to information, which makes it difficult for them to hold local government officials responsible (Ramazanovich & Toshtemirovich, 2022).

However, for accountability to be ensured, a strong legal and regulatory framework must be established. This contains regulations outlining the functions and accountability of local government bodies, as well as systems for monitoring and enforcement (Manggat et al., 2018). Additionally, Ramazanovich and Toshtemirovich (2022) opine that increased accountability can be attained by community meetings, consultations, and including locals in planning and monitoring programs. This can be done by giving local communities the power to actively engage in decision-making processes. On the other hand, leveraging international assistance and implementing best practices in governance and accountability can offer useful resources and insights for enhancing accountability in rural local governments (Ramanauskas, Stasys & Plotnikova, 2019).

3.5.2 Revenue generation and collection

Public revenue, as defined by Androniceanu, Gherghina, and Ciobănaşu (2019), is the money that national governments raise to fund their operations throughout a given year. It is also described as the cash received by the state through some taxes, tariffs, customs, the sale of goods and services, dividends, profits, disposals, and other financial sources (André et al., 2023). Therefore, revenue generation is the process of generating money so that government agencies can successfully carry out their mandates.

The rural local authorities have a task to raise adequate funds from their areas of jurisdiction for efficient service delivery. In general, local governments in Africa have two main sources of revenue which comprise their own revenue collected from taxes, user fees, and various licenses (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). There are also some transfers from the central government which are typically in the form of grants and revenue sharing. In addition, some local authorities in some nations have been granted the ability to borrow funds from capital markets particularly to finance some major infrastructure investments (Osho, Ajayi, & Ogunbodede, 2019). The position was also highlighted by UN-HABITAT (2015) when it posited that local authorities in developing countries use considerable sources of tax revenue as well as non-tax revenues gathered through user charges and levies to maintain a viable and responsible budgetary future. Across East and Southern Africa, the extent of intergovernmental payments shows significant disparities, both among countries and between rural and urban councils within nations (Fourie & Malan, 2020).

In some developing countries like Ghana and Zimbabwe, the central government allocates a portion of total income, at least 5%, to local governments, like the system in Botswana where rural councils receive 92% of their revenue from the central government (Fjeldstad & Heggstad, 2012). Conversely, local governments in Uganda heavily rely on central government transfers, while those in South Africa generate most revenue locally. The ability of local authorities to provide essential products and services and be accountable to residents depends on their capacity to generate resources. Therefore, central government funds should be complemented with local income to address expenditure needs and fiscal capability disparities which allows local authorities to support their community development programs (UN-HABITAT, 2015).

Theory and evidence support the importance of central and local governments in providing public services to residents. Consequently, rural local authorities are tasked with revenue-generating activities to expand their income base and ensure long-term viability (RDC Administrative Handbook, 1992). Initiatives such as constructing beer halls allow RDCs to collect leases, taxes, user charges, rentals, rates, and licenses (Jachi & Mandongwe, 2019). Revenue generated is used to pay council employees, including councillors' allowances, and fund daily operations, such as purchasing computers, repairing, and servicing vehicles, and providing social and infrastructure services. Decentralising this mandate to local authorities, while carefully considering the costs and benefits of service delivery, enhances local authority

over spending and revenue. Chisango, Manuere, and Muranda (2023) advocate for local authorities to charge for services they provide whenever feasible. However, during the initial stages, service delivery spending by local authorities may need to be covered directly from central government revenue.

In most African countries, the property rates in local authorities, company licenses, market fees, and different user charges, frequently in the form of surcharges for services provided by or on behalf of the local authority are the most common sources of own revenues (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). Nonetheless, the experiences from a number of these African countries demonstrate that these income tools have significant flaws which make it unappealing. Property taxes, for example, can be exceedingly expensive to administer and in certain countries, the enforcement of user fees has resulted in widespread opposition to pay among the poorer sectors of the urban population (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). Additionally, in developing nations, most local authorities find it challenging to update their valuation records, making it difficult to tax owners of newly constructed properties resulting in the local authorities being deprived of potential revenue. On the other hand, a considerable section of the local authority economy is made up of unorganised informal sectors, whose operations make it difficult to tax them (Chisango et al., 2023).

3.5.3 Rural local authorities service delivery objectives

The service delivery objectives of rural local authorities are crafted against their roles and responsibilities. Manyathi et al., (2021) posited that in a democratic society, the provision of public services serves as a constitutional contract between residents and the current government which should be provided with transparency and accountability. Munyede and Mapuva (2020) summarised these roles ranging from provision of roads, public lighting, refuse collection, educational infrastructure, health delivery, water, and sanitation.

The service delivery objectives of Rural District Councils are equally the same in many countries. It can be observed that in South Africa, Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), section 152(1) (b) (c) clearly expresses and specifies the local government's objectives as ensuring the provision of sustainable services to communities and promoting social and economic growth. This was shared by Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) in their study of South African local authorities when they noted that the local governments exist

to fulfil its developmental duty of identifying long-term solutions to meet the social, economic, and material demands of communities while also improving their quality of life.

Against this background, the importance of local government as a hub for public service delivery cannot be overstated. Thus, Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) affirm that more outputs are visible in local authorities, making them to appear more accountable to the people than any other level of government, whether provincial or national. These service delivery objectives place the local authorities at the centre of criticism should service delivery is low. The residents and businesses expect improved quality services which are more accessible from the local authority. Internal research and development initiatives are now critical for more cost-effective ways of doing business and improved organisational management with a view to obtain value for money against the prevailing limited financial context (Vilfan et al., 2018). This now stands to be a motivating factor in the rural local authorities to improve service delivery and value for money.

The demand for improved service delivery by residents and businesses has been triggered by globalisation and access to information through the digital society, media, and social networks. Vilfan et al. (2018) noted that the residents expect better, faster, and cheaper public services, and in many cases, they want more from their government administrations, based on their experiences in the commercial sector. In the design and delivery of public services, ICT has now taken on a revolutionary role (Afolabi et al., 2022). Residents and businesses have increased their expectations of e-service delivery as the digital society has grown.

Osho, Ajayi, and Ogunbodede (2019) posit that the goals of local government in Nigeria are to provide practical opportunities for the residents to practice democracy, to provide certain basic services for residents at the local level, to assist residents in solving their community problems that cannot be solved by individually. The objectives also cover the provision of infrastructure at local levels to the residents through building and maintaining of roads and bridges.

3.5.4. Responsibilities of rural local authorities

The precise functions assigned to rural local authorities might change, and depending on local needs, laws, and governance systems, certain places may have additional or different obligations (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). Furthermore, based on the general governance structure of the nation or region, the degree of autonomy and decision-making power may

differ. In many developing nations, rural local authorities are essential to the administration and advancement of rural areas. These rural local authorities serve as the voice of their localities as they are charged with a variety of duties that are meant to guarantee the welfare and advancement of rural residents (Ramazanovich & Toshtemirovich, 2022).

Emphasis is placed on their function in rural local governance such as service provision, infrastructure development, economic growth, environmental preservation, and community participation. For example, the Constitution amendment number 20 of 2013 of Zimbabwe provides that, "Whenever appropriate, governmental powers and responsibilities must be devolved to provincial and metropolitan councils and local authorities which are competent to carry out those responsibilities efficiently and effectively", rural local authorities were created. The constitution establishes legal duties and authority for local governments in rural communities in Zimbabwe, where most of the population resides. However, the system of local administration in rural areas shows how there are many different local authority forms, as well as how their roles and responsibilities often parallel and overlap (Ramazanovich & Toshtemirovich, 2022).

3.5.4.1 Provision of recreational facilities

To promote a lively and healthy rural community, recreational amenities must be available. The enhancement of social relationships and community resilience is in addition to improving the physical and mental health of the residents. Parks and green areas are frequently created and maintained by rural local governments including tennis courts, basketball courts, and other facilities (Administrative Handbook of RDCs, 1992). Many RDCs provide recreation in the form of beerhalls, which may be found across the rural districts. However, as noted by Jachi, and Mandongwe (2019) the recreational and sporting facilities which are required by residents are still in short supply in communal areas.

In South Africa, everyone has the right to a safe and healthy environment as spelt out by the Republic of South Africa's Constitution of 1996. Local governments are charged with providing a policy framework for local recreation governance that is consistent with national and provincial sport and recreation policies, and recreational facilities must be accessible to all individuals in the community (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Local governments are also responsible for broader policy areas that can have a substantial impact on

residents' physical activity, such as the administration of rights of way, parks, and other green spaces (Fourie, & Malan, 2020).

Winter, Selin, Cerveny and Bricker, (2019) stressed that high quality multi-use local green space, especially for people who are less inclined to use traditional sports centres, can play a key role as sporting grounds and alternative settings for sport and healthful exercise. Opportunities to realise the various benefits that investment in green spaces and other local areas as venues for sport and healthy activity can provide for communities are being actively encouraged to be explored whenever they emerge (Mandeli, 2019). However, community sport and recreation programs run by local governments, on the other hand, have had to work in a difficult climate owing to financial constraints.

As the central government implements its expenditure plans to assist it accomplish one of its primary policy aims, reducing the national debt, funding and support for sport and recreation are being dramatically decreased in many regions because of local government budget cuts (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). Unfortunately, local governments having a legal obligation to provide sports or leisure activities or facilities are left with no alternative except to close them. Recreation has evolved into a vital and well recognised form of service aimed at meeting the physical, social, and emotional needs of all community members and their families. Nicholls (2019) noted that through challenging considerations regarding where and how to invest limited resources, funding has often been missed due to the pressure on budgets encountered by many local authorities.

3.5.4.2 Establishment and provision of health facilities

These RDCs are also responsible for promoting the health sector, which includes the construction of clinics and rural health centres, as well as personnel and medicine distribution (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). The construction of clinics, hospitals, and rural health centres is also included in their mandate. This mandate entails that these facilities should be established closer to the people to enhance service delivery. Munyede and Mapuva (2020) argue that these functions cannot be executed well without the necessary fiscal backing for procurement of the requirements.

The Administrative Handbook of RDCs (1992) provides that one of the key duties charged to RDCs is the provision of health services, and RDCs are urged to develop both physical and

mobile clinic units. These are designed to serve populations in sparsely inhabited areas, notably in new resettlement areas where establishing physical clinics is not economically practical (Madzimure, 2021). It can be observed that these facilities are critically required in countries which had some migration of people like some rural parts of Zimbabwe due to the government steered land reform program of year 2000.

The RDCs is charged with ensuring the prevention and combating of diseases such as malaria and cholera epidemics in the surrounding populations. To achieve these goals, RDCs should collaborate with other relevant ministries or organisations to prevent severe calamities such as disease and pest control. Jachi, and Mandongwe (2019) averred that they can do so by involving authorities such as the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and Ministry of Health and Childcare officials who oversee dealing with health-related disasters. Even though RDCs collaborate with other organisations, they should have their own resources or protective tools on hand in the event of a health-related emergency. These facilities can only be availed through sound procurement planning and execution.

3.5.4.3 Provision of transport and water facilities

RDCs oversee planning, building, repairing, and maintaining infrastructure such as roads, bridges, canals, sewers, reservoirs, furrows, and culverts (RDC Act, 1998). It oversees hiring or coordinating agents like the District Development Fund (DDF) and the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) to help with the construction of these facilities. Local governments are also responsible for ensuring that energy, telecommunications, and postal services are available throughout the districts (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). Better infrastructure, without a doubt, would have a significant impact on competitiveness and growth. Infrastructure is critical in assisting the poor in improving their health, quality of life, and ability to engage in economically productive activities (Guma, 2018). The author added that cost overruns for projects are logically caused by a delay in implementing infrastructure construction.

Service delivery in terms of transportation can only be fulfilled by the local authorities through attracting and retaining sufficient human resources, skills, and efficient systems. These are critical to meet daily planning needs, respond to short term challenges, plan, and deliver long-term plans, and devote time to conducting, managing, and commissioning studies that investigate and deliver innovative transportation changes (Local Government Association company, 2021). In addition, Madzimure (2021) pointed out that considerable council and

external staff resources are typically required to develop and implement those initiatives that are more innovative and will cause larger change in the transport situation of the local authorities.

However, one problem that has gotten worse in recent decades is the erosion of rural transportation networks, which has resulted in a substantial reduction in traffic. Many sponsored services, as well as those that were operated commercially but were deemed to be unviable, have been cancelled because of cuts in funding for local public transportation. As noted by Madzimure (2021) rural routes are typically longer and have lesser demand than metropolitan lines, resulting in higher operating and maintenance costs but lower revenue. When compared to metropolitan areas, the loss of public transportation services can have a particularly detrimental impact on access to jobs, education, and training opportunities, as well as critical services like healthcare (Local Government Association company, 2021).

Even though some local authorities are proceeding with their transportation planning, personnel constraints mean that many of these local authorities are unable to meet legislative transportation obligations, let alone have time to innovate or implement large projects (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). This is one of the critical issues stemming from a lack of competent personnel resources as many local authorities are hampered in their use of data by skills gaps within local governments, that is even if data and modelling tools are accessible, personnel may lack the ability or time to use them (Madzimure, 2021). Most local governments are unable to make such huge time and resource commitments as they are unable to employ or outsource appropriate resources to address this issue due to funding constraints.

3.5.4.4 Provision of social amenities

The provision of public services and infrastructure projects is a mandate of RDCs which include both social and physical infrastructure (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). Social infrastructure comprises the building of schools for primary, secondary, and higher education, vocational training centres and housing (RDC Act, 1998). The RDCs are responsible for staffing and providing resources in addition to constructing these schools. As a result of the foregoing, the RDCs oversee total service delivery of the rural populace (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019).

Gumo (2018) noted that in South Africa, had a chaotic human settlements delivery record for the provision of low-cost homes over the last eighteen years in some of the local authorities. However, a national government intervention was successful in improving the province's delivery of low-cost housing to more acceptable levels because of employing some enabling policies. Gumo (2018) also affirm that South Africa's Housing Act 107 of 1997, demands every municipality to take all reasonable and necessary steps that ensure water, sanitation, electricity, roads, storm water drainage, and transportation services are provided in an economically efficient manner as part of the municipality's integrated development planning process.

3.5.4.5 Environmental conservation

The governments' commitment to the implementation of environmental management strategies has seen the promotion of conservation of biological diversity while supporting sustainable utilisation of natural resources (Mhlanga, Mashavave & Dzvairo, 2017). As part of this commitment the Rural District Councils are given authority over environmental issues in the areas under their jurisdiction in terms of the Environmental Management Act (Nyikadzino, 2016). As a result, the Environmental Management Agency collaborates closely with the Rural District Councils, local organisations, and traditional leaders on common lands. Therefore, rural local authorities have a crucial role in maintaining the rural environment and making sure it is used sustainably.

Through the Environmental Management Act (Chapter 20:27) which concerns sustainable development and environmental preservation, the rural local authorities are charged with overseeing the management of the area's natural resources, safeguarding the habitats of species as well as upholding environmental laws. Mhlanga et al. (2017) noted that rural local authorities protect the distinctive ecosystems and scenic beauty of the rural areas by supporting sustainable behaviours through raising environmental awareness among the community and implementing some conservation initiatives. These environmental conservation initiatives are critical in ensuring that there is long-term survival and resiliency of the local communities.

As part of the environmental management strategy, some environmental by - laws and Environmental Committees have been established throughout the country by different rural local authorities to support the environmental conversation work. Some notable examples of By-laws include Statutory Instrument 203 of 2018 on Marondera Rural District Council (Environment and Natural Resources Conservation) (By-laws, 2018), Statutory Instrument 219

of 2019 on Masvingo Rural District Council (Environmental and Natural Resources Conservation) (By-laws, 2019).

3.5.4.6 Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development is defined as the supply of essential infrastructure amenities such as the building of roads and highways, the accessibility of transportation, bridges, and ports as well as telecommunication networks (Madden & Savage, 1998). Rural areas need infrastructure for the local population to meet their basic needs and lead productive lives on both a social and economic level (Manggat et al., 2018). Consistent with the Rural District Councils Act (Chapter 29:13), rural local authorities take on the responsibility of planning, funding, and supervising infrastructure projects in their jurisdictions, with a focus on building and maintaining roads, bridges, irrigation systems, community centres, markets, and other crucial infrastructure that improves connectivity, fosters economic growth, and enhances the general well-being of rural residents.

The rural local authorities have a significant duty to encourage economic growth in rural areas through availing the necessary infrastructure to the local community (Manggat et al. 2018). Infrastructure projects are essential in bringing in investment, assisting small businesses in the area, and promoting job growth. The rural local authorities put infrastructure plans in place to support entrepreneurship, expand agricultural potential, advertise tourism, and promote sustainable economic activity by identifying and utilising the assets and tap the capabilities of their local communities (Majumder, Deka, Mondal & Bisen, 2021).

Manggat, Zain and Jamaluddin (2018) argue that infrastructure development is required as it influences demand and supply, as well as stimulating local trade through purchase and sell operations. Therefore, infrastructure development can have a positive effect on the local employment rate, productivity, and income as well as creation of value from an economic standpoint. Ramanauskas, Stasys and Plotnikova (2019) added that infrastructure development can help promote political integration and close regional disparities in society such as between the urban and rural communities.

It should be noted that the foundation for a high quality of life in rural communities is a product of the provision of adequate and effective basic infrastructure (Manggat et al., 2018). The lack of basic infrastructure facilities is a key element that might lower a community's quality of life

and thwart efforts to boost its economic transformation, especially in communities which are dependent on agricultural resources. Aziz (2015) contends that there is positive connection between infrastructure development and economic growth. The author also highlighted that having a sound socio-economic infrastructure is crucial for a high standard of living.

3.6 PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OBJECTIVES ON SERVICE DELIVERY

Public procurement objectives play a pivotal role in shaping service delivery within public sector organisations. These objectives are designed to ensure the efficient, effective, and transparent acquisition of goods, services, and works needed to fulfil the needs and expectation of the public. By setting clear procurement objectives, governments aim to achieve various outcomes including cost savings, quality improvements, timely delivery, and compliance with legal and ethical standards.

3.6.1 The general procurement objectives in different countries

Anthony, (2019) as cited by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) noted that public procurement in South Africa is aimed at addressing socio-economic disparities and segregations. In Nigeria public procurement is aimed at enhancing institutions' capacity to offer services more efficiently and contribute to the country's development, (Negedu, 2022). Kissi, Adjei-Kumi, Twum-Ampofo, and Debrah (2020) established that public procurement in the Republic of Ghana is meant for the successful implementation of government projects and public services, solid public financial management through obtaining value for money in government expenditure, decreasing corruption, increasing competitiveness, reducing debt levels, and promoting the private sector.

In Southern African nations like Tanzania, Malawi, Eswatini, Zambia, Malawi and South Africa, public procurement contributes to the most efficient use of public resources, resulting in better achievement of development goals such as poverty reduction and improved health, infrastructure, education, and other services, (Hlope & Bimha, 2020). The objectives of probity, accountability, transparency, and value for money are promoted under transparency provisions in the Procurement Regulations of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Tanzania, which require procuring entities to keep procurement records (Lindholm et al., 2019). This shows the extent to which public procurement is important in any country.

The public procurement objectives are summarised as promotion of accountability, value for money, professionalism, transparency, and efficiency in the context of Zimbabwe, (Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act [Chapter 22:23], 2018). From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that public procurement objectives are generally similar across many countries. The overall lenses of the objectives are to see transparency, fairness, competition in procurement and to expose flaws, or unethical behaviours that influence a countries' procurement management system.

3.6.2 Specific procurement objectives influencing service delivery.

The public procurement objectives of different countries are the cornerstone in driving their procurement requirements which determines how public services are delivered. The soundness and clarity of these objectives determine the level of service delivery by a public entity.

3.6.2.1 Transparency objective

Theory and evidence suggest that a transparent procurement system ensures an acceptable level of service delivery to the residents. As affirmed by Anane, Adoma and Awuah (2019) in their study on Volta River Authority in Ghana that transparency guarantees that goods, works, and services are procured in accordance with specifications, allowing the organisation to give excellent service. Implementing a transparent method, such as e-procurement, guarantees the prudent use of an organisation's resources by granting contracts to suppliers capable of providing top notch services and products at a reasonable cost (Afolabi et al., 2022).

Ensuring transparency enables the procured items to be of high quality and meet the specified standards, enabling personnel to provide excellent service. Conversely, when procurement is conducted covertly, the delivered goods are usually of inferior quality and often not delivered on schedule, negatively impacting service delivery. Consequently, policies that promote transparency enhance service delivery, while those that discourage can lead to inferior service delivery and underperformance (Martemyanova, 2018). In their research, Gleeson, and Walden (2016) found that, in addition to offering poor service by either not delivering or delivering late, a lack of transparency leads companies to procure goods and services at excessively high expenses. These elevated costs are subsequently transferred to consumers in the form of higher service charges. Crucially, a lack of openness within organisations fosters corruption, resulting in a detrimental effect on service delivery. This leads businesses to incur financial losses while delivering substandard services to customers.

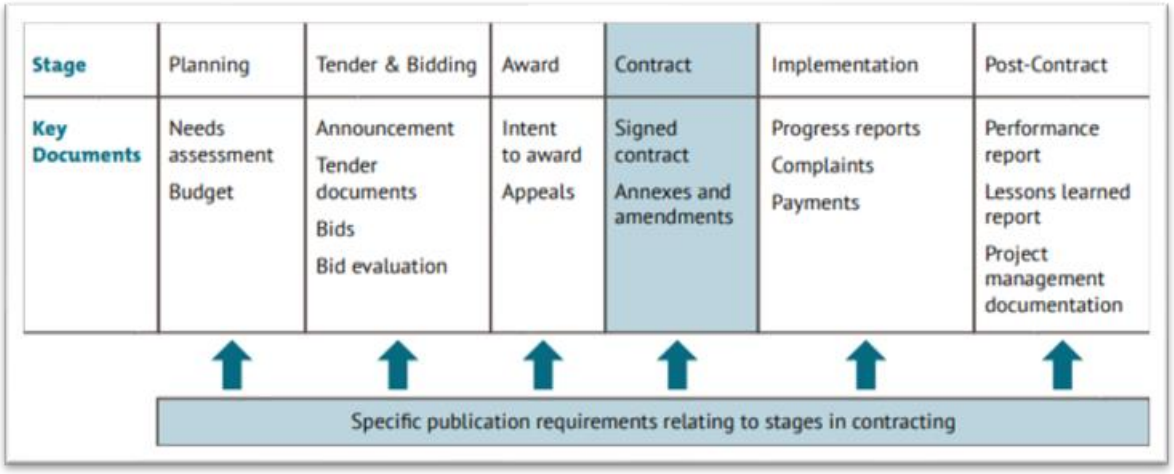

Figure 3.4: General access to information framework.

Source: Centre for Global Development (2019).

As public procurement comes from an institutionalised framework, Centre for Global Development (2019) argue that contract publication can allow legislators and the public to examine the terms of public contracts and track their subsequent performance, improving accountability and lowering the chance for fraud to go undetected. This is crucial because public contracting corruption is a key source of illegal wealth, state capture, and the undermining of government institutions. Bosio et al. (2022) contend that there is a compelling justification for governments to make important records from the public contracting life cycle, including contracts, publicly available. Such open contracting can help the government make better decisions, level the playing field for contracting enterprises, boost trust and competition, lower prices, and improve the value for money of outcomes.

Ardigó and Chêne (2017) emphasised the need for governments to improve the quality and reach of their services through implementing effective accountability and oversight systems. Higher administrative officers, such as supervisors, public auditors, and legislative bodies, typically use bureaucratic hierarchies to hold public employees responsible. However, Bosio et al. (2022) noted that a lack of definition and understanding of monitoring and supervision processes, weak regulations, a lack of resources, capacity, and bureaucratic performance disciplines, as well as a lack of commitment and political will to enforce laws, the formal monitoring and supervision processes are not followed or enforced in many countries.

However, there are some exceptions to this transparency principle in terms of publication of certain information regarding public contracts. Crown Commercial Service (2017) contends that personal privacy, national security, information gained in confidence, and commercial sensitivity are the exemptions that are particularly applicable in the context of public contracts. Centre for Global Development (2019) concurred with this assessment when also identified the exemptions as national security, personal privacy, integrity of the justice system, effectiveness of public institutions, legal confidentiality, and national interest.

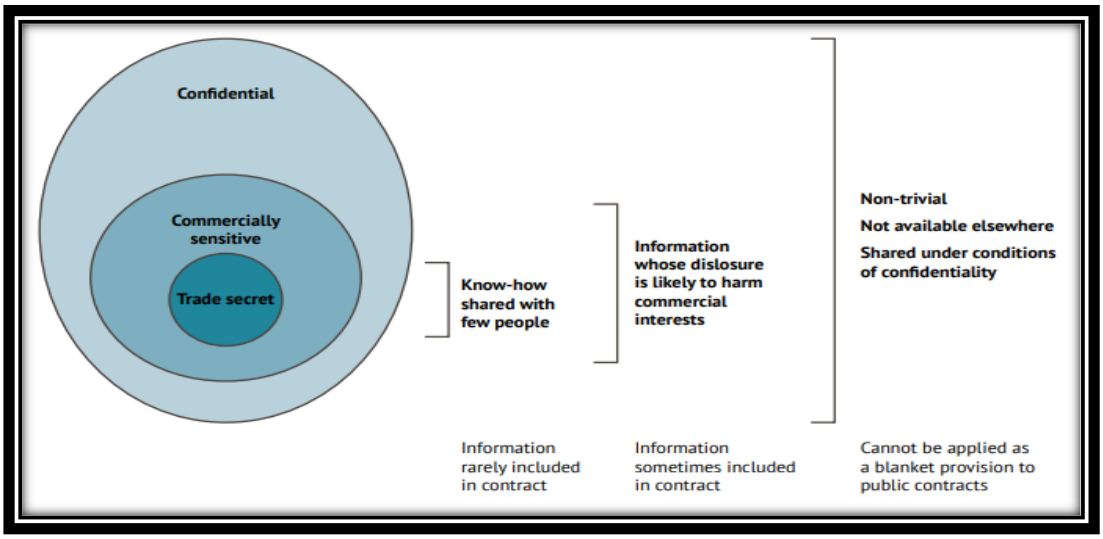

Figure 3.5: Exemptions from Publication.

Source: Adapted from Centre for Global Development (2019).

Commercial Sensitivity

It pertains to information that could jeopardise the contractor's, subcontractors', or suppliers' business interests, as well as the public agency (Crown Commercial Service, 2017). Information online-item pricing, profit margins, and input prices are among the most common forms of information contained in this category. However, some countries provide for a complete exemption from publishing commercially sensitive information, while others use a public interest test to assess whether this information should be made public (Centre for Global Development, 2019). South Africa's Promotion of access to information Act, 2000 is an example of information restriction while in Georgia bidders that use the computerised procurement method are informed ahead of time that all information will be published unless Georgian law allows for nondisclosure.

National security

The information about intelligence services of a country or information that jeopardises national security. Crown Commercial Service (2017) argues that the national security concerns are the reason why some information in public procurement contracts involving national defence spending is often concealed. Nevertheless, the security concern should not translate to mean the entire contract should be kept secret.

The security and defence concern may involve some issues such as specifications for weapons design or covert actions which cannot be for public consumption. However, Munilla, Isabel and Brophy (2018) emphasised that such procurement contract may not necessarily capture all aspects of value for money. For instance, information about the efficiency of a specific equipment, the knowledge and experience of the company providing a service, the technical merit of the bid, or the proposal's aesthetic and functional aspects.

Despite the security nature of the procurement which warrants exemption from the publication of procurement information, some measures must be put in place to ensure probity of the procurement process. Some countries commit themselves by taking steps to strengthen integrity in the domain of defence procurement, which frequently necessitates the employment of non-competitive methods to protect national security interests (Centre for Global Development, 2019). For example, in Korea, the Defence acquisition program administration, which is based on the 2005 Law on defence acquisition, ensures that external experts are involved in the decision-making process of major projects through a special committee aimed at improving procurement system transparency and monitoring.

National interest

This pertains the information that might jeopardise foreign ties, the state's economic interests, or any administration's financial interests. It is critical to highlight that the public interest test does not compare the private harm caused by disclosure to the public interest in disclosure, but rather compares the public interest on both sides (Bosio et al., 2022). It recognises that private harm can result in public harm, such as corporations refusing to bid or invest in creative solutions (Munilla, Isabel, & Brophy, 2018). As noted by Crown Commercial Service (2017) the laws of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, India, Ireland, and New Zealand all incorporate an explicit public interest test. This frees providers to supply goods and services in

the most cost-effective and inventive manner possible, without having to disclose technological details to the public.

Integrity of the justice system

The information relating to criminal processes such as the investigation of collusion between the buyers and vendors in the tendering process of a public institution. This also pertains to information whose premature release to the public would jeopardise law enforcement efforts or information held as part of a court proceeding, inquiry, or arbitration. It is against this background that the veracity and reliability of the justice system can be enhanced through keeping some sensitive information from the public domain.

Trade secrets

It encompasses exclusive manufacturing and industrial methods, proprietary recipes, sales protocols, distribution systems, customer profiles, advertising approaches, and rosters of suppliers or clients, among other elements. Given that the document is likely to be employed by various individuals involved in executing, overseeing, and documenting the project, it is rare for the complete content of trade secrets to be explicitly detailed in a contract (Crown Commercial Service, 2017). In Colombia the law of Proactive Disclosure (2013) includes trade secrets or intellectual property rights, as well as financial information that could have a negative influence on competition. This also applies to Section 15 of Nigeria's Freedom of Information Act, 2011.

Effectiveness of public institutions

Notwithstanding the need for transparency in the operations of a public institution, the effectiveness of an institution can be enhanced through keeping some critical information to itself at some stage and publicise at a later stage. This relates to the information that might jeopardise the performance of the public audit role like the auditor general's operations or the management of public affairs.

Personal privacy

Personal data covered by data protection standards, such as contact information, ages, and employment histories, or information whose disclosure would be likely to jeopardise an individual's physical or mental health or safety. Smith (2022) argues that when it concerns sensitive or secret information, personal privacy might be a legitimate rationale for exemption

from the publishing of procurement processes. Hoofnagle, Van Der Sloot and Borgesius (2019) posit that personal information, including contact information, financial data, and confidential company information, is frequently disclosed in the reporting of procurement procedures. Exemptions from privacy rules and regulations can be justified to avoid illegal access, misuse, or identity theft of people's personal information (European Union, 2018).

Publishing information about procurement procedures may be detrimental to the reputations of those concerned, whether they are people or corporations. It could result in unfair prejudice, false rumours, or reputational harm (European Union, 2018). The excessive public scrutiny that can result from publishing procurement-related information might be avoided with the aid of privacy exemptions.

Legal confidentiality

Information protected by legal professional privilege, information protected by other laws, or information whose disclosure would be considered a breach of court order (European Union, 2018). Companies are frequently asked to give delicate business information, such as price plans, trade secrets, or information on intellectual property. Public disclosure of this information may reduce a company's capacity to operate in a fair and competitive marketplace and hurt its competitiveness.

Smith (2022) argues that it is critical to conclude the discussion by highlighting that instead of depending on a case-by-case analysis, it may be determined that whole contracts or specific classes of information should be provided, and that this disclosure should be incorporated as a requirement for bidders in model contracts and tender documents. The focus of building trust, confidence and integrity in the public contracting system and capacity in institutions can make this strategy appealing in nations where there has been rampant corruption in public contracts (Hoofnagle, Van Der Sloot & Borgesius, 2019). These measures are very essential because the value of confidentiality to potential suppliers is only as strong as their confidence in the organisations involved.

3.6.2.2 Accountability in public procurement

The aspect of accountability is an important objective of public procurement which enables a flawless procurement system and enhances a positive perception on service delivery operations by the public or service recipients. As noted by Bosio et al. (2022), the individual and

institutional integrity and probity, as well as the prevention of collusive procurement, conflict of interest, and corruption, are all dependent on accountability.

Professional, technical, administrative, and political forms of accountability must be followed by the procurement function at all stages and throughout all processes (Lindholm et al., 2019). The author posits that accountability exposes practitioners to scrutiny and, where necessary, sanctions for failing to follow or breaking those laws, rules, and regulations. Accountability is one of the tenets of good governance that some African governments promote. Accountability is usually incorporated in their service charter documents. The goal of accountability is to reduce public procurement abuse and ensure that taxpayer funds are not diverted to enrich private people rather than being used for legitimate public activities (Fourie, & Malan, 2020)

Bosio et al. (2022) contends that procuring entities assist in the proper and efficient management of public resources by ensuring that all procurement entities follow good governance principles and practices. This should be followed by strengthening all forms and measurements of public accountability instruments in the public procurement. The ability of public procurement oversight institutions should be enhanced to ensure management of all types of accountabilities by the organisation (Lindholm et al., 2019).

3.6.2.3 Promotion of competition

Any business or individual should not be able to exploit the public procurement process for their own gain. Given that public procurement is primarily funded by taxpayers, all qualified organisations and individuals should be allowed to participate by making offers in response to a stated request (OECD, 2021). Potential suppliers should be treated fairly and impartially, for example, by posting selection criteria, the procedure and reasons for awarding contracts, and contract information as much as possible and suitable (Bosio et al., 2022).

In many countries, public procurement policies encourage competition in tendering processes. OECD (2019) observed that during the pandemic, several European and African competition authorities have taken steps to protect consumers from anti-competitive behaviour. However, competition authorities around the world have consistently found that market actors can engage in anti-competitive behaviour in public procurement. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have also

established institutions to monitor competition and consumer issues throughout the pandemic, such as a COVID -19 task group. The Namibian Competition Commission (NCC) has set up a dedicated staff under its Enforcement, Exemptions, and Cartels Division to handle complaints against COVID-19 critical products. The Ghanaian Public Procurement Authority has developed rules to help with public procurement amid the pandemic's lockdown (Mtombeni, Mandla, Mabece, & Thibane, 2020).

However, despite this notion, not all contracts are awarded through a competitive process since it is sometimes determined by the urgency of the demand and the procurement method utilised to meet that need. OECD (2021) argues that although it is permissible in some circumstances, the use of non-competitive procurement methods should be maintained to a minimum. Bosio et al. (2022) averred that requests for quotations or invitations to quote, as well as direct contracting or single sourcing, are examples of non-competitive procurement processes. Each of these non-competitive procurement methods serves a specific function and should not be utilised in excess.

3.7.2.4 Integrity objective

As documented by OECD (2019), integrity in the context of public procurement involves adhering to ethical standards and moral principles such as honesty, professionalism, and righteousness. It serves as a fundamental element for ensuring justice, non-discrimination, and compliance throughout the public procurement process. In the realm of public procurement, integrity signifies transparent procedures that foster fair and equitable treatment for all bidders, and that when poor performance is discovered, especially when it involves conduct those breaches minimal standards, it should be handled as soon as possible (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). Further to that, Lynch (2021) noted that integrity is twofold in public procurement comprising of the process integrity, and the integrity of public procurement practitioners which are both important for consideration.

Issues related to integrity can emerge at any stage of the procurement process, spanning from the initial needs assessment through the bidders' phase to the execution of contracts and subsequent payment (Bosio et al., 2022). Obura (2019) noted that duplication of invoicing for products and services not provided, as well as abuse of non-competitive procedures based on legal exclusions such as contract splitting, abuse of exceptional urgency, and non-supported modifications, are examples of these dangers. Service delivery and value for money is likely

to be compromised in such scenarios. It is therefore important for public sector organisations to improve their operational integrity to promote good governance and improve public procurement management (OECD, 2021). Integrity's role is such that it encourages an efficient public procurement process, attracting a wide range of suppliers that want to commit to long-term commercial partnerships with the organisation to reach a common goal (Obura, 2019). It follows therefore that the trust between the buyer-supplier relationship leads to shorter delivery times for goods and services hence improved service delivery.

i) Public Procurement Process Integrity

Bidders and other stakeholders should have confidence in the information supplied by the procurement entity, whether communicated formally or informally. The credibility of the public procurement system is dependent on the integrity of the process (Dorasamy, 2021). When making solicitation documents publicly accessible, the information within them should be precise, free of ambiguity, and impartial. Obura (2019) observes that Kenya's provides for Public Procurement Act of 2015 for the interactions between the purchasing entity and bidders or contractors to be in writing and communications in any other form must be referred to, as well as transcripts of any written exchanges. This step is critical for the improvement of integrity of the procurement process which is essential for improved service delivery.

Lynch (2021) argues that bidders should have a thorough understanding of the requirements as well as how they will be judged. In the solicitation documents, the evaluation and selection criteria must be clearly indicated. Dorasamy (2021) highlighted that unless there is a compelling reason to change them, these criteria should be left alone. If revisions are necessary, the solicitation documents should be reviewed, publicised, and accessible to all potential bidders. Any modifications to the deadline for offer submissions should allow bidders sufficient time to adapt their proposals to meet the new timeline (OECD, 2019).

Dorasamy (2021) postulate that public procurement process integrity can be enhanced through internal controls that are effective are designed to ensure that a public procurement process is completed efficiently while also protecting integrity related goals and objectives. OECD (2019) posits that the financial controls, internal audit, and management controls are examples of procurement internal controls that ensure that legal, administrative, and financial procedures are followed. Furthermore, consistent application of procurement rules and standards across the public sector is ensured by harmonised internal control processes.

The OECD Council on Public procurement recommendation advocates for the implementation of oversight and control measures to guarantee accountability at every stage of the public procurement cycle. This includes the effective handling of complaints and the implementation of appropriate sanctioning processes (OECD, 2019). Moreover, the OECD Council on Public Integrity Recommendation encourages followers to employ a framework for control and risk management. This framework aims to preserve integrity in public sector organisations by establishing a control environment with transparent and equitable objectives that reflect management's dedication to integrity and public service values. It also ensures a reasonable level of assurance regarding an organisation's efficiency, performance, and compliance, thereby ensuring a robust public sector.

However, internal controls for integrity are created based on a thorough analysis of the integrity concerns (Bosio et al., 2022). A comprehensive risk assessment involves delineating the integrity risks linked to public procurement processes, identifying the existing controls to mitigate these risks, and prioritising the development of new controls to address any identified gaps (Dorasamy, 2021). Certain countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, France, and Korea, have adopted a forward-looking strategy by routinely mapping out risk factors and integrity vulnerabilities associated with public procurement. South Africa, for instance, has appointed a Chief Procurement Officer to assess and enhance the legal framework, public procurement information systems, and overall governance, compliance, and accountability in public procurement (OECD, 2016).

ii) Public Procurement Practitioners' Integrity

Lynch (2021) posits that personal and professional integrity are required of practitioners working inside procuring entities, as well as other government officials involved in the public procurement process. Public employees working in the procurement process should be seen as honest, trustworthy, accountable, and dependable always (Dorasamy, 2021). They must constantly keep the procurement requirement's goal in mind and seek to manage public procurement responsibly in accordance with the rules (OECD, 2019). This necessitates the provision of information adequate to allow the typical participant to understand both how the system is supposed to work and how it works.

Pursuant to ensuring public procurement practitioners' integrity, specific procurement rules may help to manage the risks associated with the complexity and peculiarities of the public

procurement process (Dorasamy, 2021). The procurement rules, which include specific restrictions and prohibitions, are designed to guarantee that officials' personal interests do not unfairly influence their fulfilment of public duties and obligations (Bosio et al., 2022). Personal, familial, or business interests and activities, gifts and hospitality, revelation of private information, and prospective employment are the most prevalent conflicts of interest (OECD, 2016).

OECD (2016) noted that some OECD countries have enacted specific procurement codes of conduct typically in conjunction with specific manuals and training. The codes are aimed at assisting procurement authorities in implementing the procurement standards in their daily procurement activities (Dávid-Barrett, & Fazekas, 2020). Therefore, public officials in the procurement authorities can utilise ethics from integrity training to improve awareness, expertise, commitment, and enhance a culture of integrity in their organisations (Bosio et al., 2022).

The foregoing discussion reflects that integrity is not a necessity for public officials alone because the public procurement cycle comprises several participants. It is critical that the private enterprises have their own integrity systems in place, and governments to work with private sector actors to ensure that public procurement is conducted ethically (Bosio et al., 2022). Integrity pacts, for example, could be used to extend public sector employee integrity norms to private sector partners. These integrity pacts are defined by OECD (2016) as the agreements between a government agency issuing a contract and the companies vying for it to refrain from bribery, collusion, and other corrupt behaviours throughout the duration of the contract. This is fundamental in ensuring improved provision of services and satisfaction of residents.

iii) Integrity Risk in Public Procurement

Public procurement is usually regarded as one of the most vulnerable areas to integrity threats. UNDP (2018) posited that integrity concerns can arise at any point of the procurement process, from assessing procurement needs to tendering and contract execution and payment. The number of transactions and the severe financial incentives at stake are only a few of the factors that influence vulnerability (Castillo, Mollenkopf, Bell, & Bozdogan, 2018). They are the result of a combination of system flaws such as process complexity, regulatory incoherence, many stakeholders, close interaction between government officials and businesses, and

implementation flaws such as lack of transparency and ineffective information systems, poor professional capacities, and weak oversight and controls.

In a local government setting, inherent integrity risks appear to be magnified. The proximity of municipal government to the public makes collaboration more likely, yet the complexity of the relationship often inhibits reporting (UNDP, 2018). Furthermore, because there is less rivalry and fewer suppliers in local marketplaces, specific preferred choices may be easier to justify. Staffing shortages and a lack of legal competence, as well as a lack of capacity to manage complex procurement procedures, could raise the level of integrity risk (Martin, 2019). However, due to the close community it is harder to avoid direct connection with possible suppliers at the local level.

3.6.2.5 Integrity risk factors in local authorities

Integrity risks in local authorities, such as corruption, conflicts of interest, and unethical conduct among officials, pose significant challenges to governance transparency and effectiveness. Mitigating these risks is essential for safeguarding public resources, promoting fair decision-making, and maintaining trust in local government among residents.

i) Pre-bidding phase

The tendering process' quality and value for money are largely determined by the planning and preparation of the procurement process, which includes the design of tender papers and contracting tactics (UNDP, 2018). The preparatory phase begins with yearly and multi-annual budgeting exercises, as well as investment and feasibility studies, and the approval of the procurement plan which includes a budget and procurement strategy or method.

Procurement requirements are not properly assessed. UNDP (2018) posits that local authority officials make requests for items and resources that are not genuinely required, or in quantities that are not required. Budgets for procurement are unrealistic or misaligned with the existing budget (Martin, 2019). Procurement is not in sync with the overall investment process, including ongoing and planned capital investments and projects. Technical specifications are of poor quality because procurement professionals, particularly in sectors requiring high level technical skills, such as capital projects and construction, are lacking in competence (UNDP, 2018). However, due to a lack of market understanding, price predictions are insufficient.

ii) Bidding phase

The invitation of tenders with the posting of tender notices; clarification of tenders; receipt and opening of tenders; requests for clarifications, qualification, and evaluation of tenders; possible negotiations; and award decisions are the primary purchasing activities during the bidding process. After the award decision is made and the contract is signed, failed tenderers should be informed and debriefed. Integrity concerns are identified at this stage in the form of possible political intervention manifested in biased project selection, as well as investments made to serve a specific political interest, region, city, or even a specific group of enterprises (Martin, 2019). Integrity issues could also arise because of the acceptance of various funding strategies, such as public-private partnerships (UNDP, 2018). Conflicts of interest are a common occurrence at this level.

In exchange for a contract award, a government official requests or accepts a bribe or kickback from a company or individual. Most of the time, the corrupt official will allow the bribe payer to inflate the price to cover the bribe and keep the profit (OECD, 2020). Money, facilitation, and additional indirect payments are all examples of corrupt payments which are common at this stage. The players influence the bidding process to remove other supposedly cheaper competitors, ensuring that the contract is awarded to the bribe-paying corporation, whose prices have now been increased to meet the cost of the bribe (UNDP, 2018). Cover bidding, bid suppression, bid rotation, market sharing, and price fixing are only some of the different types of bid rigging agreements. Bid rigging schemes can go unnoticed for years, resulting in higher prices for goods and services and depriving government buyers, and hence taxpayers, of the benefits of true competition (Martin, 2019).

iii) Post-bidding phase

As noted by UNDP (2018) notifying the successful tenderer, debriefing unsuccessful tenderers, issuing performance security, concluding, and signing the contract covering general and special conditions, including all attachments, controlling, and inspecting deliveries, executing payments, and finally, closing the file are all part of the post-bidding phase. Martin (2019) noted that all these stages may provide integrity issues, but the changing of contract conditions poses the greatest threat. These include, for example, price changes and substitutes for items or services that are neither commercially justified nor compliant with the rules, as well as non-delivery or non-fulfilment of contract duties by the main contractor or subcontractors.

Other significant integrity threats include incorrect authorisation and payment execution (Martin, 2019). Falsification of records and data is frequently required to cover up illicit activities. External auditing and financial control measures that are effective are crucial tools for detecting abnormalities. Conflicts of interest can affect contract implementation on the same grounds as the planning and review phases, but not always with the same officials (UNDP, 2018). Officials with vested interests in the company who work in the inspection or finance departments may manage and oversee the awarded firm, which could lead to incorrect acceptance of errors and other instances of poor contract performance.

There is usually inadequate performance monitoring due to poor contract management (Martin, 2019). Public oversight is ineffectual, resulting in a compromise in quality and timeliness; there are fewer field officers to supervise contractors; quality assurance is solely the responsibility of the contractors. Officials conspire with contractors to stray from agreed-upon quality standards and authorise product substitutions such as used equipment or lower-cost alternatives, as well as sub-standard work or service that does not fulfil contract specifications (UNDP, 2018).

3.6.2.6 Risk Management Strategies

This implies the implementation of effective operational controls of all the procurement activities' processes (Marian, 2020). There is need for definition of the approval authority in detail, considering proper job separation and internal reporting requirements (Martin, 2019). Separate planning from execution and monitoring, contracting from contract administration, and certification of goods and services receipts from payment verification to the extent practicable (UNDP, 2018). Committees and other forms of collaborative decision-making should be used appropriately for crucial decision-making steps.

Marian (2020) averred that all public procurement activities should be conducted in a transparent way to reduce risk. Ensure maximum public availability of important, easy-to-access, and user-friendly procurement information within legal constraints, such as via web portals, notice boards, and public hearings (UNDP, 2018). Implement a Minimum Transparency Threshold in Local Public Procurement and oversee its consistent implementation, which includes information on procurement budgets and plans, tender opportunities and technical specifications, eligibility and selection criteria, award decision,

contract, and any amendments; implementation, deliverables, evaluation, oversight, and dispute resolution mechanisms and procedures (Martin, 2019).

Depending on the value, complexity, and sensitivity of the public procurement, strengthen accountability and control methods such internal control and audits, external audits, and review systems. It is critical to ascertain that quality assurance is in place and examine the contract's financial information as well as its actual performance (UNDP, 2018). Assemble effective sanctions procedures and make publicly available information on sanctions that have previously been issued.

3.7 THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

CIPS (2015) defined the procurement process as the critical steps in the procurement of goods or services in a cyclical process. The definition was corroborated by Deshpande (2021) who posited that the words procurement process, procurement cycle, and procurement process flow all refer to one of various procedures inside an organisation that are involved in the acquisition of products and services. Although each organisation's procurement process is slightly different, there are a few important processes that can be utilised as building blocks to develop and modify a procurement strategy over time (Kolenko, 2021). The process of public procurement is described in detail by the Procurement Regulations of different countries which govern their procurement.

Public procurement is characterised by framework in the form of processes which are supposed to be followed by the public procurement practitioners. As noted by Dzuke (2015), extensive protocols requiring strict adherence and records with explanations and justifications for each purchase decision are hallmarks of the public procurement process. This public procurement process has a bearing on service delivery. Kolenko (2021) also observed that to make matters even more complicated, some businesses, particularly those in government, are subject to severe rules and industry-specific guidelines, which can have an impact on the procurement processes.

In a study conducted by Paul (2020) to examine the influence of procurement tendering processing at the Arusha City Council, Tanzania, the author found that procurement process

has a significant impact on service delivery. Martemyanova, (2018) noted that compared to contracts that are designed without technical input, companies that have professionals design the technical requirements of the contracts end up with higher service delivery. As posited by Kolenko (2021) a continuous assessment of items like supplier performance, supplier quality, and sourcing needs will reveal areas where you can improve and help you spot red flags before they become serious issues.

As noted by Martemyanova (2018), organisational policies that promote the involvement of departmental technicians in the procurement process, aimed at creating more precise specifications, can enhance service delivery. Particularly, engaging in cross-departmental discussions and meetings with the goal of acquiring the latest equipment beneficial to the organisation positively influences service delivery (Reay, Zilber, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2019). Well-defined technical requirements also incentivise suppliers to innovate, fostering competition with the company in providing new and improved products which enhances the quality of services offered to clients (Martemyanova, 2018).

3.7.1 The public procurement process

The various steps which are involved in the whole procurement process cycle starting from the identification of the need to the maintenance of proper records pertaining to the procurement are clearly elaborated in the succeeding figure. It is imperative that the procurement professionals and any other stakeholder involved in the procurement of goods and services should have clear understanding of these stages (Bosio et al., 2022). This is very important in terms of prioritising, sequencing, and expediting some of the procurement processes to improve service delivery and achieve value for money.

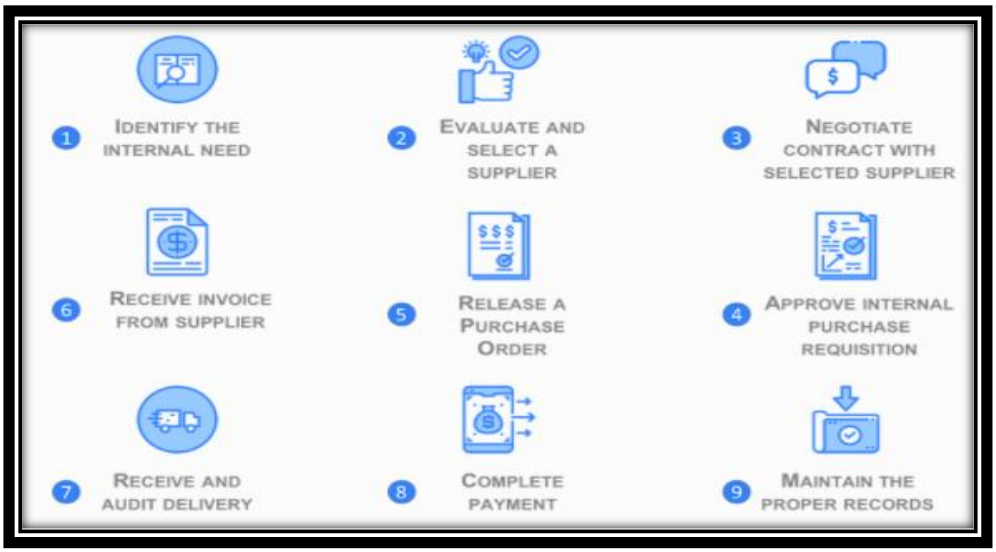

Figure 3.6: The Public Procurement Process.

Source: Adapted from Deshpande (2021).

3.7.1.1 Step 1: Internal need identification

For a department or business unit to function, it needs certain items and services. If several departments have the same requirement, procurement will combine them to save money and improve visibility. As noted by Keith, Vitasek, Manrodt, and Kling (2016) a comprehensive specification must be availed which clearly describes the requirements. This will ensure that quality goods and services are obtained from the suppliers which in turn improve the service delivery.

Dzuke and Naude (2015) contend that once a need has been established, the specifications of the product or service required must be determined. The technical specifications or part numbers are examples of this type of information. If the item has not been purchased before, a list of specifications is compiled with the input of all technical personnel. Preventing costly mistakes farther in the procurement process requires detailed specifications and proper collaboration with all departments involved (Bosio et al., 2022). When this step is done carefully service delivery is likely to be enhanced.

In Zimbabwe, sections 30-34 of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23), as well as the Regulations' Sections 10 and 13 to 17, define when and how different procurement methods are to be used, as well as the corresponding thresholds. Except in the instances indicated in section 30 of the Act, competitive bidding will be used. Detailed

regulations and procedures related to invitations to bid, including invitation content, bidding periods, bid content, and bid opening and evaluation, are outlined in Sections 36 to 56 of the Act and Sections 18 to 34 of the Regulations. Lenderink, Halman, and Voordijk (2022) noted the absence of unified electronic platforms for invitations to bid, contract awards, or other relevant information.

3.7.1.2 Step 2: Supplier Selection and Evaluation

The purpose of this stage is to compile a list of prospective suppliers for the procurement requirements. As noted by Deshpande (2021) the price, quality, reputation, dependability, customer service, and any other relevant characteristics should all be considered while evaluating vendors. Following this evaluation, procurement chooses the best provider. As noted by Bosio et al. (2022) the selection of suppliers should be determined by its capacity to fully fulfil the contract terms. This is very important in attaining a high level of service delivery. However, the length of this process is where the problems in service delivery lies as the required services will reach the intended target when problem has gone out of control.

Paul (2020) conducted a study to examine bidders' attitudes about the public procurement process in Tanzania and found that the bidding process on the issue of evaluation took roughly 60 to 90 days, contrary to the requirement of PPA No.2 of 2004 which regulates public procurement in Tanzania. The law allows for a maximum of 30 calendar days for review. It follows therefore that the overall service delivery is at stake when such delays in evaluation of bids are obtaining.

In Zimbabwe, each procuring entity is required by section 17 of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) to establish a procurement management unit led by the entity's accounting officer, as defined in section 10 of the Public Finance Management Act. For procurements exceeding the threshold stipulated in section 10 (2) of the Public Procurement Regulations, accounting officers must appoint evaluation committees. Certain procurements require authorisation from the Procurement Regulatory Authority (section 15 of the Public Procurement Act and section 10 (1) of the Regulations).

In their study, Dzuke and Naude (2015) observed that regulatory authorities oversaw registering suppliers and updating categories and lists when new ones are added. The biggest issue was that potential vendors were not assessed or evaluated. Without a rigorous appraisal

of its capability and ability to carry out government contracts, any potential provider who can produce the right papers and a registration fee can register. As a result, tender evaluation bidders may meet the tender document's minimum requirements but fail to deliver when the contract is awarded. When such a scenario occurs, service delivery suffers a huge set back.

3.7.1.3 Step 3: Contract negotiation with selected vendor

This step marks the beginning of the contracting processes where the timetables, delivery schedules, and scope of work, among other things, are well documented and understood from the start. The procurement organisation analyses any previous contracts before beginning discussions to uncover cost cutting and money saving options (Wang et al., 2021). They highlighted that the contracting organisation could utilise this information and their expertise to iron out the finer aspects of future deals if earlier agreements were costly or had unrealistic expectations.

Delays in contract development or execution, for example, can slow a business down, but they are unlikely to have a significant influence on its bottom line (Wang et al., 2021). It is also important to note that a badly handled negotiation, on the other hand, can leave a corporation with long-term legal responsibilities (Lares, 2020). This can have a negative bearing on the contract execution and service delivery. Thus, Jung, and Krebs (2019) argued that flexibility is critical to negotiate contracts effectively as both parties need a good deal. Therefore, an organisation should approach the contract negotiation table with a win-win mentality.

As the reputational cost of a service outage is so significant for government agencies, they regularly accept less attractive terms as deadlines approach to maintain service continuity. There is pressure to commit funds in the year they are designated, which implies there is pressure to get on contract and use the money that has been allotted (Jung, & Krebs, 2019). Suppliers take advantage of this flaw by delaying deadlines, seeking extra time, and only moving as quickly as the government will allow (Osborne, Prilepok, Turbeville, & Watters, 2020). When such scenario arises service delivery is likely to be compromised.

3.7.1.4 Step 4: Internal Purchase Requisition Approval

The Purchase requisition contains pertinent information such as purchaser and supplier information, a list of desired items, pricing, and terms, so that the department can accept or reject the purchase (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). However, businesses may incur costs because

of unrestrained spending. When purchases are not justified by capital investment or material inventories, revenue is lost. The time taken by management to approve an internal purchase requisition influences the service delivery by a department or organisation. Paul (2020) in his study to determine the effect of delays in decision making on effectiveness of procurement process at the Arusha City Council, Tanzania established that decision-making delays are a problem that hinders the procurement process' effectiveness and hence serve delivery.

Dzuke and Naude (2015) noted that the duration required to finalise the procurement process is influenced by the public procurement legal framework, which mandates the involvement of the procurement regulatory body. Consequently, the bureaucratic legal requirements within the public procurement process pose a challenge, hindering service delivery and increasing costs. This finding implies that procurement process decisions by the sourcing department should not be delayed enhancing high service delivery (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019).

3.7.1.5 Step 5: Purchase Order Release

A purchase order is a formal document that is used to buy goods and services. According to Kolenko (2021) the purchase order specifies the product's or service's pricing, specifications, and terms and conditions as well as any other commitments. The author emphasised that special attention must be paid when communicating the specifications as this is a potential source of dispute and can negatively affect the organisation’s service delivery.

Keith, Vitasek, Manrodt, and Kling (2016) noted that without the necessary financial authority, some purchase orders are issued, whether in writing or informally. This occurs frequently and can have serious implications for the issuer organisation and the budget. When such a scenario occurs the suppliers’ payment terms may not be met leading to non-delivery of the procurement requirements, and this affects the service delivery.

3.7.1.6 Step 6: Invoice Receipt

The supplier provides an invoice that includes a list of the items ordered, as well as prices and payment deadlines. However, some suppliers may require a 50% payment before any delivery is done. In such cases service delivery is likely to be compromised when the 50% payment is not availed. This is usually caused by some unfulfilled promises made in some previous encounters with the procurement organisation. The service delivery in such scenario is likely to be compromised. Dzuke and Naude (2015) in their study observed that it is difficult to stick

to budgets if the procurement of goods and services is dependent on the availability of funds because of the countries' economic and cash flow challenges. Martemyanova (2018) emphasised that the procurement budget should match the revenue set aside for procurement activities by the organisation. This is critical to sustain the invoice requirements and consequently improve service delivery.

3.7.1.7 Step 7: Receipt and delivery audit

In compliance with the conditions of the contract, the provider fulfils the order for goods and services. However, as noted by Deshpande (2021) the receiving organisation typically has a limited amount of time to inspect the delivery and tell the supplier of any inconsistencies such as missing items or poor quality. When an organisation encounters such an occurrence, service delivery is likely to be short changed owing to quantity and quality disparities (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). However, when an organisation executes these audits on a regular basis, the fraud and error rates will likely decrease, and the vendors' performance will likely improve thereby enhancing service delivery.

The information acquired during routine auditing can also be utilised to objectively assess vendor performance (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). The procurement personnel can assign grades to different levels of performance and provide vendors consistent feedback if you set several key performance indicators (KPIs) for each vendor. Vendors might be motivated to improve by receiving their marks on a regular basis (Martemyanova, 2018). This can improve service delivery when suppliers are motivated. However, vendors with a low score should be investigated further. The procurement auditors should also be wary of performance levels that appear to be too good to be true which can be the result of skewed data.

3.7.1.8 Step 8: Payment Completion

After satisfaction with the delivered items the finance department of the procuring organisation will facilitate the payment as indicated in the terms of the contract (Kolenko, 2021). However, there appear to be insurmountable challenges in payments by governments departments leading non delivery of future requirements by the suppliers. This has a negative effect on service delivery as the user departments are left started with no material requirements.

In their study on procurement challenges faced by the public sector, Dzuke and Naude (2015) found that due to a shortage of cash, procurement contracts issued to contractors are unable to

be sanctioned and may take up to a year to complete thereby depriving residents of critical services. Prices and delivery times are frequently adjusted by the time funds are available. This has a detrimental impact on service delivery costs. Paul (2020) in his study to examine the effect of lack of fund from treasury on effectiveness of procurement process at the Arusha City Council, Tanzania established that payment delays and shortage of funds from the Treasury are two issues that stifle the procurement process efficiency.

3.7.1.9 Step 9: Records Maintenance

The management of records is a branch that oversees the creation, preservation, usage, and disposal of records in an effective and methodical manner (ISO, 2016). The procurement department finally keep a record of the payment process for accounting and auditing purposes (Afolabi et al., 2022). It is a legal responsibility for public entities to retain proper records to preserve institutional memory and provide documentary support for their judgments. Entities also retain records to demonstrate their ability to function successfully and to account for their actions.

Ottou, Bernard and Nani (2019) in their study on the consequences of poor record keeping on public procurement proceedings in Kenya public sector established that bad it leads to poor decision-making, inability to establish fraudulent incidences and inadequate auditing since available records would be meaningless. They also established that lack of transparency in government operations; poor protection of residents rights; residents' inability to contribute knowingly to the governance process (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). This position was also averred by Afolabi et al. (2022) who noted that challenges in records management by procuring entity were encountered due to poor record keeping systems.

Procurement experts must also address security concerns and avoid giving too much data to many people even within the procurement organisation. Incorrect data can cost an organisation business and vendor relationships due to minor errors and omissions. Ambira, Kemoni, & Ngulube (2019) asserts the greatest strategy to improve procurement management is to automate the recording and storing of data. This will improve the accessibility of information in real time and reduce the incidences of information loss. Munyori (2016) contends that transparency and accountability are aided by well managed records, which also aid in the reduction of corruption and promote an atmosphere conducive to effective decision making and service delivery.

3.8 PROCUREMENT EXPERTISE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Procurement expertise are the different skills set that a procurement professional should be equipped with to perform the daily procurement chores effectively and efficiently (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). Procurement professionals are in the spotlight as important business partners driving agility and adaptability in the face of risk and volatility which are brought about by the supply chain disruptions across the world. OECD (2017) highlighted that for government organisations to achieve their strategic goals, they need a staff with sufficient capacity and capability in public procurement.

To secure successful delivery of strategic procurement efforts, professionals with a diverse set of skills and competences, such as negotiating, project management, and risk management are required. As noted by Brown (2020) procurement professionals should be competent in data, risk, and supplier relationship management as well as contract negotiation, corporate ethics, and stakeholder management. PASA (2020) also stressed that procurement professionals seeking to turn around their organisations for the better possess the top skills which focus on negotiation, risk management and data analytics.

The competencies of the personnel responsible for providing the aspects of procurement processes have a significant impact on the quality of the outcomes from public procurement (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). The individuals who perform all the various jobs and make the critical day-to-day decisions are the ones who determine whether procurements are effective and efficient or wasteful (OECD, 2018). The professionalisation and upskilling of the procurement workforce assist the organisation to attract fresh talent while also retaining current employees, hence addressing capacity gaps which enhances service delivery. As noted by OECD (2017), it takes more than initial training or even continuing education to develop a desired personnel and professional path. It may also necessitate the adoption of legal measures to ensure the continuation of a career path with specified rights such as advancement which is critical in skills acquisition.

3.8.1 Data analysis skills

Procurement departments produce and access a lot of data from all the procurement activities across the organisation (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). It is against this background that

unlocking predictive analytics for procurement, supply chain, and strategic sourcing has the potential to improve the value they offer to the organisation. Unfortunately, many business organisations lack the ability to fully exploit the data's potential (Brown, 2020). Data is very important in forecasting the future trends in terms of supply sources and supply prices.

Bals, Schulze, Kelly, and Stek (2019) contend that the current focus of data analysis is on the previous trends hence procurement professionals are expected to improve their analytical capacity. Spend analysis and management which is one area of data analysis entails analysing and processing data to reduce procurement costs, increase efficiency, and ensure compliance. In this respect, procurement just like other industries can employ data analysis to improve its delivery of service expectations (Lenderink, Halman, & Voordijk, 2022). Predictive analysis being the process of looking into the future using data to anticipate probability based on patterns is critical for businesses to be proactive in their supply chain value management instead of reacting to events after the fact (Bals, Schulze, Kelly & Stek, 2019).

However, a company must invest in the correct tools and services to leverage the power of prediction. Procurement agents must have enough knowledge of the instruments they use to recognise when the forecast should be followed (Lenderink, Halman, & Voordijk, 2022). Procurement departments might benefit from adding predictive analysis to their toolkit as it can help procurement teams better manage supplier relationships and support sourcing efforts, allowing for strategic sourcing (Shute, 2017).

3.8.2 Supplier Relationship Management skills

Relationship management is described as an organisation's strategy for maintaining a high degree of engagement with its audience (Lechner, 2019). Procurement specialists should be skilled at creating relationships both within the company and with the vendors they deal with daily. As noted by Lynch (2021) favourable supplier relationships can enhance credit conditions and lead to discounts, which is why they are so vital for businesses. Thus, relationships with suppliers should take the centre stage to reinforce supplies certainty and flexibility.

External variables, however, might have an impact on procurement's relationship with vendors such as late payments, disagreements, and poor data management can cause relationships to deteriorate (Lynch, 2021). Suppliers can prioritise or de-prioritise buyers in the same way that

buyers do, resulting in varied levels of service quality (Lenderink, Halman, & Voordijk, 2022). Suppliers must receive constant support for any possible issues to be identified and remedied early on. As a result, procurement teams must possess supplier relationship management skills to be capable of managing both internal and external connections.

As posited by Lechner (2019) supplier relationships enable businesses to better utilise their suppliers' expertise and technologies to provide competitive products. Inventory reduction, improved product quality, and shorter lead times are all benefits of coordinating operational processes through collaborative planning. Landau (2021) contends that integrating suppliers throughout the product lifecycle is a good way to reduce supply risk. An organisation can achieve long-term cost savings by forming a mutually beneficial relationship with important suppliers. Good supplier connections will not only save money, but they will also eliminate availability issues, delays, and quality difficulties, resulting in improved service for customers. Building a mutually beneficial relationship between customers and suppliers not only fosters trust, but it also allows for free flow of information and feedback (Lenderink, Halman, & Voordijk, 2022). Greater productivity, simpler operations, and improved customer service are all benefits of this connection (Landau, 2021).

3.8.3 Stakeholder Management skills

Stakeholder management is defined as the process of identifying, analysing, communicating, making decisions, and all other sorts of activities in terms of managing stakeholders, with the two associated sub-groups of stakeholder analysis and stakeholder engagement (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). Municipal governments interact with many stakeholders daily. As a result, it's critical that the municipality consults as extensively as possible. Stakeholder relationships allow the local council to investigate issues raised and opinions of residents and other stakeholders when making decisions. Consultation should assist municipalities in making better decisions, assist different stakeholders in better understanding and supporting the decisions that municipalities must make around trade-offs and prioritisation, and consultation can help improve the inter departmental and intergovernmental cooperation that is necessary for effective service delivery (Haarhoff, 2019).

The diversity of stakeholder interests that influence public sector organisations is far more complex than it is for most private sector organisations, which tend to focus on those stakeholders who have a direct impact on the bottom line. Stakeholder relationship

management is concerned with identifying, communicating, and managing stakeholder relationships (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). Stakeholder ties can help the organisation, and stakeholders can provide resources to help with crisis management. As a result, the goal of stakeholder relationship management is to persuade stakeholders to act in ways that benefit the company and its stakeholders (Lenderink, Halman, & Voordijk, 2022).

Haarhoff (2019) emphasised that there is typically a direct correlation between the frequency with which stakeholders interact with an organisation and their opinion of its performance. The author argues that the more frequently stakeholders engage and review performance, the better, as evidenced by the service outcomes of the South African municipalities of Breede Valley, Drakenstein, Saldanha, and Theewaterskloof, which have seen a significant improvement in service delivery due to a better relationship with stakeholders.

3.8.4 Effective communication skills

In a service delivery context, effective communication skills are critical hence the procurement professionals must be equipped with communication skills. As noted by Sheng (2019) good communication skills can assist an organisation in developing a positive relationship with its clients that will reflect well on the company and keep the consumers satisfied with the service they are receiving. Communication provides a documented record of the organisation's service delivery process as it relates to the case of an individual (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). The activities involved in ensuring that project information is generated, collected, distributed, stored, and arranged in a timely and appropriate manner are referred to as communication management (Newman, 2017).

Sheng (2019) noted that setting goals, defining procedures, reporting on performance, and coordinating activities are all made easier with effective communication. This position was also shared by Newman (2017) when he stressed that all stakeholders, especially customers and clients, should be able to understand a company's policies clearly. The author highlighted further that as customers require information, every employee of the company particularly procurement personnel should prioritise effective communication. Guarnieri, and Gomes (2019) noted that a project can quickly devolve into chaos if communication is not managed well. A program team's organisational structure should be structured to provide first time quality goods delivered on time at the lowest practical lifecycle cost, combined with a defined vision and missions. As the program progresses, the team should be dedicated to setting high

standards for itself. Furthermore, each program should be prepared and carried out in accordance with the work scope, timeline, and budget (Sheng, 2019).

Effective for common goals to be met, a fluid flow of information between internal and external clients and employees is required. Open communication, whether oral or written, clarifies duties and responsibilities for employees and encourages them to seek assistance when necessary. The productivity of the service delivery process is increased by creating a strong positive environment at work (Joseph, 2016). Therefore, every organisation should strive to maintain a seamless communication within and outside their circles.

3.8.5 Contract negotiation skills

A negotiation is a purposeful conversation strategically conducted to reach a mutually satisfactory resolution of an issue for all involved parties (Jung & Krebs, 2019). Each party in a negotiation seeks to persuade the other to agree with their point of view. By bargaining, the parties concerned aim to avoid disputing and instead agree to find a solution (Kenton, 2021). At the municipal, state, and federal levels, public procurement experts have the chance to provide greater value to taxpayers and residents. On the other hand, Guarnieri, and Gomes (2019) posit that public sector procurement departments can use negotiation skills to find major potential to go beyond cost savings, resulting in increased value for their companies and residents alike through reallocated funding and improved vendor performance. Osborne et al. (2020) argue that with so much money on the line, it makes sense for government agencies to use the same negotiation and contracting tactics as the private sector, where firms have developed procurement and contracting strategies to defend their bottom lines.

The procurement officer should know what the organisation is prepared to pay when entering negotiations with suppliers. As noted by Osborne et al. (2020) government contracting teams enter negotiations with suppliers all too often without a clear picture of how much the contract should cost. This means that the supplier's initial offer sets the tone for the negotiation, and the government must work hard to talk the supplier down. Offering the government's credible cost viewpoint first, or simultaneously, inhibits unilateral anchoring and can shift the burden to the provider, who must then talk the government up. On the other hand, rather than allowing the supplier to take the lead, private sector enterprises usually begin discussions with their own ideas about how much they should pay.

Governments are sometimes forced into sole-source arrangements because a supplier owns the intellectual property or because of a prior commitment. This eliminates the need for price competition among providers (Osborne et al., 2020). As a result, the government may be at a disadvantage because there is no evident best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA). As a result, public sector contracting officers who choose to construct a BATNA, or a BATNA proxy such as inviting another supplier into the mix, extension of current contract, and insourcing in a unique way can gain an advantage in these discussions.

Osborne et al. (2020) highlighted that prolonged negotiations may occasionally benefit suppliers, as they strategically limit information responses to government demands to extend deadlines. This tactic exploits the significant reputational cost of service disruptions for government organisations, often resulting in less favourable terms being accepted as deadlines approach to ensure ongoing operations (Guarnieri & Gomes, 2019). Moreover, the pressure to spend allocated funds within the designated year leads to suppliers taking advantage of delays and seeking additional time, only progressing as quickly as allowed by the government. In response, procurement officers should adhere to a plan without compromising and take proactive measures to stay on track, such as initiating preparatory discussions, enforcing supplier schedules, and scheduling negotiation preparations in advance (Jung & Krebs, 2019). Governments can also pre-emptively agree to extend existing contracts during negotiations and apply previously agreed upon terms and prices retroactively to that extension.

Through their negotiation skills, procurement experts can work with the same cost model for various projects to make sure that they understand how the outputs are calculated. They then structure the negotiation so that they can agree on the outputs while also knowing exactly what units, such as material, time, and staff, would eventually affect the contract's cost (Kenton, 2021). The main point of contention would be the outputs the government need and how the proposed pricing structure will achieve those results (Jung, & Krebs, 2019). There should be no conflicts on the contract price if all parties agree on the underlying units required to supply the output and the vendor economics, or unit costs, are fully understood which can result in value for money and better service for the local authority (Osborne et al., 2020).

Procurement experts can employ a variety of tactics to gain influence in talks, including rewarding suppliers with new initiatives and taking punitive measures, such as refusing to give them new business. As noted by Mwagike and Changalima (2021), it is critical that the plan is

disseminated throughout the team and authorised from the top down, as this encourages speed, agility, and involvement. By ensuring that the strategy is aligned from the start, the supplier will be unable to exploit occasions where members of the same government team adopt opposing opinions on a specific subject, hurting the government's negotiation position (Jung, & Krebs, 2019). It will also allow government negotiators to speed up negotiations by reducing the amount of time spent on superfluous topics because leadership will have a strategy in place.

Even though negotiation is critical to acquiring contract management, it is frequently underutilised, procurement officers have been forced to overlook several difficulties that must be addressed prior to contract agreement (Andrea, 2019). The author also argues that one of the key areas where negotiations have not been fully utilised is the area of specification and or terms of reference preparation. It can be realised that most of the time, procurement officers would have not clearly specified the nature, size, and quality of the items, works, or services to be delivered resulting in them providing unclear services (Jung, & Krebs, 2019).

3.8.6 Contract risk management skills

Contract risk management entails determining the level of risk in a contract as well as across a company's complete portfolio of active agreements (Marian, 2020). This can include lost opportunities, legal liability if things go wrong, and the contract's possible business impact on the parties involved (Gannuscia, 2021). Risk management is a fundamental aspect of service delivery, which enables the improvement of local government operations and service delivery (Bals et al., 2019). It is the function that initiates the full-service purchase process in local governments.

An enterprise risk assessment process analyses and prioritises a company's risks, delivering quality inputs to decision makers to formulate effective risk responses, including information about the status of capabilities around managing the priority risks (Marian, 2020). The assessment of process risk encompasses the entire organisation, including essential business units and functional areas. Risk assessment covers aspects including impact, likelihood, velocity, and persistence when applied effectively utilising company strategy as a context (Bals et al., 2019). Prioritised hazards are traced back to their source causes after they have been discovered. It's easier to create risk metrics and proactive risk actions at the source when management understands the causes of risk (Marian, 2020).

Effective risk management is critical for ensuring that the public receives the best service possible and for optimising the degree of service provision that can be achieved within local governments (Marian, 2020). Sigombe (2015) stressed that before they publicise their procurement notices to potential suppliers of goods, works, and services, procuring entities can use a procurement plan to maximise the value of their expenditures on services to be delivered. Marian (2020) noted that it also allows them to identify and address all relevant issues relating to a particular procurement.

In both developed and developing countries, the widely recognised acknowledgment of risk management's role in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery within public sector enterprises is evident. Bals et al. (2019) argue that risk management skills can be effective at both the national and local levels of government administration. Sigombe (2015) noted that in Uganda's local government procurement systems there is a significant positive association between risk management and service delivery.

The RDCs in Zimbabwe are expected by the operation of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act (Chapter 22:23) to establish the Procurement Management Units (PMU) in their respective procurement departments. This unit is supposed to be comprised of procurement experts who carry out the day-to-day procurement activities and their management to enhance better service delivery through their expertise. However, the situation obtaining in many rural district councils is that some have not yet put in place the procurement structures as required, while a handful which have established the procurement structures have just done so as a tick box issue to satisfy the legal requirements without employing the right personnel (Bals et al., 2019). The author suggests that the failure to realise the positive influence of procurement expertise on service delivery by some rural district councils emanates from their failure to exploit the procurement skills which are supposed to be in their procurement structures.

3.9 PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT ON SERVICE DELIVERY

Procurement management is a systematic and objective planning, organising, coordination and control of sourcing or resource acquisition activities to satisfy the needs and wants within corporate budget and timelines. It entails fulfilment of the seven rights of procurement.

Badenhorst-Weiss, van Biljon and Ambe, (2017), define procurement management as obtaining the required goods and services, in the right quality and quantity, at the right location, at the right price, under the right terms and at the right time. All the definitions sum up to the major objectives of procurement which are effectiveness and efficiency.

Effective procurement management is critical in saving the financial resources both at local and central government level (Guarnieri, & Gomes, 2019). This can go a long way in improving service delivery as the financial resources saved will be channelled towards the service delivery operations. It ensures compliance with the procurement regulations and innovation which reduces financial resource wastage and leakage through effective auditing, spending monitoring, cost effectiveness, and competitiveness which leads to better value for money (Bosio et al., 2022).

Guarnieri, and Gomes (2019) posited that good procurement management through adherence to procurement laws and regulations enables the public procurement system to enhance procurement efficiency. Anane, Adoma and Awuah (2019) support this assertion when they observed in their study of VRA in Ghana that the nature and complexity of politics and legislation governing all phases of service delivery from the provider and consumer's perspectives, procurement policy appears to have an impact on service delivery, particularly energy service delivery. The succeeding paragraphs discusses the different dimension of procurement management which obtainable in various organisations.

3.9.1 Procurement contract coordination

Contract coordination is one of the critical aspects of procurement management which warrants attention. Zhao, Zhang, and Cheng (2022) argue that the knowledge that policymakers have about contract law has repercussions for service delivery. As noted by Gleeson and Walden (2016) poorly drafted contracts do not clearly spell out the obligations of contractors. Failure to fulfil obligations can lead to substandard service delivery, distinguishing it from organisations with well-defined contracts that outline consequences for non-compliance, such as fines and refunds (Bosio et al., 2022). The contracts, particularly the technical requirements of the contracts, should be designed by specialists for the companies (Zhao, Zhang & Cheng, 2022). This is intended to ensure that the received goods align with the company's requirements. Neglecting to detail the technical specifications of needed goods and services may lead to financial losses and legal actions (Wang et al., 2021).

3.9.2 Procurement planning

This is another vital function of procurement management which aids in the efficient and effective delivery of services in public organisations (Bosio et al., 2022). Good service delivery is aided by planning activities that address the organisation's long-term cost of strategy and if done correctly, procurement planning has a favourable impact on service delivery (Martemyanova, 2018). Effective planning ensures that procurement meets organisational needs and establishes the competence to satisfy customer expectations, which is one part of service delivery. Cherotich, Ngacho, and Omari (2018) conducted a study to assess the influence of procurement practices on the performance of Kenyan county governments and found that procurement planning is highly useful in achieving successful project performance.

Planning allows a corporation to predict the future and, as a result, purchase equipment and supplies that will satisfy customers (Sahling & Kayser, 2016). Fourie, and Malan (2020) also shared the position when they opined that procurement planning has the capacity to improve government institutions and encourage successful service provision. Procurement can only be aligned with organisational needs with effective and precise planning. This is because if an organisation's planning is bad, it runs the risk of losing money because only urgent things would be acquired, while necessary items will be cash strapped. Budgeting is one of the most effective procurement planning strategies which can be implemented by an organisation, and this can enhance service delivery (Wang et al., 2021).

OECD (2019) highlighted that ensuring good procurement planning is a crucial conduit for ensuring proper service delivery. In a research endeavour undertaken by Kabega, Kule, and Mbera (2016) to examine the impact of procurement practices on the outcomes of public projects in Rwanda, it was revealed that procurement planning significantly contributes to the favourable performance of construction projects. It follows from these studies therefore that the public sector, procurement planning helps to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery (Wang et al., 2021). However, Marian (2020) in her study concedes that improper or ineffective management of the procuring process, which include poorly defined and estimated demands, unspecific, immeasurable, unreachable, and unrealistic budgets, are the critical setbacks in public procurement. Hence, there is need to put in place effective public procurement structures and systems to improve service delivery and the realisation of value for money in local authorities.

Although there is not a lot of literature on public procurement management in local authorities in general, the information that is available suggests that no matter how thoroughly procedures are put out, poor service delivery and governance remain a major concern for most Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. The procurement planning and contract coordination as the major cardinal points in procurement management to enhance service delivery appear not to be in synch with rural district councils' procurement system. The situation which is in some RDCs does not reflect a positive association involving procurement management with service delivery as there seem to be facing some challenges. This may be caused by non-compliance with procurement legislation, insufficient procurement skills, mistaken priority, and general indiscipline of procurement personnel. This was also evident when Vice President Chiwenga was addressing the annual general meeting of Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) where he lamented over lack of procurement qualifications and low levels of compliance by the public entities (Chidhakwa, 2021).

3.10 VALUE FOR MONEY IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Value for money concept is a holistic approach where the organisation is not only concerned with the buying or total delivered cost only but also the total cost throughout the entire product life cycle that is acquisition, maintenance, and disposal at the end of the product's economic useful life (Adewumi-Audu, 2023). Value for Money is a fundamental tenet of public procurement. This definition was echoed by Helby- Petersen (2019) who noted that value for money is a good indicator on a whole-of-life basis of the economy and efficiency with which public funds are converted into high quality goods, services, and works.

3.10.1 The elements of Value for Money (VFM)

There are several variables that make up value for money. These variables include aspects under whole life cost and quality as elaborated in the sections below.

3.10.1.1 Whole Life Cost

Whole Life Cost is an economic evaluation technique that considers the overall cost of an asset across its operational life, including original capital expenses, maintenance costs, operating costs, and the cost or benefit of the asset's eventual disposal at the end of its life (Chikwere,

Chikazhe & Tukuta, 2022). It is also known as the total cost of ownership over a long period of time (Nsiah-Asare & Prempeh, 2016). All costs, including as design and construction costs, operating costs, associated financing costs, depreciation, and disposal costs, are included in the total cost of ownership. Whole life costs also account for costs that are often disregarded, such as environmental effect and social costs.

3.10.1.2 Disposal Cost

Disposal expenses are incurred when a waste is disposed of or when a location is contaminated or other detrimental impacts occur (Chikwere et al., 2022). If the assets have a resale or residual value, some income may be realised upon disposal. This, as well as any rental revenue earned when assets are not in use, can be used to offset expenditures when calculating the whole life cost. It involves determining whether the assets have a residual or resale value.

3.10.1.3 Procurement specifications

Procurement specifications are a statement of a product's or service's characteristics. They inform suppliers of the required suitability for purpose or use (Van Weele, 2017). Procurement entities express their requirements to vendors using specifications and they include performance specifications, brand or trade name specifications, and sample specifications (Munyimi & Guo, 2019).

Procurement entities employ performance specifications to explain to suppliers the good or service's purpose, function, or application (Bailey et al., 2017). It describes what functions a good or a service must have. They communicate the goods or services' operational requirements to the vendor. The focus is on describing how the product, or commodities and services must work (Munyimi & Guo, 2019). Open specifications and performance specifications are two terms which are used interchangeably. A sample specification on the other hand is created when procurers take the actual product and give it to suppliers to avoid drafting specifications that may contain inaccuracies (Van Weele, 2017). The sample specification demonstrates what should provide to the procurement entity.

Procurement specifications include brand or trade name specifications which are also known as closed specifications. They specify specific commodities, systems, and producers, with no substitutes or ways to link them. Waters (2017) claims that brand or trade name criteria eliminate all alternative names except the one picked. They are most common when trying to

match a specification to an existing structure or when a precise replica is required. In public procurement, attaining value for money involves aiming for the lowest overall cost of ownership, explicitly outlining pertinent benefits, and meeting scheduled delivery commitments. Chikwere et al. (2022) noted that achieving value for money entails minimising waste, fostering competition, and ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the procurement process.

Theory and evidence suggest that value for money is crucial in effective provision of public services by public entities. In Lindholm et al. (2019) research, it was determined that the fundamental objective of public procurement is to attain value for money. This involves acquiring goods or services of the highest quality at the most affordable price within a brief timeframe, while minimising transaction costs. It is therefore imperative that public procurement managers should implement procurement management practices which enhance value for money. As noted by Helby-Petersen (2019) value for money is the idea that is used to determine if an organisation has managed to get the most out of the products and services against the employed resources.

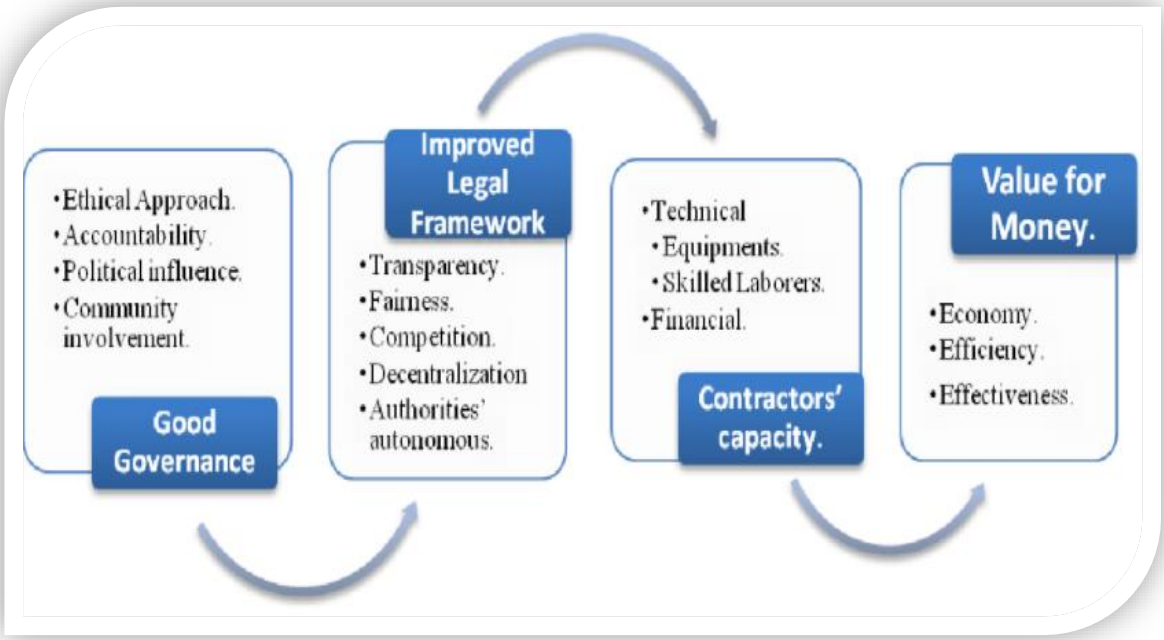

Figure 3.7: Value for money in Public Procurement.

Source: Adapted from Maduhu (2013).

3.10.1.4 Value for money

As noted by Changalima (2016), there are three guiding principles for assessing value for money in public procurement which are economy (spending less), efficiency and effectiveness. Procurement efficiency and effectiveness provide spending control by lowering costs and ensuring value for money. Effectiveness, which involves accomplishing the right objectives, is focused on achieving products or goals without significant consideration for the quantity of input resources required. On the other hand, efficiency, which is centred on doing things properly, pertains to maximising value, benefits, or satisfaction at the lowest possible cost (Changalima, 2016). The author stressed that a successful procurement is straightforward and quick, yielding great outcomes without the need for lengthy delays. Furthermore, efficiency means practicality, especially concerning alignment with government administrative resources and professionalism. The three guiding principles of value for money are illustrated on Figure 3.8 below.

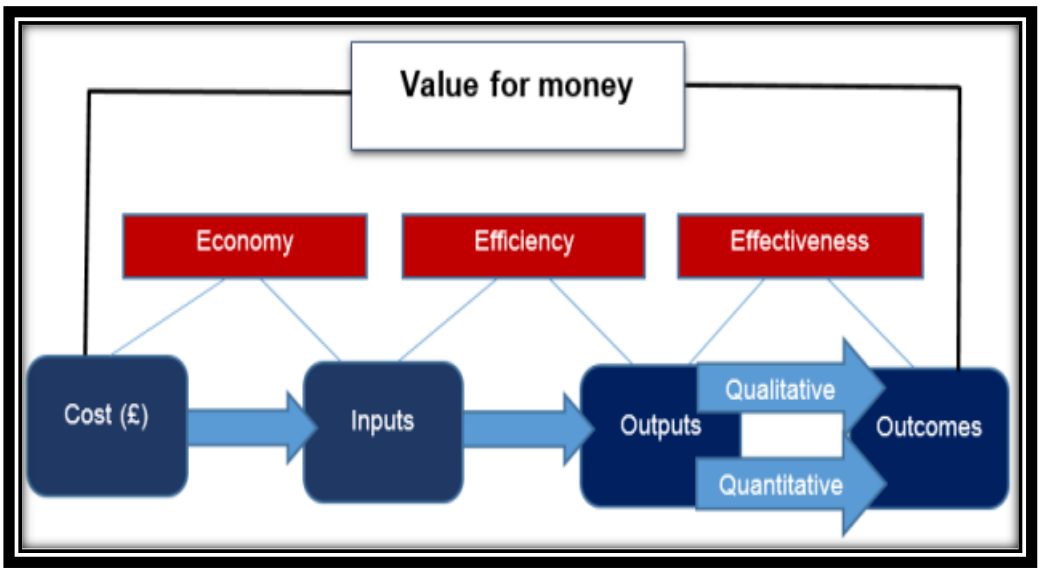

Figure 3.8: Three guiding principles of Value for money in Public Procurement.

Source: Adapted from Wilson (2018).

3.10.1.5 Good governance

Good governance is essential to promote value for money in the procurement of goods, services or procurement works. Ethical conduct is the most important element of good governance which calls for all the practices that could lead to a potential conflict of interest to be avoided during the procurement process. In terms of community engagement, Lindholm et al. (2019) noted that some governments have implemented direct social control measures to address

citizens' calls for increased accountability in public expenditure management. This involves actively engaging stakeholders, including not only the private sector but also end users, civil society, the media, and the public, in scrutinising the integrity of procurement processes. Siyavizwa et al. (2022) also noted that quality is enhanced in projects where communities actively participate in the procurement process. A study by Lindholm et al. (2019) showed high quality work in the construction of a warehouse in Nsimbo village, Uyui district of Tanzania which stands as a good example of the effect of community participation in overseeing contractors performance.

Public procurement is inherently viewed as a politically charged activity as highlighted by Fourie and Malan (2020). The involvement of senior officials and politicians who exploit their public positions to influence procurement procedures for personal gain undermines the integrity of the entire process (Lindholm et al., 2019). Considering this, Fourie and Malan (2020) argue that the interference of senior officials in the tender process to manipulate contract awards presents significant challenges to the public procurement system in developing countries. Such meddling not only erodes trust in the procurement process but also undermines transparency and fairness, ultimately hindering the achievement of procurement objectives and value for money.

3.10.1.6 Improved Legal framework

Procurement reforms attempt to achieve three cardinal pillars: accountability, fairness, and efficiency, in the sense that a fair and accountable procurement system aids in the prudent use of state resources (Bosio et al., 2022). The transparency aspect calls for the public procurement procedures to be transparent enough to prevent competing bidders from gaining an edge over others. These are consistent with the World Bank's procurement guidelines; thus, they must be observed in all procurements. Any purchase that does not adhere to these principles and objectives is not a good procurement and is not in the national interest, as these principles apply to all types of procurement (Chikwere, Dzandu & Dza, 2019). In terms of competition, the procurement procedure should ensure that there is some level of competition between the bidders (Lindholm et al., 2019). An improved legal framework also centres on fairness where all procurement management should strive for justice and ensure that all bidders are given an equal chance to participate.

To acquire the trust of the numerous actors within the procurement system, procurement practitioners must be extremely fair in their daily dealings with their suppliers, potential bidders, and the public (Chikwere et al., 2019). The advantages of accountability and fairness include improving public perceptions of openness and fairness, lowering the incidence of corruption, building mutual trust, and ensuring that processes are followed at all levels of the tendering process (Bosio et al., 2022). An effective public procurement system has the advantage of being run in a timely manner with little or no bureaucracy, hence enhancing and bolstering the procurement system's reliability (Nsiah-Asare & Prempeh, 2016).

In public procurement regulations, competition has long been seen as one of the most essential components in achieving value for money. This is based on the idea that more competition among bidders can lead to better pricing and different methods of delivering value for money (Chikwere et al., 2019). Competition might take the form of market competition during the bidding process or market contestability after the contract is signed and put into effect (Nsiah-Asare & Prempeh, 2016). As a result, it is reasonable to assume that whether a public procurement policy is cost-effective is contingent on adequate risk transfer and competition. On the contrary, lack of competition or limited possible entrants would make the achievement efficiency and value for money more difficult (Lindholm et al., 2019).

3.10.1.7 Contractor's capacity

The long-term cost of the equipment procured must be factored into the procurement budgets to enhance value for money. Martemyanova (2018) also argued that for an organisation to guarantee that the equipment and services are purchased at the correct value, the budget must account for asset depreciation and appreciation. In another study, Lindholm et al. (2019) emphasised that this requirement could guarantee that the goods were bought at market pricing and save the company money that would otherwise be lost through depreciation.

Aimable et al. (2019) established that individual abilities, professional qualifications, educational levels, and procurement principles such as integrity were the predictors of value for money achievement. This position was reinforced by Mwaiseje and Changalima (2020), who opine that value for money in public procurement operations can be obtained when organisation's personnel possess individual competences like skills, professional education, academic education, and integrity. Later, Chikwere et al. (2023) also established that the barrier to efficient procurement management which is a baseline for value for money is the absence of

sufficiently qualified staff and the nonexistence of necessary training for capacity building and skills upgrading.

Helby-Petersen (2019) observed that there are eight preconditions necessary to achieve value for money by an organisation. This implies that VfM is assessed on several indicators to bring the best out of a procurement activity (Aimable et al., 2019). The adoption of cost-effective procurement methods which entails choosing and applying procurement strategies that maximise savings without sacrificing quality. Lindholm et al. (2019) averred that to get the best value for money, this could involve looking into alternative suppliers, improved negotiating tactics, or making bulk purchases.

The second precondition is market maturity and knowledge for the works or services sought. Helby-Petersen (2019) argues that for procurement to be effective, it is essential to comprehend the market's maturity. A well-developed market has reliable suppliers and defined price lists. Kineber et al. (2021) contends that possessing thorough understanding of the market facilitates better deal bargaining and decision making. Additionally, conducting a product search and keeping track of high performers can help to find out about the past performance of each potential provider. This entails investigating and recording possible providers' past performance (Kowalska, Stusińska-Krywalska & Stachura, 2022). The authors argue that reliable suppliers can be chosen with the help of a database of top performers, which also helps to reduce procurement process risks.

Helby-Petersen (2019) emphasises the importance of calculating the relative risk associated with each proposal throughout the procurement process. This involves thorough assessment of various factors such as the financial stability of suppliers, potential delivery delays, and other aspects that could impact the performance of the procurement. Additionally, Adu-Yeboah (2021) highlights the significance of making well informed judgments, which are facilitated by evaluating and quantifying the risks associated with each proposal. By thoroughly considering and analysing these risks, procurement professionals can effectively contribute to achieving value for money in procurement processes.

The relevant direct or indirect benefits and costs should be considered in financial terms (Lindholm et al., 2019). This emphasises the significance of conducting a thorough financial analysis that considers not just the direct expenses but also the indirect costs and possible

advantages linked to a purchase choice (Kineber et al., 2021). On the other hand, the price estimation that could be obtained at the point of disposal of procured items is critical to realise value for money (Lindholm et al., 2019). It is crucial to consider the potential future value or resale of the products purchased as this estimate aids in determining how cost-effective the procurement will be in the long run (Adu-Yeboah, 2021).

Helby-Petersen (2019) posits that the maintenance costs for procurement items should be considered and justified during the procurement process. The author argues that it is imperative to consider the recurring maintenance expenses linked to the purchased products. Changalima, Ismail and Mwaiseje (2022) also shared this position when they averred that proper planning for all the anticipated costs guarantees a more precise evaluation of the overall cost of ownership. Finally, an assessment of contract options that balances value and quality should be considered (Lindholm et al., 2019). This entails weighing several contract choices to strike a balance between making sure the goods or services are of a high standard and getting the best value for the money. Wallis (2020) also proposed that long term partnerships with suppliers and flexible contract periods might be considered if value for money is to be realised.

There are different frameworks used by different organisations in assessing value for money to suit their situations (Aimable et al., 2019). For example, Changalima (2016) established that Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) is used to assess VfM in Tanzanian public organisations procurement activities using five primary VfM indicators. These include the documentation related to planning, design, and tenders; the procurement procedure; contract administration and works monitoring; project closure and completion; and the amount and quality of finished works. In compliance with the conditions of the contract, the provider fulfils the order for goods and services.

Table 3.2 Procurement objectives and value for money

Goal type	Value
Regulatory goal transparency and accountability	Conduct, behaviour, corporate governance requirements and PPPs are open and fair.
Commercial goals economy and efficiency	Reduction on costs, more purchases for the same price due to volume and trade discounts, same quality and quantity for less money
Social economic goals social welfare and public value	Equal treatment for all suppliers, protection of SMEs, trust development, accountability, and publicity is free for all. Taxpayers know how their money is spent.

Source: Nyasulu (2019).

Nyasulu (2019) highlighted that achieving the objectives listed in the table above public procurement in regaining VFM. Therefore, procurement bodies must be able to prevent excessive expenses and delays, monitor supply arrangements and co-create them when they become ineffective, and lastly guarantee ongoing improvements for the effectiveness of internal systems and procedures.

Modern markets are supported by competitive tendering, which distinguishes them from demand-supply driven markets (Nyasulu, 2019). As a result, the competitive bidding process must be fair and inclusive. Competitive tendering seeks to obtain the lowest total cost of ownership, whereas pure competition seeks to reach the lowest pricing (Matto, Ame & Nsimbila, 2021). Procurers weigh pricing put forth by competing bids, the quality of the items supplied, and operating expenses that will be spent over the course of the procurements to achieve the lowest total cost of ownership (Lindholm et al., 2019).

3.10.2 Procurement Management and Value for Money

Procurement management involves overseeing and monitoring the performance of contracts by entities engaged in the procurement process (Chikwere et al., 2022). Procuring organisations

use effective procurement management to deliver projects and effectively satisfy the requirements of their departments in the context of procurement. Lindholm et al. (2019) noted that when conducted properly, procurement management can positively influence the attainment of value for money. The whole procurement cycle needs to be managed; however, emphasis here is placed on procurement planning, bidding management, vendor engagement, procurement risk management and performance monitoring (Nyasulu, 2019).

3.10.2.1 Procurement planning

Lindholm et al. (2019) asserts that Procurement organisations can optimise the VFM gained through procurement planning by clearly outlining the criteria and in a way that encourages the most competitive and innovative responses from bidders. The ideals of planning propose that procurement planning can be carried out in a completely harmonious environment (John & Kenya, 2019). They emphasised that procurement planning addresses inquiries such as: defining the desired procurement items; determining the timing and source of procurement; identifying the availability of resources; specifying the procurement methods to be employed; assessing the impact of timely procurement or failure on the end users; designating the procuring and disposing entity; ensuring efficiency in the procurement process; and determining the individuals involved in the procurement procedure.

It's critical to start thinking about, and discussing with key stakeholders, the potential cost elements and qualitative issues that could affect the procurement outcome at the planning stage (Changalima, Ismail & Mwaiseje, 2022). Early consideration of these aspects is essential in determining whether a procurement process is worthwhile. It can also assist key stakeholders in comprehending why particular costing structures and qualitative elements would be included in the specification and assessment process, allowing for better value for money (Chikwere et al., 2023)

Nshimyumuremyi et al. (2019) noted that in Rwandan public procurement, the encouragement of value for money involves enhancing collaboration with crucial suppliers to maximise value for both departments and suppliers. This is achieved by identifying cost cutting possibilities and embracing innovative approaches. Additionally, it entails reducing the cost of procuring goods or services through the reformation of procurement and finance processes, as well as minimising stock levels.

3.10.2.2 Bidding management

The bidding process in procurement refers to a transparent and fair system for determining the best value for money (Compass Executive, 2021). It is a competitive procedure, and competitive bidding implies that each company is judged on a set of criteria that varies based on the specific contract (Bosio et al., 2022). This selection process can be divided into two steps, with the first stage using an Invitation to tender (ITT) to identify companies before moving on to the final tender round (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). Alternatively, a one-stage method could be used, in which there is no first shortlisting, and bidders are evaluated based on a single proposal. In this case the bidding process is used to determine which company is best suited to deliver goods or services under a contract (Changalima, Ismail & Mwaiseje, 2022). Most contracts in the public sector are therefore expected to go through the tender procedure which improve the transparency of the process and reach out to a wider supply base.

A procurement method should be developed such that the most capable bidders to deliver VFM are encouraged to bid and demonstrate their value during the selection process, which will culminate in awarding of the contract to the best bidder (Helby - Petersen, 2019). The use of appropriate procurement methods and bidding procedures increases the likelihood of attracting suitable bidders and securing favourable bids which ultimately enhance the organisation's overall value for money (VFM) (Lindholm et al., 2019).

A contracting authority employs a bidding procedure to objectively examine each potential supplier and award a contract for products or services to the most qualified organisation, rather than simply assigning a contract to whichever company they want (Compass Executive, 2021). Therefore, the evaluation should be based on both quality and other commercial pricing factors, rather than just a case of 'lowest price' wins. Lindholm et al. (2019) also noted that the most common method for a buyer to choose a winning bidder is the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT). In a bid, this considers both cost and other factors such as quality, technical ability, social value, innovation, and added value (Helby-Petersen, 2019).

3.10.2.3 Vendor engagement

When public authorities actively increase their knowledge of, and proper involvement with the supply market, particularly the local supply market, better VFM outcomes can be attained (Lindholm et al., 2019). Continuous market knowledge and positive relationships with suppliers can help government agencies stay informed about items or services with better value

results, hence improving value for money. By focusing on the desired procurement results rather than dictating how the outcome should be attained, vendor engagement-based procurement management encourages supply market innovation (Karanja, 2021).

Supplier participation must not jeopardise a potential tender and must not be carried out in a way that provides an unfair advantage, distorts, or inhibits competition. The goal of a technical discourse should be to learn what the market must give, at what price, and in what timeframe (Suresh & Ravichandran, 2021). This data should be utilised to guide the tendering process so that the intended outcomes are achieved. It also gives you the chance to condition the market by informing them of the procurement entity's requirements and what suppliers must do to achieve those requirements (Helby-Petersen, 2019).

With a positive buyer-supplier relationship in place, the supplier is more likely to approach the contract manager of the public authority to tell them of any new innovative or value-add products or business value-add efforts (Helby-Petersen, 2019). Suppliers will also be more likely to look for ways to collaborate with the government to maximise the contract's value for both parties (ADB, 2021).

3.10.2.4 Procurement risk management

For successful delivery of VFM deliverables, good risk management methods must be used throughout the procurement lifecycle (Karanja, 2021). During the planning stage, public authorities must conduct a risk assessment to ensure that the risks associated with the purchase of goods or services are recognised, assessed, and properly managed. While achieving the procurement's objectives, effective risk management ensures that unexpected or unpleasant events are minimised which can negatively affect VFM goal. It can also spot chances for promoting innovative solutions (Helby-Petersen, 2019).

OECD (2016) contends that the procurement cycle's oversight and control are vital not just for ensuring accountability and fostering integrity within the public procurement process but also for furnishing valuable insights into the performance and efficiency of the procurement cycle. Conducting a risk analysis of the government process and its environment establishes the basis for implementing a sufficient oversight and control mechanism. As a result of these observations, new and developing hazards or red flags may emerge, allowing the oversight and control system to be updated and refined (Helby-Petersen, 2019). Moreover, the imposition of

fines proportional to the degree of misconduct identified through supervision and control measures can act as an effective deterrent against involvement in corrupt practices. As a result of the oversight and control value for money outcome is enhanced (Bosio et al., 2022).

3.10.2.5 Performance monitoring

Effective contract management and performance monitoring are critical to ensuring that the supplier fulfils the agreed-upon VFM promises, whether it's to save money or satisfy other qualitative goals (Helby-Petersen, 2019). Contract management in this case is the procedure followed by the procuring entity's contract management team to ensure that the supplier, service provider, and contractor provide the required goods, works, or project as dictated by the terms of the contract (Khan, 2018). It can also enable additional VFM outcomes that would not have been possible through the sourcing process, as it allows for more innovation and better contract performance.

Contract management being the process of ensuring that the agreed-upon terms and conditions are met, and that each party fulfils their responsibilities, it follows that effective contract management has the capacity to manage the agreed-upon contract terms and conditions to achieve the contract's desired objectives (Brunet & César, 2021). As noted by Khan (2018) contract management lays the foundation for improved working relationships that are more engaging to one another to complete the projects. Furthermore, contact management will continue till the contract expires. In the even that disputes or crises arise, contract management can assist in resolving them so the value for money outcomes is achieved (Helby-Petersen, 2019).

Qualitative considerations should be included into specified targets, KPIs, and contract reporting requirements to accomplish VFM through contract management (Brunet & César, 2021). Consistent performance management is also necessary as a guarantee of the consistence of goods or services quality and that there are no negative or unforeseen consequences for contract results, such as cost or specification modifications which affect attainment of value for money (Helby-Petersen, 2019).

Literature has shown that procurement management influences value for money in several countries. However, it is not very clear to the researcher whether the same effect is obtainable in some rural district councils in Zimbabwe. Value for money, being grounded on efficiency,

effectiveness and economy owing to sound procurement management is shrouded in obscurity in most rural district councils. The furniture and equipment are sometimes bought but only serve a short lifespan while some procurements prices may be very high. In 2012 for example, the roads authority purchased at least 40 motorised graders for $8 million from a company called Univern for distribution to local governments. This procurement was aimed at improving the road infrastructure in rural districts, but they did not live up to the expectations as the graders were manufactured for snow regions. This scenario is a testimony that there is indeed a procurement management gap between procurement management and value for money in rural district councils.

3.11 THE PROCUREMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Theory and evidence have shown that service delivery by public entities has for long been hampered by a myriad of public procurement challenges which are inherent in these entities (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). This has resulted in service delivery dissatisfaction by the residents in different countries with hardest hit being the developing world. As noted by Sifile, Madzorera and Chavunduka (2015) the primary procurement challenges leading to poor service delivery can be summarised as insufficient human and financial capacity to deliver, lack of proactivity and weak procurement oversight and unabated tender corruption.

The implication of these procurement challenges on service delivery is underdevelopment owing to inefficient and compromised public procurement (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). Munyede and Mapuva (2020) also observed that delays in the awarding of tenders negatively influence service delivery due to non-take off or projects taking too long to complete. When such a scenario is encountered it means therefore that the residents are not able to get the required service at the expected timeframe thereby infringing one the critical procurement right (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019).

3.11.1 Corruption practices in public procurement

Corruption is defined by Ardigó and Chêne (2017) as the misuse of entrusted power for personal gain. Dávid-Barrett, and Fazekas (2020) noted that corruption in service delivery comes in many forms, and it can be found at all levels of government and throughout the service delivery chain. Ardigó and Chêne (2017) identified three forms of corruption which are grand, petty, and political. They posit that grand corruption is when high level power is abused to

benefit a few at the expense of the many, causing substantial and widespread harm to individuals and society. It is frequently tolerated without repercussions. Petty corruption is the daily misuse of entrusted power by public employees in their dealings with regular residents, who are frequently seeking essential commodities or services in places such as hospitals, schools, police departments, and other institutions (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). Finally, political corruption refers to political decision-makers abusing their influence, status, and money by manipulating policies, institutions, and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and finance (Dávid-Barrett, & Fazekas, 2020).

Corruption stifles healthy governance, long-term economic development, and market functioning (Dávid-Barrett, & Fazekas, 2020). Because of their proximity to government and de facto elected officials, state owned companies (SOEs) are particularly vulnerable to corruption. Policymakers in Southern African economies recognise the challenges of corruption and the harmful impact it has not only on efficient and transparent SOE operations, but also on government, the economy, and ordinary individuals, who end up paying the price for corruption (Crane-Charef, 2015).

In analysing Malawi's National Anti-Corruption Strategy, Crane-Charef (2015) noted that there are several corruption costs listed including stifling social, political, and economic development. Corruption cripples the government's ability to deliver social services as public funds are illegally diverted to private use (Dávid-Barrett, & Fazekas, 2020). It also undermines democratic values of good governance, political stability, and the rule of law, breeding criminal behaviour, putting public security at risk, and violating residents' rights. These costs are an indicator of how corruption can interrupt service delivery if put on check (Crane-Charef, 2015). Despite the well documented public procurement procedures, corruption frequently finds a loophole to waste public funds, causing service delivery to be hampered. Manyathi, Burger, and Moritmer (2021) contend that corruption by public officials always attracts more regulations, lengthening and complicating the public procurement process. Large-scale investments and significant financial commitments are often associated with service delivery, which might attract corrupt parties and drive rent seeking behaviour (Crane-Charef, 2015). As the focus shifts to self-enrichment, service performance is jeopardised, and contracts are occasionally awarded to bidders with little or no job experience (Manyathi, Burger, and Moritmer, 2021).

In a similar study, Ambe (2016) observed that there is lack of confidentiality by the officials as non-competitive bidding procedures are frequently abused in South African public entities. Fourie, and Malan (2020) noted that lack of confidentiality is common in the quotation system, where procurement practitioners request quotes from a variety of service providers and instruct their preferred bidders to submit their offers last to monitor the lowest bidder and then outbid the lowest bidder to win a tender. When the public procurement practitioners lack of secrecy, as seen by the deliberate release of tender information to their preferred bidders, compromise public sector procurement (Changalima, Ismail, & Mwaiseje, 2022).

In South Africa public entities, Corruption Watch (2018) observed that government employees serving on bid committees deliberately avoid declaring their vested interest as required by procurement regulations where they are personally acquainted with one of the bidders. This compromises the outcome of the bidding process. Manyathi et al., (2021) also noted that failure by bidders to declare their interest in the bidding documents, as required by procurement requirements has become a cause for concern. Gumede (2017) posits that the mandate of government to serve the public through service delivery is undermined by corruption and mis procurement.

3.11.2 Political interference

The political interference in the local authorities procurement processes negatively impact the service delivery quality (Chikwere et al., 2023). Anane, Adoma and Awuah (2019) contend that public procurement is fundamentally a delicate activity owing to the political interference in awarding of major tenders. Fourie, and Malan (2020) assert that political interference subdues responsiveness, sustainability, and cost efficiency which are the pillars of quality service delivery. This political influence rewarding tenders to relative or friends and neglecting the deserving vendors resulting in poor service delivery (Masuku, 2019).

Ndevu (2019) avers that the appointment of ineffective local authority employees and an unqualified team based on political patronage and nepotism undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of the rural local authorities. Masuku (2019) also averred that political leaders abuse their positions for personal gain leading to poor service delivery, underdevelopment, poverty, and general dissatisfaction by residents. In their study, Chikwere et al. (2023) found that political interference in the procurement process is a hindrance to successful public procurement in Africa. The research found that politicians control the bidding process in most

African countries, pressuring such contracts to be handed to individuals or their preferred organisations (Masuku, 2019).

3.11.3 Lack of competent human capital

Competency is described as the ability to accomplish things appropriately and accurately over time by using learned information, behaviour, and skills (Mante, Kojo, Eric, & Oheneas, 2020). It is also envisaged that poor service delivery twined with lack of value for money by the local authorities is a result of inexperience and unskillfulness. Therefore, local authorities should strive to retain the most skilled and skilled personnel to optimise their service provision.

Madzorera and Chavunduka (2015) noted that insufficient human capacity to deliver is a setback in achieving value for money and service delivery. Changalima et al. (2022) similarly associated the shortage of qualified personnel with various types of mis-procurement, leading to a decline in service quality. Due to labour mobility and constantly evolving procurement procedures, it can be difficult to develop a pool of workers with the necessary skills and competences (Fourie & Malan, 2020). As per Janchi and Mandongwe (2019), a well-functioning procurement system ensures a high standard of service and is a sign of a skilled and knowledgeable personnel that can carry out the necessary procurement tasks.

Many public-sector organisations lack workers with the necessary skills for effective procurement processes (Changalima et al., 2022). The lack of relevant skills by the employees leads to poor service delivery owing to inability by the employees to implement strategies and contract management which are the cornerstone of service delivery (Meehan, Ludbrook, & Mason, 2016). For example, some local authorities in South Africa were said to be experiencing poor service delivery due to lack of experience, insufficient professional qualifications, and lack of adequate training on public procurement processes as the procurement staff failed to interpret procurement regulations (Fourie, & Malan, 2020).

Additionally, Tumuhairwe and Ahimbisibwe (2016) observed that many of the Ugandan public sector organisations lacked expert procurement personnel with procurement activities being carried out by personnel with knowledge and experience in other areas. Martemyanova (2018) reinforced this view after noting that in most organisations' procurement department is handled by workers that are unfamiliar with procurement which causes some losses and poor service

performance. The author argues that employees working in procurement should be familiar with procurement regulations, and budgeting.

3.11.4 Weak financial base

Insufficient financial support is a big challenge bedevilling service delivery in local authorities owing to lack of fiscal support from the central government (Chikwere et al., 2023). Local authorities' optimal procurement operations require proper resource allocation to achieve optimum service delivery requirements. Jachi, and Mandongwe (2019) affirms that most local authorities are cash stripped due to inadequate funding. This position was also averred by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) who argued that service delivery by local authorities in developing countries has deteriorated owing to inadequate financial resources.

Some local governments in South Africa have been dealing with a serious financial problem over a long time (Cameron, 2021). Local governments' ability to maintain infrastructure, equipment, and perform public services has been eroded since fiscal payments from the central government have effectively dried up or are insufficient (Siyavizwa, Munuhwa, & Mbudaya, 2022). Property taxes, licenses, and public service fees are the main sources of revenue, which are all earned locally (Zalengera et al., 2020). While local governments in Zimbabwe have a long history of providing local services, the current scenario has significantly hampered their ability to do so, as well as the desire of the local populace to pay for services they do not receive (Siyavizwa et al., 2022).

Most local authorities in developing nations rely significantly on the payment of rates and subsidies from the central government to survive (Cameron, 2021). This has had a substantial impact on service delivery, primarily because these sources of funding are unreliable due to payment irregularity (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). As noted by Kawooya et al. (2020), Uganda like several developing countries, has repealed the graduated tax or hut tax, which brought in a significant amount of income, and this led to slowed service delivery.

3.11.5 Procurement bureaucracy

The procurement process in the public sector is characterised by a lot of regulations that lengthen the process thereby making it more complicated and time consuming (Dorasamy, 2021). The provision of public services is hampered by numerous administrative red tapes, as highlighted by Grey (2021), including the division of powers between those provided by

legislation to the provincial and federal governments and those that are granted to local governments for services.

Makiva (2021) observed that in South African public sector procurement, the tendering processes, which impose considerable legislative requirements, are another source of procedural challenges facing the provision of public services. The bidding procedure can take up to six months from the time the terms of reference are written until the stage where the tender is awarded to a potential supplier (Ambe, 2016). In Zimbabwe's urban councils the processes in the procurement task can take from 3 to 6 months for it to be concluded from the procurement preparation stage to award having considered the appeal procedure if a bidder is not satisfied with the result (Chikwere et al., 2023).

3.11.6 Inadequate procurement planning

Procurement planning pertain to the strategic and objective process of identifying and aggregating procurement requirements to satisfy quality, quantity, price, place, and time schedules. Manyathi, Burger and Moritmer (2021) observed that lack of procurement planning results in insufficient needs analysis, which could lead to bad specifications or terms of reference, resulting in the procurement of incorrect items that are unsuitable for purpose in terms of quality and quantity. Changalima et al. (2021) added that as an outcome of poor procurement planning unbudgeted procurements are made resulting in unauthorised and irregular spending.

The academia agrees that inadequate planning can adversely influence the performance of an organisation in terms of service delivery (Changalima et al., 2021). This position was affirmed by Aladejebi and Adedeji, (2015) when they observed that the firms with very poor enterprise resource planning for procurement activities have poor firms' performance. It was reinforced by Ambe (2016) who posits that the entities frequently face challenges in service delivery owing to poor procurement plans in their procurement operations.

3.12 SERVICE DELIVERY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Service delivery improvement strategy is primarily concerned with increasing the efficacy and efficiency of service delivery by an organisation (Chikwere et al., 2022). The authors argued

that it blends quality management, change management, and capacity improvement ideas, practices, and approaches to attain the desired level of service delivery. Thus, it is imperative that organisations put in place sustainable strategies to satisfy their clients requirements.

3.12.1 Ensuring autonomy of local authorities.

Local governments require sovereignty to succeed in their mandate. African governments must not decentralise their operations to the local level without complimentary autonomy (Gray, 2021). From the challenges identified it appears that some local governments have limited autonomy which undermines their decision making (Cameron, 2021). In their study, Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) argue that although there is some autonomy in Kenya local authorities, most of their decisions requires ministerial approval before implementation. Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) further noted that Nigeria and Tanzania's local authorities have strong autonomy where most of their decision making is localised, fast and provides a platform to improve service delivery.

3.12.2 Implementation of anti-corruption measures

The fight against corruption in local authorities can be effective if separation of duties is adopted. As noted by Manyathi et al. (2021), separation of roles is necessary to eliminate incentives for those who may want to tamper with processes of the procurement activities. This is vital to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of processes which leads to increased adherence to laws and better delivery of service. On the other hand, the separation of duties necessitates emergence of new vacancies. The challenge faced with such new vacancies is reluctance of many government bodies to place priority on filling procurement vacancies. Dorasamy (2021), highlighted that scenario leads to one individual handling many responsibilities, hence increasing the likelihood of deception and misconduct.

Guma (2018) argues that increased grass roots participation by community people in local-level monitoring is an alternative way to eliminating corruption that has gained popularity in recent years. The author emphasised that many parts of the development world, community participation is now seen as the key to reducing corruption and improving public service delivery. The community can supervise and take disciplinary measures against errant service providers when using the strategy of putting them at the heart of service delivery (Basheka, 2021). This technique also creates an ideal environment for them to have their voices heard in policymaking by the local authorities (Ngwenya, & Khumalo, 2020). Therefore, the grass-roots

approach should be premised on the idea that the community members stand to benefit from successful projects so they may be more motivated to watch for anti-corruption drive than disinterested government service providers (Guma, 2018).

To prevent and combat corruption, Zimbabwe has enacted a variety of laws and regulations. The Constitution, the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, the Public Finance Management Act, the Public Service Act, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act, the Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Act, as amended, the Public Entities Corporate Governance Act, and the Criminal Matters (Mutual Assistance) Act all form part of the country's legislative framework for preventing corruption and recovering assets (CAC/COSP/IRG, 2020).

Zimbabwe introduced the Transitional Stabilisation Programme 2018 to 2020 with the goal of eliminating corruption and enhancing governance. This involves enhancing the capabilities of anti-corruption authorities, establishing anti-corruption courts, and reinforcing the anti-money laundering framework (CAC/COSP/IRG, 2020). The Anti-Corruption Commission strives to combat corruption by advocating for honesty, financial discipline, and transparency in both the public and private spheres. Additionally, it has the authority to suggest measures for mitigating corruption risks, providing guidance on enhancing anti-corruption legislation, and assisting public and private entities in establishing preventive practices, systems, and procedures (Basheka, 2021).

In pursuit of preventing corruption in public procurement in Zimbabwe, section 72 of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act [Chapter 22:23] makes procurement officers accountable for disclosing conflicts of interest to direct superiors and prohibits the accepting of gifts and benefits. Prospective bidders could face exclusion if they have a record of unethical conduct related to any procurement, or if they have been convicted of a crime involving dishonesty or corruption. The Special Procurement Oversight Committee conducts audits on high value procurements surpassing specified thresholds, as outlined in section 10 (5) of the Regulations and conducted by designated entities. Section 12 of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act outlines the procurement practices subject to monitoring and examination by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

3.12.3 Reduction of bureaucracy

Provision of services in a timely manner by the local authority is very important to achieve the government service delivery objectives (Ngwenya & Khumalo, 2020). However, public procurement is often associated with some delays due to strenuous protocol procedures which lead to delayed provision of services to the residents and ultimately not achieving the government service delivery objectives. In his study of South African public entities, Manyati (2019) observed that to assure an improved implementation of procurement activities in South Africa, a uniform conflict mechanism is also required, which would reduce the time and expenses spent in conflict resolution with the suppliers and the contractors, resulting in enhanced service delivery.

Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) averred that local authority's effectiveness is determined by the quality and timeliness of the public services provision. They argued further that services delivered timely are important in covering the breadth of services that people demand, as some service cannot be delivered in phases over time because the initial phase service/good may be harmed. This mostly applies to services that require scrutiny, such as building construction and other construction related services (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). Based on their argument, a conclusion can be drawn that the government entities procedures must be streamlined to achieve acceptable quality of service delivery to the residents. Reduction of bureaucracy is critical in providing the much-needed flexibility in the public sector procurement (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). It is the cornerstone of achieving the government service delivery objectives which ultimately satisfies the residents. As noted by Manyathi, Burger and Moritmer (2021), the public sector should incorporate flexibility in the supply stream to enhance reduced lead times, operational costs and achieve value for money.

3.12.4 Employment and retention of competent personnel

Martemyanova (2018) noted that human resources procurement competence leads to high service delivery. Having individuals with a background in procurement ensures that correct planning is carried out and clients are more likely to be satisfied when personnel are familiar with the buying process (Brewer & Arnette, 2017). This view was supported by Martemyanova (2018) who contends that procurement competence ensures that all procurement requirements are properly bought and delivered on time which boosts reliability and the ability to satisfy consumer expectations.

Regular skills audits should be conducted by the local authorities to determine the status of an individual employee's capacity and development needs to perform better to deliver quality services (Jachi, & Mandongwe, 2019). Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) argued that qualifications, experience, and competence are the three critical components of individual ability that should be periodically assessed. They highlighted further that transforming leadership paradigms and organisational techniques to establish a positive performance culture can improve local government service delivery.

A skills audit should be performed to determine the status of an individual's capacity prior to appointing or deploying competent employees and conduct capacity development on the gaps discovered (Reddy, 2016; Ndevu, 2019). The human resources techniques such as audits and manpower development are critical in reducing the insufficient capacity to quality gap that leads to poor decision-making and flawed performance if done properly (Fourie, & Malan, 2020). Ndevu (2019) notes that significant and on-going investment in procurement officials' training, development, and professionalisation is required especially in the public sector such that procurement functions are correctly performed to enhance the fundamental provision of public services, leading to improved financial value.

A survey by Manyathi (2019) on the connection between non-compliance and procurement officials' knowledge of regulations found that public procurement officials require extensive training to comply with legislation. Manyathi et al. (2021) also contend that public officials' training strengthens the capacity of government agencies in handling procurement in activities. The crucial aspect is identifying the nature of training and knowledge requirements for the procurement departments in various government agencies. It follows therefore that human capital skills development is very critical in terms achieving the service delivery and value for money expectations of the residents by a local authority. This assumption is in line with a survey which concurred that to improve service delivery, appropriate training on procurement legislation be provided (Manyathi, 2019).

The importance of training and development was also underscored by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) when they averred that to assure the team members' value-based performance, there is a significant requirement for training and qualification. The authors contend that the main goal is to help the procurement team and the government entity in terms of improving service delivery in general. This position was also shared by Manyathi et al. (2021) who posited that

public procurement authorities' staff can gain a detailed understanding of procurement procedures which can enable them to improve service provision in their operations by training and up skilling.

3.12.5 Adoption of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools

It is imperative that the public procurement entities embrace some Information Communication Technology tools such as e-sourcing, e-auctioning, e-tendering, e-ordering, and e-catalogue (Afolabi et al., 2022). This can allow them to increase operational effectiveness by leveraging useful data, enforcing compliance through policies, tracking cost for more visibility, and leveraging valuable data. E-procurement is gaining traction as a tool for avoiding and decreasing corruption in the public procurement process at various levels. This should boost market access and competitiveness, as well as promote integrity, lower information costs, make information more accessible, and increase openness and accountability (Ardigó & Chêne, 2017).

An e-procurement platform provides an open real time and quality public procurement which promote bidder competition and transparency (Afolabi et al., 2022). It also provides an opportunity for residents to track and trace procurement activities of their local authority and where applicable oppose unjust public officials and hold them more accountable to the public. This was affirmed by Ndevu (2019) who posited that e-procurement ensures that the organisation's resources are well spent by granting contracts to vendors that can supply high quality services and materials at a fair price. Lenderink, Halman, and Voordijk (2022) also highlighted that an e-purchasing system can enhance local authority's efficiency by automating their current and future procurement management tasks. As noted by Afolabi et al. (2022), procurement function can utilise paperless approval, which allows the local authority to approve all procurement documents digitally for maximum speed and efficiency.

Afolabi et al. (2022) noted that the procuring entity has the obligation to develop, establish, and maintain databases or ICT based systems for the collection, storage, and distribution of information relating to procurement activities and actors in the procurement process in the subject countries creates an environment in which residents can gain access to information about public spending. Lenderink et al. (2022) affirmed that ICT system provides detailed documentation of activities including publication of procurement records, promotion of open bidding processes, on demand access to information, management, and distribution of

comprehensive records of all procurement proceedings. The findings are in line with those reported by Paul (2020) who examined the influence of adoption of E-Procurement system at the Arusha City Council, Tanzania and established that using an e-procurement system is an important part of the procurement process because it speeds up the delivery of services.

The digitalisation of public administration is a means to improve efficiency, minimise bureaucracy, boost user friendliness and accessibility, encourage ethical behaviour, and eliminate fraud and corruption opportunities (Lenderink et al. 2022). This transformation is based on transparency, with administrative agencies exchanging information and data and stakeholders being invited in (Paul, 2020). Interoperability is another crucial component which enables the ability of institutions and systems to communicate with one another (Vilfan, et al., 2018). This has a positive influence on the service delivery.

Most developing countries are lagging in adoption of Information and Communication Technologies owing to the fiscal constraints (Lenderink et al. 2022). On the other hand, Afolabi et al. (2022) averred that some countries are taking initiatives to streamline administrative procedures and make decision-making processes more transparent. The ZimConnect portal, for example, is one of several e-government efforts aimed at providing digital services to residents. On their websites and other venues, government agencies have posted information and reports about their work and performance.

Rural local governments, on the other hand, face significant ICT challenges, including adoption and utilisation, in comparison to their urban counterparts. The widespread practice of limited adoption and use of information and communication technology (ICT) in Zimbabwe is deeply ingrained across various public sectors, even in those with ample resources. This is evident in the presence of nonfunctional or stagnant websites, the use of personal email for official purposes, and a general lack of investment by departments in both hardware and software (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). Rural district councils lag in terms of infrastructure investment because the majority of this is concentrated in urban areas. As a result of this disparity, rural district councils have lagged in terms of connectivity. This may be a reason e-procurement adoption faces significant challenges in some local authorities.

3.12.6 Promotion of community participation

Co-production is the process of incorporating consumer resources into the development of a service whether it is in the form of their personal presence, their belongings, or their knowledge (Ngoyoni, 2021). This necessitates interaction with customers to organise and integrate their contributions (Stuurman, 2019). Local authorities can encourage communities' active participation in their procurement as they are the service users.

In structuring new needs assessments, public procurement systems should collect consistent, up-to-date, and reliable information from community and their leaders as they provide a valuable source of insight and guide future procurement decisions on what is expected by the community (Ngoyoni, 2021). As noted by Stuurman (2019) this can be achieved through consultative sessions which can be held in easily accessible locations so that stakeholders and the public can attend to express their opinions. In South Africa, it is essential to keep residents informed about the quality of services they can expect, aligning with the principles of Batho Pele. This ensures that individuals are aware of what to anticipate (Ngwenya & Khumalo, 2020). As a result, non-performers and poor service performance will be reduced.

Promotion of local community participation can be achieved through transparency. However, some countries' procurement regulations do not provide for that and where it is provided the interested parties may be required to cater for the costs of accessing information pertaining to procurement. Sabbath (2014) noted that Section 42 of the Tanzanian Public Procurement Act of 2004 provides for the disposal of public documents, both file and electronic copies, after 5 years in Tanzania and 7 years in Uganda, respectively, from the date the decision is made or the date the contract is completed whichever is later. This reduces the social oversight role and contribution of the local community in procurement activities of the procuring entity. Zimbabwe has also ensured that during the legislative process, including during the formulation of the national budget, members of the public will be consulted in pursuit of community participation. The Parliament's Public Hearing Guidelines, for example, have been developed and published so that members of the public acquaint themselves with the process.

3.12.7 Public-Private Partnership Procurement

One of the procurement approaches accessible to government entities for delivering public services is Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). Cheng et al. (2021) posit that a public private partnership in essence is a system in which private entrepreneurs participate in or assist the

supply of public infrastructure. Gumo (2018) defined private sector as the portion of the economy that is owned and operated by individuals, groups, or businesses for profit while the public sector, on the other hand, as the segment of the economy that is owned, controlled, and run by various levels of government, including the federal, state, region, local, and regional governments, as well as their agencies.

Infrastructure development in Africa is not moving fast enough to satisfy the needs of its population, according to a plethora of available research and facts. SAIIA (2020) noted that Africa's socioeconomic progress has been hampered by the infrastructural backlog. The construction of new public assets such as hospitals, transportation services, and electrification has slowed, especially in rural areas where infrastructure development is typically fraught with large upfront expenditures (Gumo, 2018). Numerous African nations, particularly those categorised as Less Developed Countries (LDCs), face challenges due to insufficient internal reserves and a limited tax paying base. This situation may hinder their ability to finance infrastructure development and make it difficult for them to secure concessional loans on the global market.

Manyathi (2019) averred that Public-Private Partnership agreements are crafted to leverage most efficiencies and expertise offered by the private business party. This is aimed at ensuring the effective execution of the PPP project without incurring high costs or delaying completion. Gumo (2018) shared the view where he posits that public-private sector partnership is a technique of buying public services and infrastructure that combines the best of both public and private sector talents and assets. The public sector has funded and operated infrastructure projects in the traditional way of raising funds through taxes and other levies such as fuel taxes and road user fees for a long time now. However, Gumo (2018) observed that the current discrepancy between resource generation capacity and demand for new facilities appears to have driven governments around the world to seek new finance methods and sources. Inadequate infrastructure is claimed to be the reason of a lack of productivity among entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa. This has an effect of putting large costs on businesses in terms of lost output and additional expenses needed to compensate for insufficient public services (World Bank, 2020).

World Bank (2020) notes that infrastructure deficits are widely recognised as one of the major obstacles preventing the Sub-Saharan African region from realising its full economic potential.

This is entrenched in their failure to utilise international trade opportunities, and resultantly an underutilising poverty reduction potential. Many countries are currently considering public-private collaboration as a means of financing, designing, building, operating, and maintaining public infrastructure, community facilities, and related services (Cheng et al., 2021).

The other expectation which makes most PPPs to be attractive source of financing is that the private business party will create, operate, and transfer skills to the local authority staff before handing over the project or property to the rural district council. Manyathi (2019) argues that Public-Private Partnerships are attractive to private business entities because the government may provide financial support in the form of subsidies, tax incentives, guarantees, and occasional one-time grants, especially when a project entails significant infrastructure development. This creates a win-win scenario as both parties stand to benefit hence its suitability for major infrastructural projects (Cheng et al., 2021).

Some successes have been recorded in the preparation, facilitation, and implementation of PPPs. The private sector in South Africa has played a significant role in the development of Mozambican PPPs in the energy and transportation sectors. The N4 Toll Road connecting South Africa and Mozambique stands out as a pioneering transport Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. This initiative involved collaboration between the South African and Mozambican governments and a private entity, the Trans African Consortium. In the SADC area, Malawi exhibits a comparatively strong institutional and regulatory framework for PPPs. Notably, Malawi is among the few countries with a well-staffed PPP Unit dedicated to facilitating and implementing PPP projects. The PPP legal framework in Mauritius is well developed. The Smart Cities Project, which consists of mixed use, development spaces, and commercial spaces, is Mauritius' goal for PPPs (SAIIA, 2020).

South Africa is often recognised as a nation with notable success in public-private partnerships. Its extensive frameworks and regulations for PPPs serve as valuable lessons and best practices for other countries across the continent. Namibia has robust PPP legal frameworks in place and has had some success implementing PPP projects aimed at alleviating the country's energy infrastructure gap. PPPs are mostly focused on energy and transportation infrastructure in Zambia, while Tanzania has a comprehensive PPP framework with a PPP technical committee (Loots, 2017).

Despite benefits which come along with the PPPs, many SADC countries, like other regions of the continent, have pre-project preparation concerns such as project conceptualisation and the ability to qualify for project preparation funds. SAIIA (2020) noted that Botswana formed the PPP Unit in 2016 to coordinate, provide technical help, and build capacity for entities involved in PPPs. Despite presence of legislation, and policy frameworks, the PPP Unit is unstaffed, and the government has taken a cautious approach to implementing PPPs. Similarly, the government of the Comoros has been resistant to PPPs, whereas the country of Eswatini has none (SAIIA, 2020).

Loots (2017) observed that PIDA, the African Union's continent-wide Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, is primarily responsible for projects in Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite the lack of a particular PPP legislative framework in the Seychelles, the island state has mostly focused on PPPs in the transportation and port infrastructure sectors. In Lesotho, PPPs have had limited success as seen by the contentious consequence of the Queen Mamohato Memorial Hospital, which was built in conjunction with a private South African healthcare provider. It follows therefore that, strong political will, a lack of corruption, and political stability are all necessary for PPP projects to succeed and the private sector to continue investing in them.

3.12.8 Partnership with private organisations

While it is acknowledged that it is difficulty to attract private sector investment by local authorities, there are certain prospects for private investors in local authorities. Private investors have a lot of room to work with local authorities particularly in the garbage recycling industry. Most local authorities gather rubbish that is not properly recycled or not recycled at all (South Africa National Waste Management Strategy, 2020). As a result, recycling firms can take advantage of garbage and partner local governments in waste recycling.

The global garbage recycling business was expected to rise to $376.9 billion in revenue in 2019, up from $354.7 billion in 2018, (Global Waste Recycling and Circular Economy Market Outlook, 2020). The figures are an indication that garbage recycling industry is quickly expanding, providing chances for local authorities and private businesses to participate in the global waste industry value chain. This can enable local authorities to raise some money while at the same time embracing sustainability. Local authorities can also engage into some profit-making businesses like farming, operating, or leasing beer halls to augment their revenue

streams. For starters, poor infrastructure makes local governments less appealing. The state of infrastructure compromises the provision of critical services such as roads, water, sewer, and other business enablers. If investment attraction is to be boosted, the provision of these services should be prioritised.

3.12.9 Establishment of Performance Indicators

There are different indicators which can be used to measures performance of local authorities. Indicators can be developed to measure the public procurement system's performance, effectiveness, and cost savings. This can be used for benchmarking and to aid strategic policymaking in public procurement. Dube (2019) in his study established that there is Urban Government Index (UGI) which is a tool for advocacy and capacity building that helps cities and countries monitor the quality of urban governance. The UGI is embedded in the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the Urban Council Association of Zimbabwe's (CLGF and UCAZ) local government peer review toolkit, which was published in 2008 as a guide for local government peer reviews in general (Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the Urban Council Association of Zimbabwe, 2008). Although this toolkit pertains to urban councils, rural districts can also utilise it for performance measurement.

da Cruz and Marques (2016) established Effectiveness, Equity, Participation, and Accountability as the four pillars on which the UGI evaluates governance. Effectiveness of UGI is determined by government revenue per capita, central government revenue transfers to local authorities, ratio of mandated to actual tax collection, predictability of central government transfers in local government budgets, the presence of published performance delivery standards, and the frequency of consumer satisfaction surveys conducted by local authorities.

3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter focused on reviewing literature which relates to local authorities' public procurement management, service delivery and value for money in developing countries in general. The literature was reviewed pursuant to identification of current knowledge with regards to the research topic in a bid to develop a framework to inform the analysis of hypothesis. The succeeding chapter to lays the footing for the subsequent analyses by tracing the historical development of Zimbabwe's public procurement procedures. It also analyses the public procurement dynamics that are inextricably woven into the fabric of economic and social development which have a bearing on the providing public services and attainment of value for

money. The succeeding chapter examines the empirical literature and development of hypotheses as well as the research model.

CHAPTER 4
EMPIRICAL LITERATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH MODEL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the reviewing literature which relates to local authorities' public procurement management, service delivery and value for money in developing countries in general. To ensure that the research would shed light on procurement and the procurement process, it was essential to first establish a theoretical foundation for the study before moving forward with empirical research. Consequently, the focus of this chapter is on the formation of hypotheses, the research model, and the empirical literature's findings. The information in this chapter also covers how procurement management, service delivery relates with value for money in rural local authorities.

4.2 THE EFFECT OF PROCUREMENT ON SERVICE DELIVERY

There is overall agreement in public procurement management literature that procurement objectives positively influence service delivery (Martemyanova, 2018; Agaba & Emenike, 2018; Martin-Ortega, & O'Brien, 2019). In a study by Martin-Ortega, and O'Brien (2019) who examined transparency and public procurement on United Nations Procurement observed that implementing proper controls to stimulate competition and reduce the danger of fraud, corruption, waste, and mismanagement of public funds is one of the most effective strategies for improving service delivery and ensuring value for money. On the other hand, Martemyanova (2018) investigated how procurement processes affect service performance by looking at the TNK-BP Oil & Gas Company in Russia. It was determined that procurement transparency and sustainability had a favourable impact on service delivery. In another study, Agaba and Emenike (2018) investigated procurement practices and public service delivery in a growing local government. According to the findings, procurement policy, procurement planning, and long-term procurement have a significant impact on public service delivery.

Jachi, and Mandongwe (2019) conducted a study on the public procurement and public service provision using the Zimbabwean local authorities as a case. The findings of the study demonstrated that transparency, accountability, and service delivery were found to have a

favourable relationship. In Kenya, Mutai and Chirchir (2015) investigated the impact of procurement regulations and processes on commercial banks' supply chain performance. According to the findings, most Kenyan commercial banks have procurement policies and procedures in place that have enabled them to achieve openness, efficiency, and accountability in their operations. In a comparable research endeavour, Albreiki, Ameen, and Bhaumik (2019) explored the impacts of internal government efficiency and the infrastructure for service delivery on the effectiveness of smart government in the United Arab Emirates. The findings revealed that the efficiency of internal government operations and the quality-of-service delivery infrastructure play crucial role as indicators of smart government effectiveness. Considering this discussion, it is therefore hypothesised that;

H_{1a}: Procurement objectives positively influence service delivery.

4.3 PROCUREMENT PROCESS INFLUENCE SERVICE DELIVERY

In both developed and developing countries, several empirical studies have been carried out to assess the influence of procurement process on service delivery. Muriithi and Moronge (2020) investigated the impact of procurement processes on service delivery in Kenyan state companies. The study revealed that procurement practices, supplier selection, tender processing, and supplier evaluation have an impact on service delivery in Kenyan state enterprises. According to the study, there is a strong positive relationship between the organisation's procurement process and service delivery. In a case study of Kenya Electricity Generating Company Limited Naivasha Station, Kipkorir and Iregi (2017) assessed the influence of procurement processes on the performance of the public sector. The research found out that specification formulation, prequalification, tender processing processes, and inspection have a direct impact on public sector performance.

On the other hand, Kakwezi, and Nyeko (2019) carried out a study to determine how the procurement process affects the procurement function's efficiency and performance. The study's findings demonstrated a substantial and favourable association between the procurement procedure and its effectiveness in terms of timely delivery and procuring requirement quality. Similarly, Karimi and Odari (2017) researched on establishing the elements that influence Kenya's government procedures on procurement. According to the

findings of the study, procurement planning, transparency, record management, and ICT are the primary elements that influence the effective implementation of public procurement processes in the Meru County procurement department. It was also found that the current procurement issue in the public sector may be addressed if public procuring bodies improve transparency in the procurement processes, employment of specialists, and improved procurement management. Furthermore, literature has substantiated that procurement process influence service delivery in the study by Paul (2020) who examined the influence of procurement tendering processing at the Arusha City Council, Tanzania. The study found that the procedure of procurement activities significantly influences the provision of public services. As a result of this discussion, it is therefore hypothesised that;

H_{1b}: Procurement process has a positive influence on service delivery.

4.4 PROCUREMENT EXPERTISE EFFECT ON SERVICE DELIVERY

There is a general agreement among scholars that procurement expertise positively influences service delivery (Fourie, and Malan (2020); Cankwo, Obanda, and Pule, 2015; Odhiambo and Theuri, 2015; Bosire, Moses, & Evans, 2017). Fourie, and Malan (2020) examined procurement skills and service delivery performance in the South African economy. The findings indicate that procurement skills application has an impact on service delivery performance. This means that knowledge acquisition and its application by procurement personnel have an influence on how they perform in the acquisition of goods and services.

In the Nebbi district local government, Cankwo et al. (2015) investigated the impact of tactical procurement process, stakeholder competence and strategic interventions on tactical procurement. In this study, the results demonstrated that the tactical procurement process and strategic interventions have a statistically insignificant impact on service delivery. It was determined that tactical procurement management can have a favourable impact on the district's service delivery. In their research of the skills set of public sector procurement, Munyede and Mapuva (2020) found that it is more focused towards supervising the procurement processes. The findings show that extensive training and qualification are required to ensure that team members deliver value-based performance.

Odhiambo and Theuri (2015) carried out a study using the county assembly of Mombasa as a case study to investigate the influence of public procurement processes on organisational performance in public procurement in county assemblies. The research discovered a strong link between stakeholder integration and organisational performance, as well as a strong link between human resource skills levels and organisational performance. The study concluded that procurement expertise influences service delivery. In Kenya's Kakamega County, Bosire, Moses, and Evans (2017) examined the impact of human resource practices on service delivery. The study discovered that personnel techniques and public service provision in Kakamega County had a favourable and significant relationship. In a different research project, Sigombe (2015) explored the connection between risk management and the provision of services, focusing on Kayunga town council as a case. The findings indicated that effective risk management enhances the efficiency of service delivery. The planning and oversight committee played a crucial role in introducing significant improvements to risk management, leading to enhanced quality in service delivery. The study also highlighted that optimal value is derived from service expenditures when risk management is well-implemented within the organisation. Ultimately, a clear association was established between risk management practices and the quality-of-service delivery.

Sauda, Ngeny, and Datche (2019) carried out a study which looked at the impact of supplier evaluation on the performance of contracts on procurement in Kenya's Coast General Hospital. The study found that supplier evaluation, supplier collaboration, financial stability, technical competency, and ethics significantly impact procurement contract performance at Coast Provincial General Hospital. On the other hand, Andrea (2019) carried out a study to determine the importance of negotiation skills in the public sector of Tanzania's purchasing contract management. In this study, negotiation abilities were discovered to be vital in business both in informal day-to-day interactions and formal transactions such as negotiating sale, lease, service delivery, and other legal contracts. The study also found that negotiations can improve the accomplishments of an organisation. This position was shared by Manyathi (2019) who examined the connection between failure to adhere to laid procedures and officials' knowledge on the rules that guide procurement. The research suggests that enhancing the knowledge of officials responsible for procurement goes beyond just training to also include ongoing education, training, and development to improve service delivery. In line with the literature review, it is therefore hypothesised that;

H_{1c}: Procurement expertise has positive effect on service delivery.

4.5 PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Public procurement literature converges on the view that procurement management is a key dimension in the local authority service delivery. Several academics have established that procurement management has a positive influence on service delivery (Muzondo, 2016; Kuloba, 2016; Makafu, 2018; Anane, Adoma, & Awuah, 2019; Rengshik, 2022). Rengshik (2022) conducted research on Procurement management and service delivery quality. It was discovered that procurement management has an impact on service delivery. The study also discovered that the procurement strategy reduced instances of unethical behaviour, resulting in better service delivery. In a related study, Anane et al. (2019) conducted a study to investigate the impact of procurement policy, procurement strategy, and sustainable procurement on service delivery, using VRA, Ghana as a case study. In this study, all the variables, procurement policy, procurement planning, and sustainable procurement showed a highly significant positive association with service delivery. According to the study, procurement policy, procurement planning, and sustainable procurement were found to be major predictors of VRA service delivery. To improve public service delivery, the study therefore suggests that VRA management continue to invest in sustainable procurement, procurement planning, and procurement policy.

In Zimbabwe, Muzondo (2016) examined how government-imposed procurement restrictions affect service delivery, focusing on a case study involving public institutions in Harare. The findings revealed that to secure public funds and improve service delivery, adequate control must be in place during the procurement process. The study also demonstrate that no items or services should be acquired outside of their allocated budgets, and that acquisitions must be approved by the authorised individuals. Conversely, Kuloba (2016) employed a case study approach, analysing the influence of procurement procedures on the performance of Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya. The study found a strong link between tendering, supplier evaluation, and organisational performance, as well as a strong link between material planning and performance. This meant that the company could fulfil its objectives through tendering and material control, resulting in improved organisational performance.

Material planning has been discovered to be necessary in any procurement in an organisation, resulting in an improvement in the institution's service delivery.

Makafu (2018) investigated how procurement planning affected service delivery in the Ntungamo District Local Government, Uganda. The findings of the study demonstrated that procurement planning methods and processes have an impact on service delivery in Ntungamo DLG, and that procurement procedures should be rigorously reviewed before being used to ensure correct and effective service delivery. As a result, it was determined that procurement planning is a critical activity in local government that aids in the delivery of services, and that top management must be fully supportive to achieve it. The study also emphasises the importance of putting in place a well-defined procurement plan to ensure that the procurement processes run smoothly to achieve value for money and effective service delivery. As a result of this discussion, it is therefore hypothesised that;

H_{1d}: Procurement management positively influence service delivery.

4.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE DELIVERY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

There is a consensus in academia on the positive association of service delivery and value for money (Natumanya, 2015; Otieno, 2019; Marinelli and Antoniou, 2020; Kusumawardani, and Aruan, 2019). In a study by Marinelli and Antoniou (2020) focusing on enhancing the value for money in public works projects through a novel procurement approach in Tanzania, it was determined that fostering intense competition among qualified contractors, enhancing the cost-effectiveness of technical solutions, and ensuring transparency in the contract award process contribute to the achievement of optimal project value at minimal cost. In a comparable investigation within the Nairobi City County of Kenya, Otieno (2019) explored the influence of procurement governance on the performance of service delivery. The results revealed that procurement planning played a crucial role in achieving value for money in the acquisition of goods, services, and works.

In Uganda, Natumanya (2015) conducted research to determine the link between procurement management techniques and value for money in Ugandan local governments. The study

discovered that procurement planning, contract management, and supplier relationship management initiatives have a substantial positive association with value for money. The study also established that procurement planning, contract management and supplier relationship management initiatives are closely linked to value for money. On the other hand, Kusuma Wardani, and Aruan (2019) investigated the influence of quality of service and value for money on the satisfaction of customers in Indonesia. The study's findings demonstrated that organisations could enhance their service delivery levels and customer-perceived value, leading to increased customer satisfaction and reduced marketing costs. As a result of this discussion, it is hypothesised that;

H_2: Service delivery has a positive influence on value for money.

4.7 THE EFFECT OF PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT ON VALUE FOR MONEY

There is substantial evidence in the procurement literature that points to the fact that procurement management and value for money are favourably associated (Sangster & Wood 2016; Nsiah-Asare & Prempeh, 2016; Changalima, 2016). The achievement of value for money in government ministries' procurement of works, goods, and services was also examined in a study by Obura (2020) in Kenya. The findings of the study indicated that proper execution and monitoring of procurement activities is crucial for effective procurement management.

It was also discovered that good contract management resulted in effective time, quality, and cost management, all of which contribute significantly to achieving value for money. As a result, it was determined that good procurement contract management was necessary to achieve value for money. Similarly, Sangster and Wood (2016) conducted a study in India to determine the impact of procurement schedule on value for money. The research revealed that the overall project cycle's scheduling had a more significant effect on value for money than the creation of a work plan. It was further discovered that project scheduling competency of staff had a significant influence on value for money.

Nsiah-Asare and Prempeh (2016) conducted a study examining methods to guarantee value for money in public procurement, utilising selected polytechnics in Ghana as a case study. The research concluded that achieving value for money in public procurement requires the support

of management from all administrative levels, procurement regulatory authorities as well as the concerned public entities. The support from these stakeholders should be aimed at promoting compliance with regulatory instruments such as procurement policy through robust monitoring and continuous evaluation. Another study was carried out by Changalima (2016) to determine the factors that influence value for money value for money in Tanzanian public works procurement. In line with the research findings, achieving value for money in the public sector procurement requires effective procurement planning, tracking of the procurement-related activities, and the use of electronic procurement mechanisms.

In Ethiopia, Pettijohn and Neville (2015) investigated the relationship between procurement procedures and value for money and discovered that there was a strong correlation. Open tendering and two-stage tendering process were found to have a significant association with value for money in the study. Closer home, in South Africa, Chegugu and Yusuf (2017) conducted research on the influence of procurement strategies on value for money within manufacturing firms. The study found that open tendering and request for proposal (RFP) significantly contribute to value for money. The conclusion drawn was that careful selection of a procurement strategy is pivotal in attaining value for money. It is therefore hypothesised that:

H_3: Procurement management positively impacts value for money.

Based on the hypothesised relationships, research model in Figure 4.1 is therefore proposed.

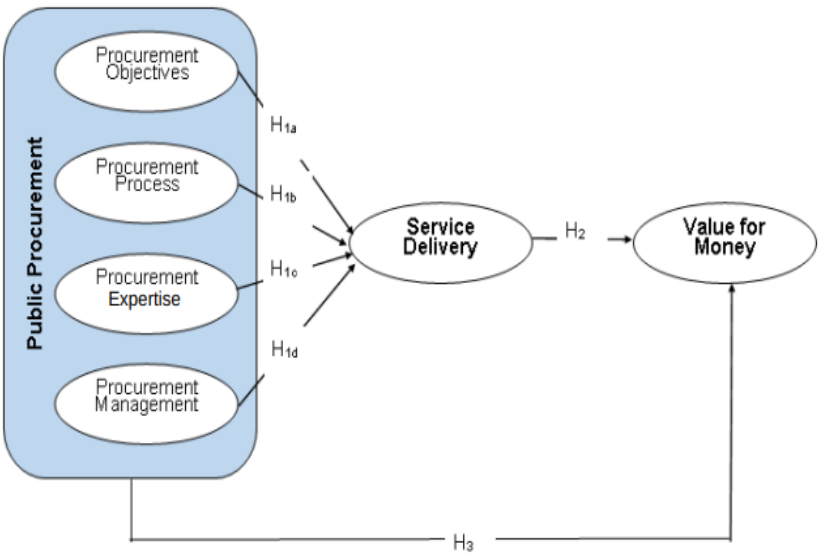

Figure 4.1: Proposed Research model of the study

Source: Author's Compilation (2023).

4.8 RESEARCH GAP

While there have been several studies on procurement management in Zimbabwe's local authorities, there remains a significant research gap concerning the procurement practices of Rural District Councils (RDCs). Much of the existing research has been centred on urban councils, where the dynamics of public procurement differ substantially from those in rural areas. This focus on urban local authorities leaves a gap in understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by RDCs which operate under different socio-economic and infrastructural constraints compared to their urban counterparts. Despite the strategic role of RDCs in driving environmental and socio-economic projects, little is known about how their procurement procedures affect service delivery and value for money in rural communities.

The review of the literature has revealed that there is limited insight into the specific procurement practices of RDCs, despite their importance in managing local resources and public services in rural areas. This lack of research means that many of the procurement related challenges faced by these councils, such as inadequate resources, capacity constraints, and logistical difficulties remain underexplored. Moreover, there is little evidence of best practices or models that could guide RDCs in navigating these challenges, making it difficult for policymakers and practitioners to improve procurement processes and outcomes in these regions.

Additionally, beyond general procurement regulations, there is no known established procurement model tailored to the specific needs and operational realities of RDCs. Unlike urban councils, RDCs lack a structured framework or set of guidelines to optimise their daily procurement operations. This study addresses this gap by developing a conceptual model designed to enhance procurement management, service delivery, and value for money in rural local authorities. The model provides a detailed understanding of the procedures, unique requirements, and challenges that RDCs face thereby offering practical solutions to help them improve service delivery and achieve value for money.

4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The empirical appraisal of previous and related literature was the subject of this chapter. The findings of the previous studies were examined, and study hypotheses were formulated. After determining correlations between research's constructs that is procurement management, service delivery and value for money, hypotheses were formulated. The research techniques used in the study to achieve the study's goals are detailed in the next chapter. Following a thorough literature analysis and empirical examination, the researcher developed research framework. The next chapter focuses on the study's research methodology.

CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter 3 provided a thorough survey of previous research and literature in the field of public procurement, service delivery and value for money. In chapter 4, previous empirical studies on the subject were examined. Consequently, an outline of the research methods for the study is the primary goal of the current chapter. The methodology includes the design of the study as well as the gathering, presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data. Blackstone (2018) defined research methodology as systematic procedures aimed at uncovering social realities which social science researchers rely on as the source of information to ascertain facts and innovation of logical conclusions. Therefore, the chapter begins by defining research design to create a foundation for the research design procedure.

5.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy as defined by Manyathi (2019) is the process used to develop a research strategy, identify a research topic, gather, and analyse data, produce findings, and provide suggestions. It serves as the framework for the study and guides decisions about the ideals that should be reflected in the research strategy. Tamminen and Poucher (2020) postulate that there is a reciprocal relationship between the research philosophies, research design and the beliefs and assumptions in a study. Each of the elements influence the researchers in their decision on which research design or philosophy to prefer. As noted by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), a research philosophy which is sound and reliable is based on a well organised and norms which guide the methodological choices, research plan, data collection methodologies, and procedures for analysis.

In addition, Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, and Bristow (2015) noted that every stage of the research process involves the researcher making several assumptions, whether they are conscious of them or not. These assumptions include human understanding which are epistemological assumptions (acceptable, valid, and legitimate knowledge), expectations about the facts anticipated to be met in the research that is ontological assumptions "nature of reality" including the amount to which the beliefs of the researcher's impact the research process that is ethical assumptions or axiological assumptions.

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2023) posited that social science investigation has four main research philosophies which comprise of the positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism which lies between these extremes that can be employed to investigate social phenomena. The philosophy that best fits the goals and nature of the study was chosen by the researcher from these four philosophies after careful consideration of research plan, data collection methodologies, and analytic procedures.

5.2.1 Positivism philosophy

The researcher employed positivism philosophy for the study. The methodological decision was informed the belief that there is a quantifiable, objective reality, which seeks to uncover causal connections through methodical testing and observation. As noted by Alharahsheh, and Pius (2020), the positivists think that the world exists regardless of the presence of the researcher, and that only one external reality can be discovered by deductive reasoning and hypothesis testing. Al-Ababneh (2020) also remarked this position when the author averred that applying deductive reasoning is the main objective of positivism, and the researcher's objective is to use primary data analysis to support an existing hypothesis. For instance, it is possible to determine the primary problems leading to poor service provision in Zimbabwe's RDCs when it is known that poor service delivery is being experienced there.

The methodological effects of positivism, on the other hand, include data collection that is quantitative and usually structured, focusing primarily on observable events while neglecting people' perceptions, and employing theory to produce hypotheses that can be supported by empirical observations (Iovino, & Tsitsianis, 2020). For example, the study hypothesise that procurement management positively influence service delivery which is subject to authentication by empirical observations. The positivism philosophy augers well with the study as it was cross-sectional and gathered a lot of data from a representative sample of 300 participants. Ugwu, Ekere, and Onoh (2021) also support this position, asserting that the positivism philosophy is most suitable for conducting cross sectional research with representative samples, as it allows for the collection of large amounts of data in a rigorous and trustworthy manner.

The research also opted for positivism philosophy as it is descriptive in nature basing on the style of the research problem and research questions which are grounded in quantitative methodology (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As highlighted by Bryman and Bell (2015),

quantitative research is grounded on the positivism paradigm which advocates for approaches based on statistical breakdown. Consequently, the positivist viewpoint emerges as a feasible option for the study. Park, Konge and Artino (2020) also posit that positivism paradigm is also rooted on such strategies as inferential statistics, hypothesis testing, mathematical exposition, experimental and quasi-experimental design randomisation, blinding, structured protocols, and questionnaires with a limited number of predetermined answers. These are the major characteristics of the current study which formed the basis to inform the current research to follow the positivism paradigm.

The decision to choose positivism was also informed by the fact that it is a philosophy which holds that only information derived through observation including measurement is reliable (Al-Ababneh, 2020). This augers well with the study as it sought to present rigorous and reliable information premised on empirical observations. This position was backed by Saunders et al., (2023) who posited that the positivist paradigm requires the researcher to be independent of the elements which are being observed. This gives rise to the claim that the researcher in positivist paradigm does not affect the subject of the study but only phenomenon observed would result in the generation of reliable data (Ugwu, Ekere, & Onoh, 2021).

In positivist studies, the researcher's function is mainly confined to data collection and objective interpretation of the results (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020). In other words, the researcher conducts the study as an impartial analyst who separates him/herself from personal values. The study outcomes in these types of investigations are therefore frequently apparent and quantitative in nature. The central tenet of positivism as remarked by Fuyane (2021), is that the social environment exists independently of humans and that its characteristics ought to be evaluated according to objective standards. Alharahsheh, and Pius (2020) also emphasised that world knowledge is supposed to exist regardless of what people believe about it while science utilises some objective techniques to find what the world carries.

The constructs of this study have quantifiable observation components which lead to statistical analysis that form the foundation of positivism. Collins (2018) pointed out that the philosophy of positivism aligns with the empiricist idea that knowledge is derived from human experience. It takes an atomistic, ontological approach to the world, seeing it as a collection of separate, observable elements and events that interact in predictable, predictable, and predictable ways (Ugwu, Ekere, & Onoh, 2021). This is believed to be the rationale behind its widespread use

as a research method in the fields of business and management. Nonetheless, in positivist inquiries, the researcher remains distinct from the study but there are no established safeguards to ensure the protection of human interests (Fuyane, 2021). Although positivism is thought to be objective in nature, it is not always consistent when it comes to studying social issues, and its conclusions are regarded as less reliable (Ugwu, Ekere, & Onoh, 2021).

Another position that relates to positivism which is advancement to it is post-positivism. As noted by Al-Ababneh (2020), the post-positivism philosophy is also referred to as methodological pluralism. This paradigm evolved from the positivist viewpoint where it shifted to the subjectivity of reality thereby moving away from the logical positivists' totally objective perspective (Iovino, & Tsitsianis, 2020). Among the most popular varieties of post-positivism is critical realism. The researchers who hold a critical realism view claim that science can study reality independently of our perceptions about the concept (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). According to the post-positivist viewpoint, not everything is totally knowable. The deterministic view of cause and effect that is causality, which emanates from the inference that theory is what drives research, is given a lot of weight in this argument (Al-Ababneh, 2020). The fact is that not everything is totally understandable (Iovino, & Tsitsianis, 2020).

Although positivism can be useful in some situations, research that tries to comprehend the social dynamics, subjective experiences, and subjective meanings of procurement management may be better served by interpretivism or critical theory. Iovino, and Tsitsianis (2020) suggest that truth and knowledge, in line with the interpretivism viewpoint are subjective, naturalistic, and they are based on the individual's perceptions which are brought about by their own cultural and historical experiences. This assertion was also averred by Haight and Bidwell (2016); Hothersall (2019) when they say inductive reasoning is frequently used in the interpretive approach when the goal is to create a theory.

On the other hand, pragmatism thinks that there are various realities, whereas realism believes that what one observes reflects the reality, (Alharahsheh, & Pius, 2020). However, when using pragmatism, the researcher would usually use ‘abductive' thinking process, which alternates between inductive and deductive reasoning (Fuyane, 2021). This position was also erred by Al-Ababneh (2020) who posited that pragmatism embraces the two extremes of positivism/post-positivism and those backed by interpretivists in terms of mode of inquiry.

Table 5.1: Comparison of four research philosophies in management research

	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism/ Constructivism	Pragmatism
Epistemology: the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law-like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements.	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively, phenomena create sensations that are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). Focus on explaining within a context or contexts.	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of a situation, a reality behind these details, subjective meanings motivating actions.	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data.
Axiology: the researcher's view of the role of values in research	Research is undertaken in a value-free way. The researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance.	Research is value laden. The researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences, and upbringing. These will have an impact on the research.	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective.	Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view.
Data collection techniques most often used	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can be qualitative.	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative.	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative.	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative.

Source: Mutandwa (2020).

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive research design was chosen for the study owing to its potential to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate description. The purpose of descriptive research as posited by Nassaji (2015) is to draw and characterise a phenomenon. Research design pertains to research questions and ideas where interests are changed from just being a mere "thought" to a purposeful and meaningful result, which are particularly significant in the social sciences

(Sileyew, 2019). The study opted for descriptive design as it is novel and seeks to fill the unexplored research gap of public procurement management, service delivery and value for money in RDCs. This aligns well with assertion of Punch (2016) who posits that descriptive approach is best suited for a relatively new or unexplored research area.

Although Fuyane (2021) noted that there are various research designs such as descriptive, exploratory, experimental, or explanatory which can be employed by the researcher, descriptive research has been opted for this study. The idea is also premised on the fact that researcher is focused on describing what already exists and only aids in the discovery of new facts and meaning with the primary goal of observing, describing, and documenting parts of the situation as it unfolds naturally (Siedlecki, 2020). As noted by Al-Ababneh (2020), a descriptive research plan may use a variety of research techniques to examine one or more variables. Descriptive research design was used as it also provides for the collection of high-quality and honest data in the respondent's natural setting to confirm the current situation (Siedlecki, 2020). This position was reinforced by Nassaji (2015) who posited that when the researcher is unsure about the authenticity of an existing condition, descriptive research is helpful to figure out what is going on beneath the surface. This is because descriptive research methods examine each variable in detail before drawing conclusions (Fuyane, 2021).

In the same vein, Hove (2015) posits that descriptive studies' primary goal is to provide the researcher with a profile and a description of some key aspects of the current study problem, which can either be personal, professional, or business related. On the other hand, Fuyane (2021) argues that descriptive studies aim to address what, how, and who questions, and as a result, they usually yield precise data that can serve as the foundation for straightforward decision-making. It is also against this backdrop of Fuyane (2021) perspective that the researcher was influenced to employ descriptive design as the study includes questions like "What is the effect of procurement objectives on service delivery? What is the influence of procurement process service on delivery? What is the effect of procurement expertise on service delivery? What is the effect of procurement management on service delivery? and what is the relationship between service delivery and value for money?". It is against this background that in the current study the profiles of Rural District Councils were created using descriptive research.

However, the only challenge posed by pure descriptive approach is that it does not determine cause-and-effect relationships in the study (Siedlecki, 2020). As noted by Ababneh (2020), contrast to descriptive research is causal research which is solely concerned with discovering why things happen the way they do. It aids in the identification of cause-and-effect relationships. In empirical research, causality is typically accepted and is dependent on three factors: a) the existence of a link between variables that could theoretically influence one another; b) the causal variable's exertion of its influence prior to the occurrence of the outcome; and c) the exclusion of alternative explanations, such as the influence of a third variable on both variables. Consequently, the cause-effect relationships between procurement management, service delivery and value for money in this study were determined through triangulation. The triangulation in this study was accomplished using standardised questionnaires to collect quantitative data, with respondents occasionally being asked to explain their selections.

5.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study employed a quantitative (deductive) research approach. Quantitative research is defined as the systematic collection of numerical data and application of statistical, mathematical, or computational approaches to investigate phenomena (Adedoyin, 2020). The main goal of a quantitative research design is to control how a population interprets the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable or consequence variable. There are two types of research designs which are descriptive and experimental. A descriptive study just identifies relationships among variables. If a large percentage of the population participates in a sample that is randomly chosen from the population, the evaluation of the relationship is less likely to be biased (Zangeneh, 2020).

As the study was hinged on the descriptive research design, it therefore employed a quantitative research approach to understand the influence of procurement management on service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe's rural district councils. The decision was informed by the nature of the research questions which are inextricably linked to quantitative research. The study also contains variables and hypotheses which are unproven assertions or claims about the relationship between variables which fits well with quantitative research (Mikalef, Boura, Lekakos, & Krogstie, 2019). This position was also averred by Zangeneh (2020) who asserts that quantitative method largely employs post-positivist assertions, such as cause-and-effect reasoning, reduction to specific variables, hypotheses, and questions, as well as the use of

measurement and observation as well as the testing of theories. Quantitative design also makes use of investigational techniques like surveys and studies, gathering information with specified tools that provide statistical data and hypothesis testing.

Quantitative research approach is ideal in this study as it provides unbiased random selection of research participants from the study population, standardised questionnaires, and statistical tools for testing prepared hypotheses about the relationship between specified variables. This position was also shared by Allen (2018) who posited that researchers could use quantitative research approach to obtain unbiased statistics to explain quantitative data in a clear and concise manner. The author highlighted further that when done correctly, quantitative analysis allows researchers to make predictions and generalisations to populations larger and more universal than the test sample.

Moreover, the employment of control groups is allowed in a quantitative research technique. Using control groups, the researcher may elect to divide the participants into groups and ask them identical questions, for example, non-procurement and procurement trained individuals, while keeping in mind the factors being researched (Siedlecki, 2020). Another advantage of using quantitative research method is the capacity to replicate results. Since the research method is based on hypothesis testing, the researcher does not have to make educated guesses but instead the researcher must adhere to specific criteria and objectives (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

As noted by Bryman and Bell (2015) many researchers prefer the quantitative method because of its speed and efficiency. Even with huge sample volumes, data computing equipment allows for speedy processing and analysis particularly with the use of instruments used to collect and quantify quantitative data such as statistical analysis software. This position was also shared by Daniel (2016) who observed that the researcher saves time and effort by using statistical data for research descriptions and analysis. For example, the study employed a computer to calculate and conduct data, such as numbers, percentages, and measurable figures using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) with Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 21 which saved a lot of time in data analysis.

Each research design has flaws for example quantitative approaches have flaws since they do not completely comprehend the context in which respondents supply their responses (Siedlecki, 2020). On the contrary, a qualitative design frequently pushes the researcher's ideas, making

them potentially biased (Ugwu, Ekere, & Onoh, 2021). However, due to the nature of the research questions and objectivity required to find the underlying cause of the problem at hand, the researcher was prompted to employ a quantitative research design.

The other research approaches are mixed method and quantitative. The origins of qualitative research methodology must be credited to anthropology and sociology's corrections. Numerous labels, including the constructivist paradigm, phenomenological research, natural inquiry, postmodernism, post positivism, and post structuralism, have been used to denote the qualitative line of inquiry (Al-Ababneh, 2020). With a constructivist perspective, qualitative approach describes things using words, images, and interviews rather than numerical statistics to gain a thorough knowledge of many types of information (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

In qualitative research, the strategies for gathering data are determined by the study questions. Alase (2017) noted that to comprehend the interpretations people provide to their experiences, data is inductively evaluated in qualitative research. Additionally, the interpretive nature of the approach enables the researcher to gain insights from the respondents by using curiosity, openness, empathy, and flexibility to listen to people narrating their stories in their own natural settings to determine how their experiences and behaviours are shaped by the context of their social, cultural, economic, and historical worlds (Tuffour, 2017).

On the other hand, the pragmatic worldview is the foundation of mixed techniques. Mixed methods refer to the purposeful blending or a combination of the quantitative and the qualitative methodologies with the view of getting the most out of on the advantages of each approach and address pressing research concerns (Kaur, 2016). It situates research within the theoretical and philosophical frameworks that underpin both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. As a result, the mix method approach uses rigorous quantitative research to evaluate the size of the issue and rigorous qualitative research to investigate the significance and comprehension of the construct and the situation (Mikalef et al., 2019).

Kaur (2016) posits that mixed method studies have a sequential possibility. It means that the findings from one dataset, whether it is quantitative or qualitative, are used to build the other. A qualitative investigation may be the first step of a study, followed by a quantitative analysis, or a quantitative analysis may be the first step which can be tailed by a qualitative analysis that explains the results. In the latter where qualitative data aids in elucidating the detailed

mechanisms that is (why and how) underpinning the conclusions of quantitative data, the health sciences have found great success (what, who, where, and when) (Kaur, 2016). Bigler, Amacker, Ingabire and Birachi (2019) highlighted that the utilisation of diverse techniques is realistically necessary when pursuing a study topic comprehensively. The reason for this is that reality is frequently too complex to be perceived in a single dimension (Strijker, Bosworth, & Bouter, 2020).

5.4.1 Other research approaches

The researcher can decide between using qualitative, quantitative, or hybrid methodologies when performing their research. These approaches may also be referred to as deductive, inductive and abduction research approaches (Kovalainen & Eriksson, 2015). The deductive research approach is quantitative while inductive inferring qualitative and abduction assuming a mixed research paradigm (Saunders et al., 2023). As noted by Al-Ababneh (2020) these approaches are not mutually exclusive and should not be seen as diametrically opposed because a study can be more qualitative or more quantitative. The different research approaches are explained underneath in Table 5.2 including the one adopted by the study.

Table 5.2: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed method approaches

Quantitative Methods	Mixed Methods	Qualitative Methods
Pre-determined	Both predetermined and emerging methods	Emerging methods
Instrument based questions	Both open- and closed-ended questions	Open-ended questions
Performance data, attitude data, observational data, and census data	Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities	Interview data, observation data, document data, and audiovisual data
Statistical analysis	Statistical and text analysis	Text and image analysis
Statistical interpretation	Across databases interpretation	Themes, patterns interpretation

Source: Creswell (2014).

Table 5.3: Comparison between deductive, inductive, and abductive approaches

	Deductive	Inductive	Abduction
Logic	In a deductive inference, when the premise is true, the conclusion must also be true	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions	In an abductive inference, known premises are used to generate testable conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific	Generalising from the interactions from the specific to the general	Generalising from the interactions between the specific and the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, locate these in a conceptual framework and test this through subsequent data collection and so forth
Theory	Theory falsification or verification	Theory generation and building	Theory generation or modification; incorporating existing theory where appropriate, to build new theory or modify existing theory.

Source: Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2023).

5.5 TARGET POPULATION

The target population of this study were the management and employees from procurement departments, human resources department, finance and administration, customer service and technical department. An estimate total of 3000 drawn from the 60 Rural District Councils in the eight (8) non-metropolitan provinces of Zimbabwe. There was no further information about the total number of employees under each RDC which triggered the study to make an estimate using auxiliary information from Chivi, Binga and Neshuro RDCs which had an average of 50 employees as the actual size of the population could not be established. Since each had an average number of fifty employees basing on the readily available information, it translated to three thousand employees for Zimbabwe's RDCs in total. The target population was chosen based on their association with either procurement activities or the service delivery operations

in the rural local authorities. This aspect made the target population fit for the study as the researcher was able to draw broad conclusions from their responses.

The study's choice of population was remarked by Lesko et al. (2020) who averred that the target population is a specific group of people with whom the researcher is preoccupied with drawing broad conclusions. On the other hand, Otzen, and Manterola (2017) posit that target population should be a full set of individuals, elements, or things that the researcher is interested in so that conclusions can be formed. The target population (the theoretical population) in this study had a variety of characteristics covering all the common sections of a conventional rural district council in Zimbabwe making it possible to draw some conclusive results from the study.

5.6 SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size of the study was 300 which was arrived at by employing the Raosoft sample size calculator at 95% confidence level with 5% margin of error and 80% expected response rate. The composition of the respondents within each of the eight (8) non-metropolitan provinces was 12.6% of the total sample, meaning each group had 38 respondents. The sample size was informed by the Association of Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe (ARDCZ) (2022) which posits that Zimbabwe had 60 Rural District Councils in total. Auxiliary information was used to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of sampling as the exact total number of the population is uncertain (Tarima, & Pavlov, 2006; Kativhu, 2016; Smith, & Yung, 2023; Ahmad et al., 2024).

As the researcher could not use the whole population of Zimbabwe's RDCs, a sample was consequently utilised. This position aligns with the assertion of Manyathi (2019) who posited that a sample is frequently used in social science research investigations since it is impractical to interview or survey the complete relevant population at any given time. It follows therefore that a sample should be a representation of the entire population in question as chosen by this study. Otzen, and Manterola (2017) also asserted that larger samples can result in significantly more reliable parameter estimates which improves the credibility of the results, hence, the sample of 300 chosen by the study.

However, existing literature suggest that there is no consensus on what constitutes a sufficient sample size which can be a true representative of the population. Otzen, and Manterola (2017), posit that the choice of a sample size is influenced by the research objectives, the level of precision required, expressed as a confidence interval, the level of uncertainty that is acceptable when predicting precision, expressed as a confidence level, the size of the population, and the level of variability, as well as the population's size, cost, and time constraints. In addition, Riley et al. (2020) emphasised that accuracy and confidence are two of the most crucial aspects to consider when choosing a sample size since they have a direct impact on the sample data used to draw conclusions about the population and give an estimate of the extent of the potential inaccuracy. Larger sample sizes produce more precise and robust statistical results, whereas smaller samples produce less precise and unreliable results (Fuyane, 2021). It is against this background that the researcher chose a larger sample of 300 for the study in the quest to produce more precise and robust statistical results.

5.7 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND METHODS

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure a fair representation of the population. First, the population was divided into eight (8) non-metropolitan provinces to capture geographic diversity. From each province, three (3) RDCs were randomly selected using simple random sampling. Within these RDCs, the population was further stratified based on professional roles involved in public procurement and service delivery. Finally, a simple random sampling method was used to select 300 respondents from the stratified groups. This approach ensured that every individual had an equal chance of being selected thereby providing a comprehensive representation of the population (Otzen & Manterola, 2017; Lenau et al., 2021).

As sampling is a technique for selecting a specific number of individuals or elements from a specified population to conduct a survey (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Lenau et al., 2021), the study used a probability sampling approach to ensure that unbiased number of individuals are selected from the population. This assertion was also averred by Lakens (2022) when the author stated that choosing the best sample methods is one of the most crucial considerations in a quantitative investigation. Additionally, Otzen, and Manterola (2017) posit that the main motivations for sampling are to reduce the amount of time, effort, and expense required to

survey the complete target population. This important aspect informed this study's choice as the population of Zimbabwe's RDCs is large.

The study had to choose between probability sampling and non-probability sampling approaches as Hove (2015) posited that probability sampling and probability sampling are the two main types of sampling techniques which a researcher can choose from. The population in the alternative non-probability sampling has no equal chance of being picked and included in the sample Fuyane (2021), hence, the study's choice of probability sampling technique.

5.7.1 Sampling method

The current study used both stratified and simple random sampling methods to provide a thorough and representative data collection. The breadth of the population informed the dual sampling methods as it was necessary to capture both geographic and professional diversity within the RDCs. Incorporating a range of geographic perspectives was made possible by initially stratifying the population based on provinces, which was essential for comprehending regional differences and guaranteeing that results are not prejudiced towards any location. This position aligns with Fuyane (2021) who argued that such sampling approach enables researchers to statistically demonstrate a sample's representativeness, quantify variation, and identify potential biases.

Insights from all functional areas of the RDCs were represented through an additional stratification within each province by professional responsibilities, such as top management, procurement, human resources, finance and administration, customer service, and technical divisions. This sampling approach offered a comprehensive and balanced perspective, strengthening the validity and reliability of the study by integrating a wide range of experiences and points of view on procurement processes, service delivery and value for money from various professional levels and geographical areas of the 60 RDCs in Zimbabwe. As a result, each council had an equal chance of being selected, thereby decreasing the possibility of systematic favouritism or exclusion of some rural district councils (Berndt, 2020).

Simple random sampling was employed to draw individual participants from the professional strata which reinforced the study's statistical validity (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). The traits provided by simple random sampling enabled the use of inferential statistics to form

generalisations, draw inferences about the RDCs and validate the study (Bhardwaj, 2019). Berndt (2020) also contends that simple random sampling approach is extremely simple to comprehend and use. The choice of the sampling method was also informed by transparency and cost-effectiveness which was essential in managing Zimbabwe's 60 RDCs against researcher's resource limitations (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). Time was also of essence in choosing the sampling method as it allowed completion of the study within the prescribed timeframe (Rahman, Tabash, Salamzadeh, Abduli, & Rahaman, 2022). Consequently, ethical standards of fairness in participants selection were promoted as circumstances where some RDCs would feel left out or unfairly singled out were prevented.

Although stratified and simple random sampling were justified in the circumstances, it is important to be aware of their potential drawbacks which include the requirement for an accurate and comprehensive list of all Rural District Councils and the possibility of differences in the sample's characteristics. However, the advantages of simplicity, fairness, and statistical validity made the chosen sampling methods a viable strategy in research where care and precision were critical (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

5.8 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The study employed a structured questionnaire as the sole instrument to gather the primary data. A questionnaire is a set of questions that are asked of the respondents to gather statistically useful information on a specific topic (Reni, 2017; Ahmadaliev et al., 2018). The questionnaires are an important tool for making statements about specific groups or individuals, as well as entire populations, especially when they are properly constructed and administered (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018). The questionnaire was found noble as the study used a quantitative research approach which requires an objective collection of data followed up by a comprehensive quantitative analysis of the study results (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

The designing and use of questionnaire in this study are justified by three main reasons which were to make the data collected as relevant and accurate as possible, to maximise the target respondents' participation and cooperation; and finally, to make data collection and analysis more convenient (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018; Ahmadaliev et al., 2018). The respondents'

responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The scale was employed because it is simple for the target respondents to comprehend and interpret.

5.8.1 Research Questionnaire design

A questionnaire is a series of questions used to gather quantitative and/or qualitative data to learn more about respondents' attitudes, experiences, or opinions (Bhandari, 2021). The process of designing a questionnaire in this study involved creating questions that are valid and trustworthy and fulfil the research objectives, organising them in a meaningful sequence, and deciding on the best administration method (Bhandari, 2021). A questionnaire should be designed to satisfy three main reasons which are outlined as (i) to increase the usefulness and accuracy of the information gathered; (ii) to increase the target responders' cooperation and participation and (iii) to make both the data collection and analysis process simpler (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018).

The study questionnaire primarily consisted of 5-point Likert scaled items that are scaled as 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree to indicate the agreement level. This aligns with Jebb, Ng, and Tay (2021) who posit that the 5-point Likert scale is important in that; (i) they assess attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions, (ii) they lessen the development of response bias among the respondents; (iii) Likert scale makes it possible for the response items from the respondents to be comparable on a standard basis; and (iv) the Likert scale statements answers are simple to code and analyse directly from the questionnaire. The questionnaire containing 37 items was designed covering six constructs which are public procurement objectives (6 items), public procurement process (6 items), public procurement expertise (6 items), procurement management (7 items), service delivery (6 items) and value for money (6 items).

The scope of this study covered eight (8) non-metropolitan provinces in Zimbabwe. The questionnaires were distributed to employees and management of the RDCs in the non-metropolitan provinces of Zimbabwe where the research participants were located. Due to distances between them, much of the data was physically collected with the aid of research assistants while the remainder were gathered using self-administered questionnaires. The research assistants had the responsibility of guaranteeing the accuracy and consistency of the collected data by closely adhering to the ethical contact and protocols for study (Tang, & Gube, 2022).

The questionnaire was simple to fill out and conduct owing to simple language and format which was adopted. As a result, the researcher was able to collect a large volume of quantitative data in a short space of time spanning from June 2023 to October 2023 without having to hire professional interviewers, thereby lowering the research expenditure. There were no follow-up questions provided, and the questions posed were the same for the first and last respondents. Hence, the consistency level in this research was quite high. Besides the primary data obtained from the questionnaires, the researcher also read, examined, and studied numerous documents relevant to public procurement including some journals, pertinent books, and public procurement legislation or service delivery-related information are among other documents to obtain secondary data.

5.8.2 Pilot study

Following the arguments of Al-Ababneh (2020) who recommended the pre-testing of the research instrument, the study questionnaires were pre-tested to ensure reliability and accuracy. Prior to the questionnaire's widespread implementation, a pilot study was carried out to improve the validity, reliability, and general quality of the questionnaire as the primary means of gathering data. A small sample size of 25 participants typical of the intended respondents were chosen using the purposive sampling method from two local authorities to fill out the questionnaire. The results of the pilot test were used to fine-tune the research design before the full-scale study was conducted. This is in line with Al-Ababneh (2020) who posited that a pilot study is administered with the intention to assess whether the questionnaires, interview schedules, or other data collection instruments are feasible or not.

To ensure that the final instrument is well-constructed and capable of reliably capturing the necessary data, this preliminary step enabled the detection of potential difficulties, ambiguities, or inconsistencies in the questions. A thorough examination of the pilot study data was conducted to find any trends, patterns, or anomalies (Sharma, & Gidwani, 2022). This analysis directed the questionnaire's refinement, which involved changing unclear questions, getting rid of unnecessary items, and changing the wording to make it clearer. This assertion was also shared by Chatzi, and Kourousis (2023) who averred that the instrument’s refinement should involve the input of the participants. Thus, the pilot study enabled the evaluation of the questionnaire's usefulness in the actual environment.

5.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

5.9.1 Reliability of the instrument

The precision of the measuring instrument, or if the device reliably measures whatever it measures, is demonstrated by reliability which is defined as arbitrary error in measurement (Dzuke, 2015). The measurement factor reliability test demonstrates the power of measuring latent variables via a subjective scale that is proportional to judgmental preference error. On the other hand, a measurement is deemed dependable by Al-Ababneh (2020) if it produces repeatable results. Consequently, a measuring device's reliability is determined by its capacity to yield consistent results over time, regardless of the circumstances surrounding its use or the person doing the test. Otzen, and Manterola (2017) also noted that an instrument's reliability can be defined as how well it guarantees consistent measurement across time and across various variables. It evaluates how accurately and consistently an instrument measures a concept.

The current study used Cronbach's reliability analysis to test the consistency of the measurement instrument in line with the assertion of Al-Ababneh (2020). To determine the appropriate level of preliminary consistency, a cut-off point of 0.7 was used. The reliability of the research variables was further evaluated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, Composite Reliability (CR) values, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. To calculate the squared correlation between the observed and true scores, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was utilised while the Composite Reliability values were used to assess the internal reliability of each concept in this study. Lastly, in line with the assertion of Ab-Hamid, Sami, and Sidek (2017), the Average Variance Extracted values were used to show how much variance in the measurement items the latent construct overall accounts for.

5.9.2 Validity of the instruments used for measurement.

Validity refers to the extent to which observed discrepancies in scale scores reflect true differences (Hove, 2015). According to Ab-Hamid, Sami, and Sidek (2017), an instrument's validity is determined by how well it captures the desired result. Construct, criteria, and content validity are the three main categories of validity (Al-Ababneh, 2020). By consulting relevant literature and subject matter experts, content validity was evaluated quantitatively. Further validity was enhanced through approval of the survey questions by the research supervisor before the commencement of data collection. Construct validity assesses whether a variable

provides an accurate definition of the construct, whereas criterion validity relates to the research tool's ability to predict outcomes to produce an objective result (Ab-Hamid et al., 2017).

Table 5.4: Types of validity

Type of validity	What is measured	Methods
Content	Degree to which the content of the items adequately represents the universe of all relevant items under study	Judgemental or panel evaluation
Criterion-related	Degree to which the predictor is adequate in capturing the relevant aspects of the criterion	Correlation
Construct	Identifies the underlying construct being measured and determines how well the test represents them	Judgemental: correlation of proposed test width established one; factor analysis; multitrait-multimethod analysis and convergent-discriminant techniques

Source: Cooper and Schindler (2011).

The researcher used the correlation matrix and factor analysis to measure construct discriminant validity, and item-to-total correlation to measure convergent validity. The study also utilised both convergent and discriminant validity to evaluate constructs validity. Convergent validity, as defined by Cheung, and Wang (2017), is the degree to which the measurement items display homogeneity within the same latent variable investigated. Validity is established, as noted by Otzen, and Manterola (2017), when scores from two or more different measurement items measuring the same latent variable exhibit a substantial association. A measurement item must therefore correlate strongly with the other measurement items that measure the same latent variable for convergent validity to exist and be validated. In line with the assertion of Cheung, and Wang (2017), this study determines whether each measurement's factor loadings are higher than the minimal threshold value of 0.5 for each connected research construct.

Discriminant validity is an assessment used to identify the degree to which the measurement items for different latent variables display variability (or load separately) among distinct latent variables (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2023). For instance, for a questionnaire to be

discriminately valid, the survey items for example procurement objectives must load explicitly and separately from the measurement items loading into value for money. Discriminant validity is established when two or more latent variables that theory predicts to be uncorrelated turn out to be uncorrelated in terms of their measured scores (Otzen, & Manterola, 2017).

The correlation matrix coefficients and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values used in the current study's measurement of discriminant validity were both less than 1. Analysis of the Average Variance Extracted being the square of the parameter estimate between these measures, which was extracted from the latent variables with the highest shared variance, allowed the study to evaluate discriminant validity as well. Thus, where the AVE values exceeded the greatest shared variance between variables, discriminant validity was demonstrated (Cheung & Wang, 2017).

5.9.3 Quantitative methods

Al-Ababneh (2020) defines validity and reliability as a measure of data quality in quantitative data studies. The researcher made use of four main validity measures as posited by Middleton, (2021). As there was no option to provide additional explanation in quantitative method, the content of a questionnaire was understandable and clear to respondents. This was enhanced through use of simple English language with jargon simplified to easy terms. The research was less biased towards one sort of outcome due to the inclusion of more variety (age, work position) and many sample respondents to ensure valid results. The construct validity was determined by a panel of experts who assessed the questionnaire and deleted some statements that did not match the study's topic (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

5.10 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The process of gathering data started with the population being divided into eight (8) nonmetropolitan provinces in Zimbabwe before the questionnaires were distributed. This preliminary measure guaranteed that the collected data included the geographic diversity required for an in-depth examination in answering the study questions. This aligns with Iovino, and Tsitsianis (2020) who contend that data collection method is the process of gathering data with the intention to provide some answers to research questions in a study. The research aimed at collecting data that is representative of different regional contexts by taking into

consideration RDCs variances with the provinces. The overall validity and reliability of the findings were improved by this geographic delineation, which was essential for comprehending how various locations might affect the viewpoints and experiences of the participants.

A simple random sampling was employed to select three (3) RDCs from each province where stratification was conducted based on professional roles including top management, the procurement department, the human resources department, the finance and administration department, the customer service department, and the technical department. Random selection was used to pick at least two individuals from each of these professional strata which were then issued with the questionnaires. The objective of this approach was to ensure that data collected captured the perspectives and experiences of individuals across the RDCs professional spectrum. As Mazhar et al. (2021) stated that data collection is essential for completing a study with the chosen method depending on the study's purpose and scope, the adopted procedure allowed for a detailed analysis of how different roles within the RDCs perceive and interact with the procurement management, service delivery and value for money. Consequently, the participant diversity across functional areas allowed the data collecting process to capture a wide range of insights and provided a comprehensive picture of RDCs dynamics across provinces and professional categories.

Data collection utilised hard copy questionnaires administered by the researcher and trained data collectors, supplemented by self-administered Google questionnaires. This hybrid approach ensured inclusivity, accommodating participants who were absent during questionnaire distribution but with internet connection (Clark et al., 2021). Using trained data collectors was crucial for ensuring they understood the study's purpose, tools, and ethical issues, thereby maintaining the accuracy, consistency, anonymity, and reliability of the data (Tang & Gube, 2022). The hard copy responses were physically returned to the researcher and data collectors after completion or physically deposited at the respective RDCs reception for collection to allow completion of the questionnaires at the respondents' own pace and time (Siedlecki, 2020). The self-administered Google questionnaire responses were virtually sent directly to the researcher.

In terms of the storage of collected data, the researcher greatly reduced the likelihood of data breaches, unauthorised access, and data loss while retaining the confidentiality and integrity of the stored information by implementing access control, physical protection, and data masking

to secure data storage systems. This is in line with the thinking of Corti, Van den Eynden, Bishop, and Woollard (2019); and Duggineni (2023) who posited that data storage is an essential requirement for maintaining the integrity and security of the data.

5.10.1 Cover Letter of the Research Instrument

The cover letter that briefly summarises and states the study's goal was included on the questionnaires to gain the intended respondents' informed consent and participation. The cover letter for the questionnaire was critical in boosting the response rates (Ruel, Wagner III, & Gillespie, 2015). Additionally, this letter asks the responders to give their informed consent to participate in the study without any coercion or undue influence. This position aligns with Patten (2016) who posits that the importance of the study, the benefit of the respondents' involvement, and the guarantee of the response's confidentiality and anonymity should be highlighted in the cover letter. Consequently, a cover letter was created and submitted with the study questionnaire in line with Ruel, Wagner III, and Gillespie (2015) recommendations, and issued to all respondents.

5.11 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION METHODS

In this study, the descriptive statistics methods of frequency distributions, measures of dispersion (range, variance, standard deviation), and inferential statistics such as hypothesis testing were applied to provide a thorough understanding of the data. This was used from summarising important features to drawing conclusions about population and creating visual representations of patterns and relationships through bar charts and histograms. This aligns with Manyathi (2019), who described data analysis as the procedure of turning raw data from numerous sources into valuable information that can give meaning and value to the study. On the other hand, the study's choice of data analysis methods was guided by Gravetter et al. (2021) who averred that inferential statistics are used to make inferences about a larger population (over 3000 in this study), whereas descriptive statistics are used to describe and summarise data. The study also employed hypothesis testing in line with Amrhein, Trafimow, & Greenland (2019) and Lind, Marchal & Wathen (2022) who posited that one of the most common methods in inferential statistics is hypothesis testing.

Table 5.5: Seven steps in the data analysis process

Stages in the quantitative method data analysis process	Description of each stage	Application in quantitative data analysis
1. Data Reduction	Reducing the dimensionality of the quantitative data	Via descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis and cluster analysis
2. Data Display	Pictorially describing the quantitative data	Using tables and graphs
3. Data Transformation	Statistical and text analysis	Quantitative data are put into numerical codes that can be represented statistically
4. Data Correlation	Statistical interpretation	Quantitative data is correlated with qualitative data
5. Data Consolidation	The quantitative data are combined to create new or consolidated variables	
6. Data Comparison	Involves comparing data from the quantitative data sources	
7. Data Integration	This is a final stage, wherein quantitative data are integrated into a coherent whole	

Source: Adapted from Bannon (2013).

The quantitative research data gathered for the purposes of this study were analysed using the four-step procedure of principle component analysis (PCA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), structural equation modelling (SEM), and multiple regression analysis. In a bid to limit the number of items in this study, the study first made use of the principal factor analysis to extract factors or components that had a strong correlation with each of the research variables. Secondly, the likelihood that the hypothesised factor structure is supported or confirmed by the sample data was examined using the CFA. Thirdly, SEM using the route analysis was carried out to test the research model and assumptions. Regression analysis, which served the same purpose as path analysis in SEM, was the last phase, and it was used to validate the relationships and influences that the variables had.

The structural modelling technique (SEM) in the "Analysis of Moments of Structure" (AMOS) was used to test the hypotheses analysed using AMOS 21 software version. A structural model is a theoretical model that shows how latent or unobserved variables are structurally related which include the dependent and independent as well as their observed variables or measurement items, with the error terms for the observed variables together with the direct arcs connecting them (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

For this study, SEM refers to three different types of models: the path models, the full latent variable model, and the measurement model of confirmatory factor analysis. AMOS was chosen because of its ability to produce results for both saturated and independent models. As noted by Wesam et al. (2020), the saturated model includes all defined possible relationships, whereas the independent model includes estimated minimum numbers of parameters. For principal component analysis (PCA) and regression analysis, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 21) was utilised. The statistical methods used in this study as well as the computer programs used are covered in the next section.

5.11.1 The Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

In a bid to compress 37 questionnaire measurement items which were utilised for the six (6) research variables (public procurement objectives, public procurement process, public procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery and value for money), principal component analysis was used. As a result, the 37 items which made up the questionnaire for all the research variables were reduced to a lower figure of seven (7) principal components/factors by making use of the principal component analysis, which was carried out using the SPSS 21 statistical software programs. For each of the six research variables, this was accomplished through the identification of the linear combinations between the original questionnaire items that accounted for the greatest amount of variation in the initial data set. Based on eigen values greater than one (1) and factor loadings greater than 0.5, the seven (7) major components or factors were extracted (Hung, 2020). These seven (7) components were further rotated using the varimax rotation approach, which presupposes that the items are orthogonal to one another and disconnected in the sense that their scores are not correlated. The varimax rotation approach, as posited by Hung (2020) aims to maximise the variance explained by the survey items by raising the correlation of items that have a high correlation with them and decreasing the correlation of items that have a low correlation.

Further connections between the six (6) research variables and the seven (7) retrieved varimax rotated principal components or factors were made (public procurement objectives, public procurement process, public procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery and value for money). This was done based on which extracted component or factor had the highest loadings across most of the measurement items for the research variable. Additionally, structural equation modelling was employed to do confirmatory factor analysis and test hypotheses using the extracted items.

5.11.2 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (SEM)

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is a collection of statistical methods used to quantify and examine the connections between latent and observable variables (Mueller & Hancock, 2018). It investigates linear causal links between variables while concurrently taking measurement error into account, making it like but more effective than regression analysis (McNeish & Hamaker, 2020). The researcher chose this approach since it allows for the estimation of several interconnected dependencies in a single analysis. Endogenous and exogenous variables of both sorts are used in this research. Endogenous variables are the same as the independent and dependent variables respectively (Mueller & Hancock, 2018).

Confirmatory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, also known as simultaneous equations models, are used in SEM to create a thorough modelling framework (Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019). As noted by Mueller and Hancock (2018), the CFA offers a method for developing the measurement component of the model, or measurement model, where the relationships between the observable (measured) variables, also known as indicator or manifest variables, and the latent factors (unmeasured constructs), may be investigated. On the other hand, the structural part of the SEM model allows for the study of the causal relationships among the constructs (so-called structural model). If the full-information estimation methods are supplied, the relations between all treated variables in both sub models (measurement and structural) can be computed concurrently (Ab-Hamid, Sami, & Sidek, 2017).

To evaluate the nature of the latent constructs and to gain a preliminary understanding of the links between the measured variables and the related latent factors, the exploratory factor analysis is frequently utilised as the first step in the research process (McNeish & Hamaker, 2020). Therefore, this analysis may be effective in obtaining some valuable advice for CFA-based future research. The so-called general linear modelling techniques, such as analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression modelling, are extended in a statistical sense by SEM (Mueller & Hancock, 2018). It can be used with a variety of data types, including cross-sectional and longitudinal data as well as continuous or ordinal data.

SEM is divided into two primary parts, the measurement, and the structural model (Ab-Hamid, Sami, & Sidek, 2017). The measurement methodology allowed for the use of many indicators to one single independent variable in this investigation (public procurement management). The

public procurement management, an independent variable, and the dependent variables (service delivery and value for money) were connected and tested for correlations with the use of a structural model path which is recognised in this study. The study also established that service delivery and value for money are influenced by procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, and procurement management. The carrying out of a measurement model, which is covered in more detail below, is firstly required by the SEM technique.

5.11.2.1 Measurement model

The measurement model is a theoretical model that illustrates the structural relationships between the independent and dependent variables and their observed variables, as well as the arcs that directly connect them and the error terms for their observed variables (Owolabi, Ayandele & Olaoye, 2020). Its primary goal is to present the factor model's overall fit, which demonstrates how dimensional the measurement items are (Effendi & Matore, 2019). The rationale is that before moving on to the underlying structures, it is important to confirm that the measurement model is valid. For instance, based on one's sample of data, one may discover that two latent variables perform better than another set of indicators, or one may discover that some indicators are underperforming. The final model might then be developed after any necessary adjustments (Effendi & Matore, 2019).

One of two factor analysis that is, either exploratory or confirmatory can be used to analyse the measurement model (Effendi & Matore, 2019). Exploratory factor analysis is employed to locate and create the likely component structure (new measures) when there is a lack of literature and prior measurements for the latent variables being researched (Owolabi, Ayandele & Olaoye, 2020). Confirmatory factor analysis is a method that checks that the existing measurement items truly load themselves into the latent variables, depending on how the researcher links the measurement items to the latent variables. Confirmatory factor analysis is the subject of the subsequent section.

a) **Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)**

CFA is a measurement model that only concentrates on the relationship between factors and their measurement variables (Hung, 2020). It aims to statistically test the likelihood that a factor structure under consideration will be supported or verified (Hung, 2020). It is used to determine whether a construct's measurements are in line with the researcher's conception of the nature

of the construct (Luong & Flake, 2022). The CFA process has taken the place of earlier techniques to assess construct validity. Before modelling in SEM, every measurement model for a latent concept must go through CFA (Luong & Flake, 2022). Considering this, the data would not deviate greatly from the factor model if the data were consistent with it. If the data do not agree with or fit the proposed factor model, the data will diverge significantly from the presumptive factor model.

The fundamental principle of CFA is that commonalities are originally one, which states that all variables' variation can be explained by means of their constituents (or factors), and that there is no erroneous variance (Luong & Flake, 2022). The researcher's application will be most effective if they are familiar with the underlying latent variable structure. Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, and Cillo (2019) highlighted further that the researcher can use their understanding of theory together with the empirical study to hypothesise using statistics a structure which links the observed measurements and their underlying causes. Considering this, CFA demands that the one carrying out the research should provide a certain number of factors which are connected whereby the observable variables account for each component (Lefcheck, 2015).

There are two main reasons why CFA is utilised in this study: first, the availability of some prior literature on some of the variables, and second, many researchers in the field of procurement management have used CFA extensively in the past. Consequently, CFA permitted the specification of procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery, and value for money as associated variables in this study. Data should be reviewed, to facilitate effective CFA performance (Luong & Flake, 2022). This involves looking at the correlation matrix with the intention of removing any items that have a weak link with other items or are not associated at all (Lefcheck, 2015). Furthermore, Luong and Flake (2022) indicated that for CFA to work effectively, the sample size must be evaluated to make sure it is large enough. The study's 300 respondents final sample size is in accordance with most recommendations for sample sizes that are sufficient in size to produce a decent fit for the factor model (Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019).

To determine whether the sample data for the research fits or supports the research factor model hypothesised for this study, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The Chi-square and

degrees of freedom, the Root mean square residual, the Augmented Goodness of Fit Index, the Normed Fit Index, the Incremental Fit Index, the Tucker-Lewis Index, the Composite Fit Index, and the Root mean square error of approximation are the model fit indices tested in CFA to assess the factor model fit using Amos version 21. Path analysis, which is addressed in greater detail in the following section, is carried out because of confirmatory factor analysis.

5.11.2.2 The Structural Model

A theoretical model identified as a structural model shows the structural relationships between latent or unobserved variables (both dependent and independent variables) and their observed variables (measurement items), as well as the direct arcs connecting them and the error terms for the observed variables (Owolabi, Ayandele & Olaoye, 2020). The proposed study hypotheses are reflected by the linear relationships between the unobserved variables. The six variables in this study have six linear relationships, which are depicted below.

Table 5.6: Theorised Variables Paths

Hypothesis	**Theorised Variables Paths**
H_{1a}	Procurement objectives → service delivery
H_{1b}	Procurement process → service delivery
H_{1c}	Procurement expertise → service delivery
H_{1d}	Procurement management → service delivery
H_2	Service delivery → value for money
H_3	Procurement management → value for money

Source: Author (2022).

The path model and measurement model are combined in the structural model (Owolabi, Ayandele & Olaoye, 2020). In other words, the structural model both assesses the factor model's overall model fit and verifies the study hypothesis. The following part goes over the path analysis.

5.11.2.3. Path analysis

To measure the connections between various variables, path analysis was created (Mitchell, 2020). It was the original name for SEM before latent variables were invented, and it was particularly effective in testing and refining the structure hypothesis with both indirect and

direct causal effects. Recent times have seen a synonymising of the two effects (Elsayed & Aneis, 2021). The causal linkages between several variables can be explained through path analysis. Mediation, which posits that a variable can have an impact on a result both directly and indirectly through another variable, is a frequent route analysis function (Elsayed & Aneis, 2021).

A model must also be specified by the researchers as part of the path analysis process to shed light on the reasons behind the correlations between variables X and Y (Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019). In other words, the path analysis may include estimating the presumptive causal linkages among the unobserved variables (for instance, X causes Y); or presumptive non-causal associations, such as an erroneous association between X and Y. Ultimately, the path analysis evaluates how well the factor model accounts for the sample data, or the observed correlations or covariance (Mitchell, 2020).

Two key categories of variables, latent and observable variables are explained in this study to aid in a better comprehension of the path analysis (Mitchell, 2020). Latent variables, on the other hand, are the study variables or characteristics that are noticed or quantified inadvertently by way of the observed variables or measurement items. They are also known as unobserved variables, and the researcher infers them out of a collection of questionnaire items by way of utilising statistical methods to assess the latent variables (Elsayed & Aneis, 2021). This suggests the necessity for an operational characterisation of the latent variables of interest in terms of the behaviour the researcher assumes to represent them (Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019). The fact that the latent variable is connected to the measurement components or observed variables makes it possible to measure latent variables. These latent variables are shown as circles in the SEM's path analysis (or an ellipse).

Elsayed and Aneis (2021) define the observed or manifest variables as a collection of variables or survey questions which the researchers use for the construction or inference of the latent variables. These test or assessment items are used to make the underlying latent constructs more apparent (Owolabi, Ayandele & Olaoye, 2020). These measurement items or observed variables in SEM's path analysis are represented by a square (or a rectangle) through pictorial presentation. Furthermore, these two categories of variables can be classified as either dependent or independent (exogenous) variables (endogenous). As noted by Mitchell (2020)

the dependent variable is influenced by other variables, whereas the independent variable is a variable in the model that is not influenced by any other factors.

To make a comparison of the results of the study's hypotheses test with the outcomes of the path analysis, multiple regression analysis was also carried out. The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Chapter 6 on study findings and data analysis. SEM models and multiple regression analysis both place a high priority on the reliability as well as the validity issues, which are covered in the following sections.

5.11.2.4 Structural Equation modelling steps

The flowchart below demonstrates how the fundamental steps of SEM modelling can be expressed. The flow shows that a variety of fundamental assumptions like sample size, normality, independence, outliers, and collinearity are often applied after the data are collected and the proper measurements are chosen (Castro-Schilo & Russo, 2021). The model must then be specified, which entails defining all causal relationships between the variables based on some theory and fundamental theoretical understanding. The process then moves on to model identification and estimate. The risk of over-identification, which occurs when we estimate more parameters than are available during model identification, must be considered.

As noted by Hung (2020) to successfully complete the estimation of the model step of the SEM technique, model verification, the appropriate estimation method must be chosen. Here, the model is put to the test and its fit quality is assessed, and a variety of fit indicators can be used. Castro-Schilo & Russo (2021) highlighted that the post-hoc alterations of the model specification must also be carried out if these indices show a poor fit performance. If not, the model is prepared for suitable interpretation and a report of the results obtained (Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019).

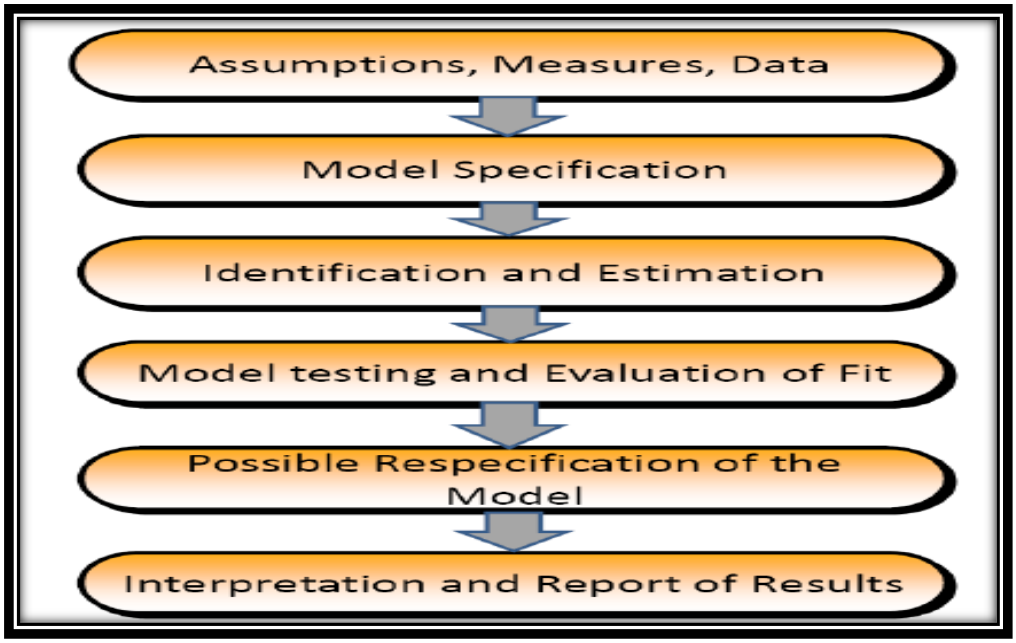

Figure 5.1: The Flowchart of the basic steps of SEM modelling

Source: Dragan & Topolšek (2014).

In the figure below, every key stage of the SEM modelling process is presented in detail, along with how the CFA measurement model is incorporated. The modelling process continues with the design of the structural model, as can be seen from the figure below, following the suitable construction of the CFA model and its positive validation (Cepeda-Carrion, Cegarra-Navarro, & Cillo, 2019). To achieve this, it is necessary to first translate the related measurement model into the structural model. The structural model validity must be evaluated in the following stage, which also involves estimating the structural parameters and examining the goodness of fit indices and the directions of all routes. The model refinement is required if the structural model fails the validity test, in which case it might be utilised to draw certain inferences (Castro-Schilo & Russo, 2021).

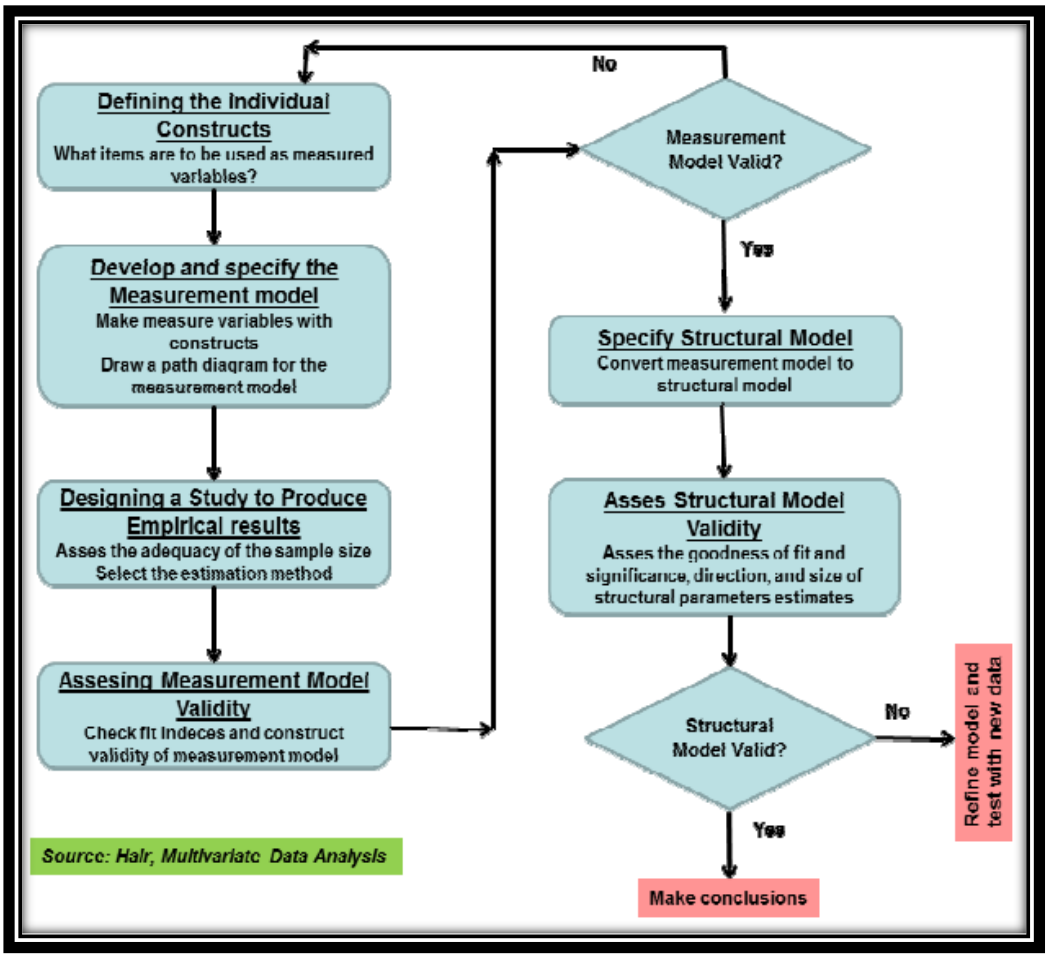

Figure 5.2: The detailed presentation of all significant steps in the SEM modelling

Source: Dragan and Topolšek (2014).

5.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Several unethical behaviours, such as breaking non-disclosure agreements, deceiving people, and falsifying results, were avoided by the researcher. Assuring that no one is harmed or suffers because of their involvement is the main objective of ethics in any study, (Manyathi, 2019). Cognisant of the foregoing, academic research customs and etiquette, as well as all stated conventions, were observed during the study. The study adhered to professional confidentiality, recognition of resources, accepted citation methods, and correct referencing. The study respondents' right to privacy was respected. Confidentiality issues were managed with the respect they deserved and were respected by all parties involved. The researcher upheld academic standards to the highest degree, and any material that seemed to expose the operations of the companies involved or the respondents' integrity were not revealed.

5.12.1 Confidentiality and privacy

Privacy is the ability to control when, how, and under what conditions one shares or withholds private information from others (Bala, 2022). On the other hand, to maintain confidentiality, participants must be allowed to disclose and withhold any information they see fit. To prevent the participants' identity from being disclosed unnecessarily throughout the data gathering process, revealing items, such as the names of participants' organisations were removed (Bala, 2022). As a result, respondents' confidentiality was upheld, protected, and honestly highlighted by employing coding to hide the names and organisations of respondents. Additionally, they were advised of the possibility that the university or the researcher may publish the study's results.

It is imperative to take all necessary precautions to safeguard those involved in the study from any physical, psychological, or social injury both during the stages of research and after the results are released (Bala, 2022). To ensure participants' privacy, the researcher respected their decision to withhold personal information if they felt it compromised their privacy. This included details such as age, qualifications, and other potentially sensitive information. The data was also kept secure by locking them in a cupboard until the study was concluded.

5.12.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

Informed consent denotes that participants of a research express their permission in clear and obvious manner while acting voluntarily, intelligently, and consciously (Tulyakul, & Meepring, 2020). By allowing individuals to make their own decisions, informed consent aims to include their rights along with defending individual freedom and truth, it also aims to stop attacks on participants' integrity.

The data that were collected were considered as pooled data, and potential participants were asked to give their informed consent before participating. Before collecting information from the respondents, permission was first requested from the Rural District Councils which were randomly selected as participants for the study. The participants were adequately informed about the study's goal for them to voluntarily engage in it. Potential research advantages were briefly described and provided to convince participants that taking part in the study was advantageous to their individual Rural District Councils.

To ensure that participants were voluntarily agreeing to engage in the study, emails asking for their participation in it also included an informed consent clause. Participants were also informed that they can withdraw at any time without incurring any penalties, as was made clear on the instructions on the data collection instrument, which advised the respondents that participation was completely a choice (Tulyakul, & Meepring, 2020). The researcher used very simple language for participants to understand the researcher as a way of circumventing their emotional limitations and finally emphasised to them that they can withdraw from participation at any stage during the research.

5.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research paradigms and philosophies considered in the current study were discussed in this chapter. The methodology highlighted the research philosophy, research paradigm, research design, target population, sample size, sampling method, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation methods, reliability, validity of findings, and ethical considerations. The research was conducted using a positivist philosophy, which calls for the application of a quantitative research approach. A sample size of 300 members of the Rural District Council was determined using Raosoft sample size calculator while a total of 237 valid questionnaires were gathered and analysed after data collection. The research also employed principal component analysis to cut down some excessive number of survey items before the analysis of data began. This was followed using AMOS (version 21) software packages to perform the confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis SEM models. While the route analysis was used to assess the study's hypotheses, the overall model fit was tested using the confirmatory factor analysis. For purposes of comparison with the outcomes of the route analysis hypotheses test, multiple regression analysis was also carried out using SPSS version 21. The discussion covered the study instrument's validity and reliability. Discussed also were the ethical guidelines that were followed and respected when conducting the study with confidentiality, informed consent, and other ethical issues being considered. A thorough discussion basing on the findings and the analysis of the study’s data are covered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The philosophy, which was adopted by this research, design, data collection methods, sampling techniques as well as data analysis methodologies were covered in the previous chapter. The results of the data analysis are presented in this chapter along with their interpretation. The information presented in this chapter was gathered from Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. The data was gathered through questionnaires and the comparative study of other researchers on the related research subject. The responses to the study questions are presented in tables utilising percentages and frequencies together with figures to simplify reading and understanding of the results. The study conducted statistical and descriptive analyses on respondent and firm profiles, presenting the outcomes through graphs and tables. SPSS Version 21 was utilised for these analyses, as highlighted in earlier chapters. Additionally, principal component analysis, aimed at reducing the number of measurement items for latent variables, was performed using SPSS Version 21. Structural equation models, including confirmatory factor analysis for overall model fit and route analysis to test hypotheses, were carried out using Amos Version 21. The following section delves into the descriptive analysis of results pertaining to the sample profile.

6.2 RESULTS FOR DESCRIPTIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The section starts with response rate reflecting the proportion of distributed questionnaires that were completed and returned. This is a critical metric in survey-based research which provides the context for data analysis (sample's quality, appropriateness, and representativeness) (Aguinis, Ramani, & Alabduljader, 2018; Holtom et al., 2022). A sample profile of the respondents was also created where a descriptive analysis was carried out. This consisted of the respondents' gender, age ranges, level of education, work experience and area of employment in RDCs as public procurement management, service delivery, and value for money are significantly impacted by these fundamentals. Using a descriptive approach to analyse the sample's demographic data was crucial as it deepened the researcher's understanding of key individuals' backgrounds in relation to public procurement, service delivery and value for money.

6.2.1 Response rate

Table 6.1: Response rate

Instrument	Total Number	Number Unaccounted	Number Responded	Response Rate %
Questionnaire	300	63	237	79%

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, but only 237 responses were used for data analysis due to 63 unreturned questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 79%. Mandishona (2021), avers that a response rate exceeding 50% is considered sufficient for examination purposes, while a rate over 60% is very good for analysis and fairly representing the target population. Therefore, a response rate of 79% suggests that the research results are valid and pass the generalisation test. This high response rate indicates that the responses in this study were reliable and credible, allowing for meaningful conclusions and implications to be drawn.

6.2.2 Respondents' gender

Service delivery and the achievement of value for money can be influenced by the internal stakeholders of public procurement in rural district councils. These stakeholders comprise of the management and employees from procurement departments, human resources department, finance and administration, customer service and technical department. As a result, the initial inquiry about the gender of the study's respondents and their respective outcomes are displayed in Table 6.2 underneath.

Table 6.2: Gender representation

Respondents' Gender					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Male	140	59.1	59.1	59.1
	Female	97	40.9	40.9	100.0
	Total	**237**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

According to Table 6.2 above, the respondents made up 59.1% men and 40.9% women. The results show that there is still a gender gap in public procurement management. As a result, fewer women hold the highest-ranking jobs in procurement management, including contract

and the management of projects. The findings concur with earlier studies that assert that roughly 10% of the highest-ranking supply chain positions are held by women (Lukiwski, 2018). This finding also aligns with that of Ponthieux and Meurs (2015) who noted a gender imbalance in procurement industry and the dominance of men in the procurement profession. Moreover, Lukiwski (2018) averred that the underrepresentation of women in influential roles within public procurement is attributed to their educational levels and professional experience. Additionally, these results support previous findings and confirm extant literature (Tyler, 2019; Chikwere et al. 2022; Singh & Slack, 2022). A study by Tyler (2019) notes that women make up only 25% of members of procurement management committees and management teams, which are one or two levels below the executive committee. The author also pointed out that activities requiring interpersonal skills are seen as feminine, risk-taking, or decision-making is seen as strength of men, and that reasoning is seen as predominantly a masculine trait. However, O'Connor, (2019) argue that when given the chance smart, educated women realise their potential and can contribute to their fields of endeavour. Considering the gender of respondents is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of the public procurement in RDCs, recognising potential biases and inequities, and guiding initiatives and policies that support inclusivity and diversity in procurement processes. The sample's educational backgrounds are the subject of the succeeding section.

6.2.3 Age Range of respondents

Age groups frequently vary in their knowledge and experience of procurement procedures (Adewumi-Audu, 2023). While younger individuals may have new insights and familiarity with upcoming technologies and trends, older professionals may have gathered substantial experience and knowledge. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the procurement issues and procedures in relation to various age groups can offer a broad perspective on the industry (Kale & Doguwa, 2015). Owing to the introduction of numerous digital tools and platforms with procurement management becoming more and more technology driven, studying the age range of the respondents becomes imperative. It can be noted that older professionals may have varied experiences and difficulties adopting technology, whereas younger responders may be more accustomed to and skilled at using it in their procurement procedures. Hence, analysing these variations can assist in locating potential obstacles or openings for technology integration in public procurement.

Table 6.3: Age Range of the respondents

Age Range					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 30	29	12.2	12.2	12.2
	30-40	81	34.2	34.2	46.4
	41-49	70	29.5	29.5	75.9
	50-59	52	21.9	21.9	97.9
	60+	5	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	237	100.0	100.0	

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Adewumi-Audu (2023) posits that age is a factor in typical demographic research for any social issue. Considering the foregoing, the age range has been included as a study component to ascertain whether it has any impact on value for money in government procurement in the rural local authorities. The age range between 30 and 40 had the highest number of personnel with a percentage of 34 followed by the 41 to 49 with 30%. The respondents' age ranges are correlated with their knowledge and level of experience in the various areas (Beier, Torres, Fisher & Wallace, 2020). The findings of theses earlier studies infer that data for the current study were gathered from a wealth of knowledge which assures its reliability. The result of the study demonstrates that any issue relating to the operationalisation of public procurement value for money must also investigate the issues related to age as a major element, and if possible, putting into cognisance the age range between 30 and 49 years since they are more prevalent in public procurement in the RDCs. Researchers and organisations can learn a lot about the dynamics of the procurement profession, technological adoption, decision-making styles, training needs, and workforce diversity by considering the age range of respondents in procurement management research. In a rural local authorities' procurement environment that is changing quickly, this thorough understanding can result in more efficient and adaptable procurement management methods. The respondents' educational backgrounds are covered in the next section.

6.2.4 Highest qualification of the respondents

The study sought to determine the highest educational level that the public procurement officers in the rural local authorities had. This is because the level of education of personnel in public procurement in RDCs can have an impact on service delivery and the attainment of value for money. On the same note, Fourie and Malan (2020) contend that the research's reliability and

validity can be improved by including respondents from various educational backgrounds. When the data captures the opinions of people with varied educational backgrounds, researchers can make more solid conclusions and suggestions. The personnel in public procurement management who were issued questionnaires include engineers, managers in charge of finance and human resources, procurement supervisors and some personnel from selected functional departments. The results of the investigation of the respondents' educational level are shown in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4: Highest qualification of the respondents

Highest qualification of the respondents					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Certificate	8	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Diploma	107	45.1	45.1	48.5
	Degree	86	36.3	36.3	84.8
	Postgraduate	36	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	237	100.0	100.0	

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

To find out more about the respondents' educational backgrounds, an inquiry was made about them. The above, Table 6.4 indicate that most respondents held diploma (45.1%), and degree (36.3%), while 15.2% had postgraduate credentials. Therefore, most of the staff handling procurement activities in Zimbabwe's RDCs was thought to possess the necessary educational credentials for managing the procurement function effectively. It also suggests that the officers have been exposed to a variety of ideas that have the potential to improve value for money in the RDCs procurement. The importance of education in helping people comprehend the public procurement process should not be understated (Chikwere, Dzandu & Dza, 2019). Top procurement professionals, such as procurement managers, may be influenced by their educational backgrounds in the quality and type of decisions they make for their organisations (Dorasamy, 2021). This confirms earlier study by Adewumi-Audu (2023) which proposes that the personnel working in the procurement field are knowledgeable individuals who are aware of the effects of any decisions they make when performing procurement processes. These results are also in line with earlier research by Anesukanjanakul, Banpot, and Jermsittiparsert, (2019), which posited that personnel's performance of their tasks is influenced by their level of education and training. The best practices and industry standards are continually changing

in the dynamic sector of procurement management. Hence, educated personnel are more likely to be conversant in current trends, techniques, and developments which improve procurement management, service delivery and the attainment of value for money.

6.2.5 Length of employment of the respondents

The length of employment of respondents responsible for public procurement activities can influence positively or negatively on service delivery to residents and the attainment of value for money in the rural district councils. Adewumi-Audu (2023) posits that the level of professional experience may also help to explain why the public procurement is subject to significant outside influences that have an impact on the RDCs' ability to implement VfM. In general terms, employees with more work experience are likely to provide a higher quality and deliver batter value for money compared to those with little experience. According to Baliga et al. (2020), a person's understanding of the relevant industry increases with their level of job experience. It follows that individuals with experience tend to gain a deeper understanding of their job roles and develop a wider range of skills over time. This may pertain to their capability to anticipate and solve problems during their work, increased confidence in decision making, and superior attention to detail and greater efficiency which can result in improved service provision and financial value. The results of the investigation of the respondents' length of employment are shown in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5: Length of employment

Length of employment					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Less than 5 years	15	6.3	6.3	6.3
	5-10years	99	41.8	41.8	48.1
	11-15 years	90	38.0	38.0	86.1
	16-20 years	22	9.3	9.3	95.4
	Over 21 years	11	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	237	100.0	100.0	

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Table 6.5 above indicates that most respondents range between 5-10 years of experience (41.8%), followed by those with length of employment between 11-15 years (38%), while a paltry of 4.6% are over 21 years of employment. Therefore, most of the staff handling procurement activities in Zimbabwe's RDCs was thought to possess the necessary experience for managing the procurement activities effectively. Davidescu, Apostu, Paul, and Casuneanu

(2020) contend that years of work experience can sometimes lead to the development of skills in a specific profession. Therefore, the data collected by the study was from a rich source of information. Hiring the experienced individuals can result in greater efficiency, high quality of output and superior customer satisfaction which ultimately translate into greater value for money and service delivery. This finding validates extant literature by Chikazhe et al. (2023) who observed that work experience can significantly affect the way public services are provided. This study also concurs with studies by Adewumi-Audu (2023) which emphasised the importance of experience in the delivery of procurement service delivery.

6.2.6 Respondents' Area of employment

The area of employment of those who participated in this study refers to the place, department, or section upon which the respondent is attached at the time of the study. The results of a study can be considerably influenced by respondents' line of work, which in this study include finance, engineering, human resources, and administration. It's crucial to include a varied group of respondents from various places to assure the study's validity and thoroughness (Kilic, Van den Broeck, Koolwal, & Moylan, 2022). Appropriate research procedures were used in the study to account for any biases and viewpoint differences (Galdo, Dammert & Abebaw, 2019). A more sophisticated view of how procurement management affects service delivery and value for money across various RDCs' activities was also obtained by first examining the responses from each group independently, and then comparing them.

Table 6.6: Respondents' Area of employment

Area of employment					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Human Resources	29	12.2	12.2	12.2
	Finance	81	34.2	34.2	46.4
	Procurement	68	28.7	28.7	75.1
	Engineering	52	21.9	21.9	97.0
	Administration	7	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	**237**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Table 6.6 above indicates that most respondents were from finance and procurement sections with 34.2% and 28.7% respectively. This was followed by engineering 21.9%, human resources 12.2%, and administration 3.0%. The largest group which comprises of 34.2% of the sample, is financial professionals. Their significant representation shows that the study does a good job of covering the financial aspects of procurement management. They can shed light on cost management, planning, and financial responsibility. On the other hand, with 28.7% of the sample, the procurement department is likewise strongly represented. Their perspectives are pertinent to the topic of the study because they oversee procurement activities. They may offer thorough details on procurement procedures and how they affect the provision of services.

The sample was made up of 21.9% engineers. When analysing the technical facets of procurement and how they impact the functionality and quality of provided goods or services, their expertise is essential. Professionals in human resources, on the other hand, make up 12.2% of the sample while administration professionals had the lowest representation at 3.0%. However, the administration viewpoint was important in understanding how procurement management influences workforce-related aspects of service delivery through providing information about how purchasing decisions affect daily operations.

Overall, the results show a very evenly distributed sample of respondents across different work sectors. The benefit of this variety is that it enabled a thorough evaluation of how procurement management affects service delivery, considering financial, technical, workforce-related, and operational issues. The study made sure to carefully assess the responses from each group to get insightful findings on the study's topic.

6.3 THE PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

An effective method for separating systematic variation from noise is principal component analysis (PCA), which is a multivariable exploratory analytic methodology (Kawachi et al., 2022). The principal component analysis provides for the creation of a reduced-dimensional space with the ability to display scores and loadings while retaining all important information from the original data (Kimmons, 2022). It is also important to highlight that performing PCA requires multivariate data, which, in this instance, includes numerous variables recorded across various objects. In addition to a brief rundown of the fundamentals of linear algebra, the terms

data, matrices, and vectors are defined (Mahmoudi et al., 2021). The 37 questionnaire items (observed variables) utilised in this study to evaluate the six latent variables and confirm their dimensional categories were reduced and regrouped using this procedure, as was previously indicated in Chapter 5. In addition, this research confirmed the measured variables for each of the six latent variables in the survey questionnaire through Principal Component Analysis (PCA).

By employing maximum likelihood, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criterion (with eigenvalues greater than 1), scree plot evaluation, and varimax rotation techniques, the principal components, or dimensions of all six latent variables in this study were computed. All six latent variables in the study met the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sample adequacy criterion of at least 0.5, a vital prerequisite for conducting Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The results of the study indicate that KMO coefficients were 0.753 for procurement objectives, 0.671, for public procurement process, 0.820, for public procurement expertise, 0.822 for public procurement management, 0.639 for service delivery and finally 0.805 for value for money. In each of these situations, all the KMO ratings for sample adequacy were less than 0.05 (0.000) and were deemed significant. The continuation of PCA for factor reduction was required when KMO values at all levels of significance were satisfied to be larger than 0.5.

6.3.1 Procurement objectives PCA results

The outcomes shown in Table 6.7 demonstrate that exploratory factor analysis could be done because the minimum requirements were met. Results complied with the minimum requirements specified by Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value significance at $p < 0.000$ and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of above 0.5 (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1974).

Table 6.7 Procurement objectives KMO and Bartlett's Test

Procurement objectives KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.753
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	656.439
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The purpose of this study was to define the procurement objectives. To gather eigenvalues and identify the principal components, a PCA was used. Additionally, a rotated component matrix was used to identify correlated procurement objective items. Kaiser's normalisation criterion and eigenvalues for procurement objectives were used to perform total variance explanation, and the scores that were recovered are shown in Table 6.8 below.

Table 6.8: Procurement Objectives Total Variance Explained

Procurement Objectives Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.277	54.612	54.612	3.277	54.612	54.612
2	1.170	19.506	74.117	1.170	19.506	74.117
3	.658	10.974	85.092			
4	.410	6.840	91.932			
5	.270	4.505	96.437			
6	.214	3.563	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The initial eigenvalues obtained by SPSS version 21 are displayed in Table 6.8, demonstrating that the eigenvalues of the first two components (components 1 and 2) are greater than 1. A 54.61% variation in the procurement objectives for the public procurement data set is accounted for by the first component, which has an eigenvalue of 3.277. In the data set on procurement objectives, the second component, with an eigenvalue of 1.170, oversees 19.51% of the variation.

It is now time to choose measurement elements with factor loadings greater than 0.5. The initial eigenvalues for all the components with sizes bigger than the proposed value of one (1) have already been calculated. The varimax rotated component matrix, which is shown in the table below, is a representation of the results of the major component analysis exhibiting these high factor loadings. When using the measurement item's primary dimensions, it is possible to distinguish clearly between each factor loading by using varimax rotation, which is required in factor reduction (Acal, Aguilera, & Escabias, 2020). The rotational component matrix's findings for the variable denoting procurement aims are shown in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9: Procurement objectives rotated component matrix[a]

Procurement objectives rotated component matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
PO1	.672	
PO2	.688	
PO3	.764	
PO4	.839	
PO5	.820	
PO6		.693
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The results of the varimax rotation for the primary elements or measurements of procurement objectives are shown in Table 6.9, together with the measured variables that significantly load into these dimensions. The initial component exhibited strong factor loadings, ranging from 0.672 to 0.839, encompassing six measurement items from PO1 to PO5. Meanwhile, a single measurement item (PO6) demonstrated significant factor loadings of 0.693 on the second component.

6.3.2 Public procurement process PCA results

The outcomes shown in Table 6.10 below demonstrate that exploratory factor analysis was feasible due to the minimum requirements being met. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance level of p 0.000 and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of larger than 0.5 both indicate that the results satisfy the minimum requirements.

Table 6.10: Public procurement process KMO and Bartlett's Test

Public procurement process KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.721
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1848.018
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

This study set out to define the public procurement process. A Principal Component Analysis was used to collect eigenvalues and pinpoint the principal components. In addition, associated

public procurement process elements were found using a rotational component matrix. In the current study, the total variance explanation was carried out using Kaiser's normalisation criterion and the eigenvalues for public procurement process, and the scores that were recovered are displayed in Table 6.11 below.

Table 6.11: Public Procurement Process Total Variance Explained

Public Procurement Process Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.830	63.827	63.827	3.830	63.827	63.827
2	1.308	21.801	85.629	1.308	21.801	85.629
3	.492	8.194	93.822			
4	.254	4.237	98.060			
5	.111	1.854	99.914			
6	.005	.086	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

In Table 6.11 above, the initial eigenvalues generated by the statistical program SPSS version 21 are shown. It is evident that the eigenvalues for the initial two components, namely components 1 and 2, exceed the value of one. 63.83% of the variation in the public procurement process for the public procurement data set is accounted for by the first component, which has an eigenvalue of 3.830. In the data set on public procurement process, 21.80% of the variation may be attributed to the second component, which has an eigenvalue of 1.308.

Following the computation of initial eigenvalues for components surpassing the recommended threshold of one (1), the subsequent stage entailed the selection of measurement elements exhibiting factor loadings exceeding 0.5. The findings of the major component analysis displaying these high factor loadings are represented by the varimax rotated component matrix, which is displayed in the table below. When using the measurement items' primary dimensions, the factor loadings for each measurement item can be distinguished clearly owing to varimax rotation (Acal, Aguilera, & Escabias, 2020). The outcomes of the rotated component matrix are shown in Table 6.12 for the variable that represents the public procurement process.

Table 6.12: Public procurement process rotated component matrix[a]

Public procurement process rotated component matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
PRP1	.688	
PRP2		.831
PRP3	.932	
PRP4	.817	
PRP5	.898	
PRP6	.902	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The results of the varimax rotation for the primary elements or measurements of public procurement process are shown in Table 6.12 as well as the measured variables which have significantly loaded into these dimensions. The first component displayed strong factor loadings, ranging from 0.688 to 0.817 to 0.932, on five measurement items encompassing PRP1 and PRP3 to PRP6. Conversely, a single measurement item (PRP2) exhibited substantial loading on the second component, with factor loadings of 0.831.

6.3.3 Public procurement expertise PCA results

The results provided in Table 6.13 below show that because the minimum prerequisites were satisfied, exploratory factor analysis was possible. Results met the minimal criteria outlined by the significance level of $p < 0.000$ for the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of greater than 0.5.

Table 6.13: Public procurement expertise KMO and Bartlett's Test

Public procurement expertise KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.829
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	679.446
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Source**:** Data Analysis (2023).

This study was aimed at identifying the influence of public procurement expertise on service delivery and value for money. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was utilised to collect the eigenvalues as well as pinpointing the required principal components. Additionally, correlated public procurement expertise items were found using a rotated component matrix. On the other hand, the total variance explanation was performed using Kaiser's normalisation criterion and eigenvalues for public procurement expertise and the scores that were recovered are displayed in Table 6.14 below.

Table 6.14: Public procurement expertise Total Variance Explained

Public procurement expertise Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.475	57.911	57.911	3.475	57.911	57.911
2	1.035	17.242	75.153	1.035	17.242	75.153
3	.555	9.244	84.396			
4	.410	6.827	91.224			
5	.317	5.283	96.507			
6	.210	3.493	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The first eigenvalues produced by the statistical software package SPSS version 21 are displayed in Table 6.14, demonstrating that the eigenvalues of the first two components that is components 1 and 2 are greater than one. The first component, which has an eigenvalue of 3.475, accounts for 57.91% of the variation in the public procurement expertise for the public procurement data set. 17.24% of the variation in the data set on public procurement expertise can be attributed to the second component, which has an eigenvalue of 1.035.

Following the computation of initial eigenvalues for components exceeding the recommended threshold of one (1), the subsequent step involved selecting measurement elements with factor loadings surpassing 0.5. The findings of the major component analysis displaying these high factor loadings are represented by the varimax rotated component matrix, which is displayed in the table below. When using the measurement items' fundamental dimensions, the factor loadings for each measurement item can be distinguished easily owing to the use of varimax

rotation (Acal, Aguilera, & Escabias, 2020). The results of the rotated component matrix for the variable indicating knowledge in public procurement are shown in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15: Public procurement expertise rotated component matrix[a]

Component Matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
PPE1	.905	
PPE2	.863	
PPE3	.793	
PPE4	.686	
PPE5	.775	
PPE6		.799
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Table 6.15 above includes the measured factors that significantly load into the main components or measures of public procurement knowledge, together with the results of the varimax rotation for each of these dimensions. Factor loadings for the first component, which covered PPE1 to PPE5, ranged from 0.686 to 0.905 and revealed a high loading on five measurement items. One measurement item (PPE6) had a significant factor loading into the second component of 0.799.

6.3.4 Procurement management PCA results

The outcomes shown in Table 6.16 below demonstrate that exploratory factor analysis was feasible due to the minimum requirements being met. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance level of $p < 0.000$ and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of larger than 0.5, equally indicate that the results satisfy the minimum requirements.

Table 6.16: Procurement management KMO and Bartlett's Test

Procurement management KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.822
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	481.179
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

One of the goals of this study was to describe procurement management within public procurement. The eigenvalues were gathered, and the principal components were identified using a principal component analysis. A rotatable component matrix was also used to locate related procurement management components. The scores that were obtained from the total variance explanation using Kaiser's normalisation criterion and eigenvalues for procurement management are shown in Table 6.17 below.

Table 6.17: Procurement management Total Variance Explained

Procurement management Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.302	47.168	47.168	3.302	47.168	47.168
2	1.021	14.588	61.756	1.021	14.588	61.756
3	.761	10.868	72.623			
4	.607	8.668	81.292			
5	.494	7.064	88.356			
6	.447	6.389	94.744			
7	.368	5.256	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

In Table 6.17 above, the initial eigenvalues generated by the statistical program SPSS version 21 are shown. It is evident from the table that the eigenvalues of the initial two components, specifically components 1 and 2, surpass the value of one. 47.17% of the variation in the procurement management for the public procurement data set is accounted for by the first component, which has an eigenvalue of 3.302. In the data set on public procurement process,

14.59% of the variation may be attributed to the second component, which has an eigenvalue of 1.021.

After computing the initial eigenvalues for components surpassing the suggested threshold of one, the next step involved selecting measurement elements with factor loadings exceeding 0.5. The varimax rotated component matrix, which is shown in the table below, is a representation of the results of the major component analysis exhibiting these high factor loadings. When using the measurement items' primary dimensions, the factor loadings for each measurement item can be distinguished clearly owing to varimax rotation (Acal et al., 2020). The outcomes of the rotated component matrix are shown in Table 6.18 for the variable that represents the procurement management.

Table 6.18: Procurement management rotated component matrix[a]

Procurement management rotated component matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
PM1	.612	
PM2	.612	
PM3	.672	
PM4	.736	
PM5	.787	
PM6	.761	
PM7	.602	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Method of Rotation: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The results of the varimax rotation that are shown in Table 6.18 above are for both the measured variables that heavily load onto the main dimensions of procurement management as well as the major components or measurements of procurement management. It can be observed that all the factor loadings ranged from 0.602 to 0.787, exhibited a high loading on seven measurement items exclusively in the first component, covering PM1 to PM7 inclusively.

6.3.5 Service delivery PCA Results

The outcomes shown in Table 6.19 below demonstrate that exploratory factor analysis was feasible due to the minimum requirements being met. Both the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

significance level of p <0.000, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of larger than 0.5, indicate that the results satisfy the minimum requirements.

Table 6.19: Service delivery KMO and Bartlett's Test

Service delivery KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.776
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	691.780
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

One of the goals of this study was to describe the process of providing services through public procurement. A principal component analysis was used to collect the eigenvalues and identify the major components. Locating associated service delivery components also required the usage of a rotatable component matrix. Kaiser's normalisation criterion and the eigenvalues for service delivery were used to calculate the scores from the total variance explanation, which are displayed in Table 6.20 below.

Table 6.20: Service Delivery Total Variance Explained

Service Delivery Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.337	55.621	55.621	3.337	55.621	55.621
2	1.009	16.819	72.440	1.009	16.819	72.440
3	.855	14.246	86.686			
4	.320	5.337	92.023			
5	.277	4.621	96.644			
6	.201	3.356	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

In Table 6.20 above, the initial eigenvalues generated by the statistical program SPSS version 21 are shown. It is evident from the illustration that the eigenvalues of the initial two components, specifically components 1 and 2, exceed the value of one. Of these values, 55.62% of the variation in the provision of public services by way of government procurement data set is accounted for by the first component, which has an eigenvalue of 3.337. In the data set on

service delivery, 16.82% of the variation is attributed to the second component, which has an eigenvalue of 1.009.

The subsequent stage included generating initial eigenvalues for components surpassing the designated threshold of one and subsequently choosing measurement elements with factor loadings exceeding 0.5. The varimax rotated component matrix, shown in the table below, serves as a representation of the major component analysis results exhibiting these high factor loadings. The factor loadings for each measurement item can be separated easily when employing the primary dimensions of the measurement items in line with varimax rotation (Acal et al., 2020). The table 6.21 underneath shows the results of the rotated component matrix for the variable that denotes service delivery.

Table 6.21: Service delivery rotated component matrix[a]

Service delivery rotated component matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
SD1	.814	
SD2	.814	
SD3	.440	
SD4	.870	
SD5	.759	
SD6	.697	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

Source**:** Data Analysis (2023).

The results of the varimax rotation are shown in Table 6.21 above for both the measurable variables that substantially load into these dimensions as well as the major components or metrics of service delivery. With factor loadings of 0.814, 0.814, 0.870, 0.759 and 0.697 which are in the initial component exhibited a high loading on four measurement items, covering SD1, SD2, SD4, SD5 and SD6 inclusively. With factor loading of 0.440, one measurement item (SD3) is loaded into the second component with a value less than the 0.500 standard. If the sample size needed for significance is greater, a loading is considered significant if it exceeds that level. Le & Cheong (2010); and Cheung, & Wang (2017) averred that when the sample size is between 230 and 350, a factor loading of 0.35 is necessary for significance. This explains why the current study's factor loading of 0.440, which is significant and suitable for a sample size of 300, is found.

6.3.6 Value for money PCA Results

As can be seen from the results in Table 6.22 below, exploratory factor analysis was feasible because the minimal requirements were met. The results satisfied the minimum requirements specified by the significance level of p <0.000 for the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of more than 0.5.

Table 6.22: Value for money KMO and Bartlett's Test

Value for money KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.805
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	459.188
	Df	15
	Sig.	.000

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Describing the achievement of value for money in public procurement was one of the goals of this study. A principal component analysis was used to collect the eigenvalues and identify the major components. Locating associated value for money components also required the usage of a rotatable component matrix. Kaiser's normalisation criterion and the eigenvalues for value for money were used to calculate the scores from the total variance explanation, which are displayed in Table 6.23 below.

Table 6.23: Value for money Total Variance Explained

Value for money Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.050	50.837	50.837	3.050	50.837	50.837
2	1.056	17.595	68.432	1.056	17.595	68.432
3	.621	10.358	78.789			
4	.563	9.388	88.178			
5	.399	6.656	94.833			
6	.310	5.167	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

In Table 6.23 above, the initial eigenvalues generated by the statistical program SPSS version 21 are shown. It clearly shows that the eigenvalues of the first two components, or components 1 and 2, are bigger than one. Of these values, 50.84% of the variation in the realisation of

financial value by way of public procurement data set is accounted for by the first component, which has an eigenvalue of 3.050. In the data set on value for money, 17.59% of the variation was attributed to the 2nd component, which has an eigenvalue of 1.056.

After obtaining initial eigenvalues for components exceeding the suggested threshold of one, the subsequent step involved the selection of measurement elements with factor loadings greater than 0.5. The varimax rotated component matrix, which is shown in the table below, represents the results of the major component analysis exhibiting these high factor loadings. Due to varimax rotation, the factor loadings for each measurement item may be recognised easily when employing the primary dimensions of the measurement items (Acal et al., 2020). Table 6.24 displays the results of the rotated component matrix for the value for money variable.

Table 6.24: Value for money rotated component matrix[a]

Value for money rotated component matrix[a]		
	Component	
	1	2
VFM1	.629	
VFM2		.717
VFM3	.686	
VFM4	.855	
VFM5	.762	
VFM6	.808	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation.		
a. 2 components extracted.		

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The above Table 6.24 displays the results of the varimax rotation for the key components or measures value for money as well as the measured variables that heavily load into these dimensions. With factor loadings of 0.629 and 0.686 to 0.808, the first component exhibited a high loading on five measurement items, covering VFM1 and VFM3 to VFM6 inclusively. With factor loadings of 0.717, one measurement item (VFM2) significantly loaded into the second component. The examination of measurement accuracy, that is, the reliability and validity tests is covered in the next subsection.

6.4 ASSESSMENT OF MEASUREMENT ACCURACY

Testing the validity and reliability of the measurement items is a part of evaluating measurement accuracy. These tests played a vital role in this study as the original six variables underwent modifications and additions to align with the needs of the current study context. The following section explores the validity and reliability tests employed in this research.

6.4.1 Reliability tests

Reliability is the degree to which results from an independent but comparable evaluation of a latent variable using comparable items are constant over time, across groups of people, or across instruments, (Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). Testing for reliability determines the accuracy and consistency of measurements or data acquired from a certain instrument, questionnaire, or assessment tool. The fundamental objective of reliability testing is to evaluate how well the measurement method yields consistent and repeatable data over time and under various conditions (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

High reliability denotes that the measures are dependable and free of random errors, which raises the validity of the measurements' findings. The reliability of metrics can be evaluated using a variety of approaches and tests (Black et al., 2019). Researchers and practitioners can use reliability tests to assess the consistency and dependability of their measurement tools, which is essential for deriving valid conclusions from the data obtained. There are various ways to evaluate reliability, and each is appropriate for a particular set of data and measurement tools. Item-total correlations, Cronbach's alpha, and the split-half reliability coefficient are a few examples of reliability metrics (Pallant, 2020). In the present study, the evaluation of measurement reliability was conducted using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and scores for item-total correlation.

6.4.1.1 Cronbach’s coefficient alpha

The coefficient alpha, commonly known as Cronbach's coefficient alpha, is a statistic that is used to assess how effectively a set of measurement items captures a single latent variable (Rose & Johnson, 2020). An effective indicator of internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha. It evaluates the average correlation between each item on a test or questionnaire. Good internal consistency and reliability are indicated by a high Cronbach's alpha score, which is often above 0.7 or 0.8.

For all possible ways to divide a collection of items in half, the average reliability component can be calculated using the widely used internal consistency metric known as the Cronbach's coefficient (Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). In the case of scales or surveys containing multiple items, Cronbach's alpha is a frequently employed statistical metric to gauge internal consistency and reliability. For instruments that comprise measurement items with more than three questions, Cronbach's alpha was also said to be a more forgiving method (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The four-question essay test and Likert scale questions are two examples of this type of test. Given that the present study incorporated Likert scale inquiries, the choice of Cronbach's coefficient was deemed suitable for gauging the internal consistency of the variables.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients, spanning from 0.00 to 1.00, reflect the consistency of the internal structure of the measurement items. Conversely, a value of 0.00 signifies complete uniformity in the measurement items employed for computing a specific latent variable. Alternatively, a score of 1.00 signifies absolute uniformity among the measurement items associated with the latent variable. In certain ways, the more accurate a number is, the closer it is to one. Due to the small number of measurement elements, if the number is lower, there might not be as much uniformity. The importance of reliability coefficients and the fact that the research purpose has a significant impact on consistency should not be overlooked, although there are currently no standards for assessing consistency (Black et al., 2019). Cronbach's alpha requires that the underlying construct being assessed is unidimensional, which means that all items are associated to a single latent factor. Cronbach's alpha may not be a viable internal consistency indicator for a scale that assesses numerous separate variables, and alternative methods, such as factor analysis, may be more acceptable for evaluating the scales or questionnaire's structural reliability (Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). Considering this and using the reliability technique in SPSS version 21, the coefficient values for the study's six latent variables were calculated.

In this research, the internal reliability of each latent variable was evaluated and established through the standardised Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Cronbach's coefficient alpha values greater than or equal to one indicate a higher degree of dependability among the measured items. Additionally, higher item total correlations were employed in this study, along with Cronbach's coefficient alpha, to illustrate statistical concurrence among the examined items. The results of the reliability tests for the current study are presented in Table 6.25 below.

Table 6.25: Reliability tests results

Research Constructs		Descriptive		Cronbach's Test		Composite Reliability	AVE	Factor Loading
		Mean	Std Deviation	Item Total				
Procurement Objectives	PO1	3.637	0.888	0.523	0.832	0.884	0.561	0.672
	PO2			0.564				0.688
	PO3			0.628				0.764
	PO4			0.719				0.839
	PO5			0.7				0.82
	PO6			0.494				0.693
Public Procurement Process	PRP1	3.474	1.050	0.626	0.878	0.939	0.720	0.688
	PRP2			0.371				0.831
	PRP3			0.853				0.932
	PRP4			0.701				0.817
	PRP5			0.788				0.898
	PRP6			0.794				0.902
Public Procurement Expertise	PPE1	3.893	0.931	0.823	0.848	0.917	0.650	0.905
	PPE2			0.777				0.863
	PPE3			0.672				0.793
	PPE4			0.537				0.686
	PPE5			0.661				0.775
	PPE6			0.336				0.799
Procurement Management	PM1	4.165	0.09	0.474	0.812	0.86	0.47	0.612
	PM2			0.469				0.612
	PM3			0.536				0.672
	PM4			0.602				0.736
	PM5			0.663				0.787
	PM6			0.634				0.761
	PM7			0.465				0.602
Service Delivery	SD1	3.576	0.951	0.663	0.82	0.879	0.556	0.814
	SD2			0.669				0.814
	SD3			0.318				0.44
	SD4			0.768				0.87
	SD5			0.624				0.759
	SD6			0.558				0.697
Value For Money	VFM1	3.574	0.061	0.452	0.791	0.882	0.557	0.629
	VFM2			0.333				0.717
	VFM3			0.541				0.686
	VFM4			0.726				0.855
	VFM5			0.599				0.762
	VFM6			0.656				0.808

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The item-to-total ratios for procurement objectives range from 0.494 to 0.719, while those for the public procurement process range from 0.371 to 0.853, according to Table 5.25. The figures for expertise in public procurement range from 0.336 to 0.823. While the statistics for service delivery range from 0.318 to 0.768, the item-to-total ratios for procurement management range from 0.465 to 0.663. Finally, the value for money item-to-total ratios ranges from 0.333 to

0.726. According to the study's findings, all the measuring items used to represent the six latent variables had item-to-total ratios that exceeded the 0.3 acceptable cut off point, making them all valid (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020).

The Cronbach's alpha values for the six latent variables in the research varied between 0.791 and 0.878, as indicated in Table 6.25. Notably, all Cronbach's alpha values for each research parameter exceeded the accepted threshold of 0.7. Additionally, all item-to-total ratios surpassed the crucial cutoff of 0.3, and the Cronbach's alpha values approached one, signifying that the selected measurement variables in the study were not only excellent but also fitting (Black et al., 2019). To evaluate the internal consistency of scale items, the study looked at composite reliability as well as Cronbach's alpha. Table 6.25 showed composite reliability values between 0.860 and 0.939, which is greater than the cutoff value of 0.7 (Kumar et al., 2021). These study results are a clear indication that the internal consistency was attained.

6.4.1.2 Construct validity

Structural validity was defined by Bashir and Marudhar (2018) as the reliability of a measuring tool which is utilised to statistically measure the latent variable. It describes how properly a measurement or test evaluates the theoretical construct or notion that it is meant to measure. Construct validity is the question of whether the assessment accurately captures the underlying theoretical notion or feature that it is intended to measure.

Rose and Johnson (2020) also defined it as a metric for precision that assesses the extent to which a concept, idea, or behaviour undergoes modification or conversion into a practical and functional reality. Establishing construct validity is a continuous process that entails gathering proof from many sources to back up a measurement's interpretation and use. To make meaningful inferences from their research findings, researchers must ensure that the assessment instruments they use appropriately reflect the constructs they seek to explore (Knezevic et al., 2020). Convergent validity and discriminant validity are the two criteria used to assess a construct's validity. Convergent validity is covered in more detail in the following section.

Convergent validity

Convergent validity, as defined by Black et al. (2019), is the extent to which the measuring items adequately represent the homogeneity of the latent variable. A measuring item must have a high correlation with the other identical items tested for the same latent variable. For instance,

the convergent validity of this study predicts a substantial connection between the other measurement items that evaluate procurement objectives and the measurement items within the same latent variable (such as PO1, PO2, and PO3). It is anticipated that these criteria related to procurement objectives will have a weak correlation with those related to the public procurement process within rural district councils, public procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery, and value for money in RDCs. As suggested by Bashir and Marudhar (2018), the evaluation of convergent validity involved examining whether the factor loadings of each measurement item exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.5.

Table 6.25 shows that 6 measurement items for Procurement Objectives (PO1 through to PO6) had factor loadings that ranged between 0.672 and 0.839 and were greater than the permitted level of 0.5. Six measurement items (PRP1 to PRP6) for the public procurement process are also included in Table 6.25 with factor loadings greater than 0.5. For this variable, factor loadings ranged from 0.688 to 0.932. In addition, Table 6.25 lists 6 public procurement expertise in RDCs (PPE1 to PPE6) with factor loadings larger than 0.5 and ranging from 0.686 to 0.905. Seven components for procurement management in RDCs (PM1-PM7) are summarised in Table 6.25, with factor loadings ranging from 0.602 to 0.787 for all items. Additionally, Table 6.25 lists 6 (SD1 to SD6) items that correspond to service delivery, each of the factors SD1, SD2, SD4, SD5 and SD6 had a factor loading that is greater than 0.5 and measured 0.814, 0.814, 0.870, 0.759 and 0.697 respectively. However, service delivery in RDCs was also represented by one component (SD3) that accounted for less than 0.50 loading which measured 0.440 and was therefore excluded from further statistical analysis. Finally, the Table 6.25 displays 6 (VFM1 to VFM6) items for value for money, all of which have factor loadings above 0.5, ranging from 0.629 to 0.855. Therefore, the convergent validity was attained in this investigation, as shown by the finding that all six latent variables had factor loadings over 0.5. The discriminant validity is examined in the section that follows.

Discriminant validity

Knezevic et al. (2020) characterised discriminant validity as a technique for appraising the validity of a construct, emphasising the extent of distinctiveness among different indicators. In this investigation, discriminant validity was gauged by employing Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values below one. It is essential for discriminant validity that the correlation coefficients between pairs of research variables are less than one (1.0) when they lack a connection. This aligns with prior studies conducted by Dixon and Johnston (2019) and Bashir and Marudhar

(2018), asserting that establishing discriminant validity involves demonstrating a correlation value between variables below 0.1. As clarified earlier, the existence of discriminant validity is indicated by AVE values below one. The methods outlined earlier, as discussed, were implemented to evaluate the discriminant validity of the constructs utilised in this study.

6.5 MODEL ACCEPTABILITY USING CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Schreiber (2021) defined Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) as a statistical method applied in the social sciences and psychometrics to evaluate the reliability of a theoretical model and verify the measurement capabilities of observable variables. Schreiber (2021) postulates that CFA is a sort of structural equation modelling (SEM) that tries to support or disprove a priori theories regarding the fundamental structure of latent variables and their connections to observable variables. Witvliet et al., (2023) contend that the main objectives of CFA are to evaluate the observed variables' congruence with the postulated latent components and the estimation of the strength of these correlations. The goodness of fit between the suggested model and the observed data is measured by researchers using a variety of fit indices (Marsh et al., 2020).

In CFA, a theoretical model is put forth by the researcher and includes several latent (unobservable) elements and the corresponding observed indicators (variables). The underlying concepts or dimensions that cannot be observed directly but are thought to have an impact on the observable variables are represented by the latent factors (Witvliet et al., 2023). The quantifiable factors that are thought to be connected to the latent components are known as the observed indicators. The CFA was used in this study as the approach is ideal for ordered categorical variables like Likert type scale data which characterise the current study (Schreiber, 2021).

In the current study, the consistency and accuracy of the measuring tools were evaluated using CFA carried out in AMOS version 21. Some of the measurement items (PRP4, PPE5 and PM6) that had factor loadings that were less than the obligatory threshold of 0.5 were excluded from the CFA testing to achieve an appropriate model fit and to assess the validity and consistency of the measurement items. Several recommendations for model fit were generated to enhance the understanding of the assumptions associated with Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in the development of diverse and intricate models. As

postulated by Brown (2015), there is no single statistical test of significance that can be used to determine whether a particular model is suitable for the sample data provided. Instead, fit indices for the CFA and SEM are used. The chi-square index was the first of 11 benchmarks for model fit that were used to assess the model's overall fit (Ashraf, Rahman, Hossain & Sarker, 2020). In evaluating the overall adequacy of the research model, the investigation employed 10 criteria for model fit, discussed in the subsequent sections, beginning with the chi-square index as per Kline's (2015) study.

The common indices and standards for CFA model fit acceptability that are recommended are shown on the Table 6.26 below. A favourable model fit is determined by the chi-square statistic divided by degrees of freedom (2/df) falling within the range of 1 to 3. The table also illustrates that achieving values equal to or exceeding 0.90 for the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), along with a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value equal to or less than 0.08, as depicted in Table 6.26 below, serves as indicators of a satisfactory model fit. Additionally, a model is considered to have a good fit if values for the Parsimonious Fit Index (PClose), Relative Non-Centrality Index (RNI), and McDonald's Centrality Index (CI) are 0.9 or above.

However, Witvliet et al. (2023) highlighted that these fit indices must be interpreted in conjunction with one another because no one index can give a comprehensive picture of model fit. They posit that fit indices are not absolute metrics, and the complexity of the model under test as well as the specific study setting may affect how they should be interpreted. Considering the limits of CFA and SEM, caution should be taken when interpreting results and consider a variety of fit indices. The findings of the CFA for the chosen 10 model fit indices are highlighted in the following sections.

Table 6.26: The Model Fit Indices and Level Interpretation

Explication of Goodness of Fit Criterion	Acronym	Acceptable Level	Level Interpretation
Chi-square	(x^2)	Low² value (relative to degrees of freedom) with significance level < .05	Value greater than .05 reflects acceptable fit. Values between 0.05 and 0.20 indicate a good fit. Non-significant & small values show good fit. Significant and large values show poor fit
Chi-square/df	CMIN/DF	Ratio 2:1 or 3:1	Values close to 1 reflect good model fit, values < 3 reflect acceptable fit
Goodness of Fit Index	GFI	0.90 or higher	Values > .90 reflect good fit shows the number of variances explained by model. It is the equivalent of R2 in multiple regressions
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	AGFI	≥ 0.90 = acceptable fit	Adjusted for the degrees of freedom Values > .90 reflect a good fit. Adjusts model fit for the degrees of freedom relative to the number of variables
Root Mean Square Residuals	RMSR or RMS or RMR	0.08 or lower	Values near 0 indicate a good fit, while the marginal acceptability threshold is 0.08 shows the average quantity of variances and covariance that the model is unable to account for.
Model Comparison and Relative fit measures			
Tucker- Lewis Index or Bentler-Bonett Non-Normed Fit Index	TLI or BBNNFI	Value close to 1	Values over 0.90 indicate a good fit, penalise for model complexity, and compare the theoretical model of interest with an absolute null model.
Normed Fit Index (NFI) or Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (BBNFI) or DELTA 1	TLI or BBNNFI or DELTA 1	Value close to 1	Values below .90 indicate the need to specify model
Incremental Fit Index	IFI or BL89 or DELTA	.90 or higher	Values = or > .90 reflect a good fit
Relative Fit Index	RFI or RH01	Values close to 1	Values > .90 reflect a good fit
Model Parsimony and Parsimonious fit measures			
Parsimony Ratio	PRATIO	.90 or higher	Demonstrates the extent to which releasing limited parameters can lead to good fit.
Parsimonious Fit Index	PCLOSE	.90 or higher	Values >.90 represent a good fit, while values near 0 and 1 imply no fit and a perfect fit, respectively.
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (measure of	RMSEA or RMS, RMSE	< .08	Values below.05 show a good fit. Values in the range of.05 and.08 indicate a reasonable fit. It estimates the population covariance matrix's closeness to the fitted model.

misfit), discrepancy per			

Source: Adapted from Uedufy (2023).

The results of the CFA for the chosen ten model fit indices in this research are highlighted on Table 6.27 below. This was done to assess the fitness of the model in this case in line with the proposed standards of a model fit.

Table 6.27: The Results of Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Actual Results	Recommended	Sources
Chi-square/ d. f. (CMIN/DF)	3.85	≤ 3 = acceptable fit ≤ 5 = reasonable fit	Kline (1998). Marsh & Hocevar (1985);
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.089	<0.08 = Good fit	Malkanthie (2015);
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	0.078	≤ 0.07 = acceptable fit	Steiger (2007);
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.932	≥ 0.90 = acceptable fit	West et al. (2012); Fan et al. (1999)
Normal Fit Index (NFI)	0.871	A value close to 0.90 reflects a good fit.	MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara (1996); Malkanthie (2015)
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	0.927	A value close to 0.90 reflects a good fit.	MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara (1996); Malkanthie (2015)
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.932	≥ 0.90 = good fit	Sideridis & Jaffari, 2021)
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.862	≥ 0.90 = good fit	Forza & Filippini (1998);
Goodness Of Fit Index (GFI)	0.715	A value close to 0.95 reflects a good fit.	MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara (1996); Malkanthie (2015)
Parsimony ratio (PRATIO)	0.935	≥ 0.90 = good fit	Jin, Vegelius & Yang-Wallentin (2020)

Source: Data analysis (2023).

As indicated in the above Table 6.27, the measurement model yielded a ratio of 3.85 for the chi-square value to degrees of freedom. It is recommended according to the standards of model fit index to use a threshold between 1 and 3. Despite having a value above 3 as shown by the results on the table, the current study's difference of 0.85 is still acceptable for a model fit.

Hung (2020) posits that model with chi-square to degrees of freedom values less than 5 is considered to fit data well. As a result, the current study's 3.85, chi-square to degrees of freedom figure is only lightly accepted and shows that the model fits the data well. It can be noted that Table 6.27 also displays CFI, TLI, PRATIO and IFI values which fall above the expected boundary of 0.9 or higher, which shows that there is a satisfactory model fit (0.932, 0.927, 0.935 and 0.932, respectively).

In line with the opinion of Forza and Filippini (1998), and Jin, Vegelius and Yang-Wallentin (2020), the NFI, RFI, and GFI values of 0.871, 0.862, and 0.715 respectively, are slightly below the usually expected 0.90 as demonstrated in Table 6.27 but are still sufficient for model fit. The RMR result as shown in Table 6.27 is 0.078 and it is less than 0.08, resulting in an acceptable model fit. On the other hand, a RMSEA value of 0.089 is also displayed in the table, again demonstrating an acceptable model fit. The result is within the acceptable range of 0.09 or less even if it is above the range of between 0.05 and 0.08 that produces a satisfactory model fit. Consistent with the criteria for model fit acceptance outlined in Table 6.26 and the specific results for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) model fit presented in Table 6.27 above, all 10 chosen model fit indices indicate a satisfactory overall fit of the measurement model to the provided sample data. Further elaboration on the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) model fit concerning hypothesis testing is provided in the subsequent section before progressing to the structural model analysis.

6.6 SEM CONCEPTUAL MODEL FIT ASSESSMENTS

This section focuses on evaluating the fit of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) model by initially establishing a model fit to create an effective model. The assessment employs the 10 model fit indices introduced in Section 6.5 (CFA model fit). The details of the results were covered in more depth on Table 6.27 which displays the outcomes. The following section focuses on the Chi-square.

6.6.1 Chi-square (x^2)

The chi-square statistic measures the difference between the implied covariance matrix based on the estimated parameters of the model and the observed covariance matrix (Ashraf, Rahman, Hossain, & Sarker, 2020). It is calculated by comparing the sample's observed covariance

matrix to the model's anticipated covariance matrix. A low chi-square value denotes a strong fit, with the projected covariance matrix closely matching the observed covariance matrix. A high chi-square score, on the other hand, denotes a large discrepancy between the model and the data, indicating a poor fit (Kline, 2015).

To ensure a minor difference between the repeatedly inferred covariance matrix and the sample variance-covariance matrix, such that it is statistically insignificant, the chi-square test must be employed (Ashraf, Rahman, Hossain, & Sarker, 2020). As postulated by Do and Huang (2022), the replicated implied covariance matrix and the scores within the covariance matrix must agree in all respects for the chi-square to have a value of zero, which denotes a model fit which is perfect. The chi-square outcome is close to zero or lacks significance, in other words, when the residual values within the residual matrix approach zero. Ashraf, Rahman, Hossain, and Sarker (2020)averred that this shows that the theoretically proposed model is observed and closely resembles the observed facts.

However, there are various limitations associated with Chi-square which reduces its effectiveness in achieving the best results. Chi-square statistics are sensitive to sample size and are influenced by sample size, making large samples more likely to yield significant results. It might not be the best fit index for huge datasets as a result (Kline, 2015). The chi-square statistic is also sensitive to model complexity and tends to punish complex models, which may cause models with many parameters to be rejected (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2023). On the other hand, when comparing hierarchical models with various degrees of complexity, this might be troublesome. Where the chi-square test considers the multivariate normality of the data, the chi-square statistic might be wrong if this supposition is incorrect. Kline (2015) noted that due to its sample-specific fit, the chi-square statistic is susceptible to variations in the data because it depends on the sample being examined.

Since multivariate normality and large deviations from normality are fundamental premises of the chi-square index, it should be used in conjunction with other model fit indices to overcome its limitations of occasionally rejecting a fully described model (Hung, 2020). It is noteworthy that no one fit index can completely reflect the model fit; hence, it is critical to employ a combination of these fit indices. The study setting, sample size, and model complexity may all be used as the assessment factors in the fitness of the model. The next section discusses the Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

6.6.2 Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)

Various statistical modelling methods such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), use the well-known goodness-of-fit metric known as Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Shi, DiStefano, Maydeu-Olivares & Lee, 2022). It evaluates the disparity between the observed covariance matrix and the model's indicated covariance matrix while taking the model's complexity and degrees of freedom into consideration (Middleton, 2020). The average difference per degree of freedom between the covariance matrices suggested by the model and the observed covariance matrices is squared to determine the RMSEA, which is a population discrepancy function. As postulated by Middleton (2020), the model's projected parameter count has the biggest impact on the RMSEA, and its greatest benefit is the ability to determine the confidence interval around the outcome.

A robust model fit was defined as having an RMSEA value of less than 0.10, and a poor model fit as having a value more than 1.0 in the early 1990s (Nye, Joo, Zhang, & Stark, 2020). As postulated by Brown (2015), a good model fit is one with an RMSEA score of less than 1.0. However, Middleton (2020) asserted that RMSEA values of less than 0.05, between 0.05 and 0.08, and greater than 0.08, respectively, indicate a weak model fit. In SEM, the RMSEA is a useful fit indicator that takes model complexity into account and is less sensitive to sample size than the chi-square statistic. To acquire a thorough evaluation of model fit and to make informed judgments about model alterations or enhancements, it is important to frequently utilise RMSEA in conjunction with other fit indices (Shi, DiStefano, Maydeu-Olivares & Lee, 2022).

6.6.3 Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)

The Root Mean Square Residual is determined by taking the square root of the average of the squared residuals (Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). The discrepancy between the actual value (data point) observed and the value anticipated by the model for the same data point is known as a residual (Widodo, 2020). The square root of the resulting average is used to calculate the RMSR after the squared residuals have been averaged. An approachable style is used to represent the average residuals utilising the correlation matrix metric used in the RMR.

All standardised residuals between 0 and 1 are added to determine the matrix's output value. As a result, when the RMR value becomes closer to 0, the model's fit gets better (Bashir &

Marudhar, 2018). The RMSR assesses how well the model's forecasts match the actual data. Better model and data fit is shown by smaller RMSR values. Conversely, higher RMSR values denote a worse fit, implying that the model's predictions considerably depart from the observed data points (Widodo, 2020). In line with a criterion put forward by Ashraf, Rahman, Hossain, and Sarker (2020), values near to zero indicate a strong model fit, whereas values of 0.08 or less reflect a moderately satisfactory model fit.

6.6.4 The Comparative Fit Index (CFI)

A version of the NFI that takes sample size into account is called the CFI. A different name for it is the Bentler comparative fit index. CFI is a measure of incremental model fit that compares the fit of a research model to a baseline or null model (Middleton, 2020). It compares the sample covariance matrix to the null model under the assumption that all latent variables are statistically independent (null/baseline model) (Brown, 2015). Complex mathematical calculations are required to compute the CFI. It considers both the discrepancy function of the saturated model (a model with perfect fit), which is the discrepancy between the hypothesised model and the null model. These differences lead to the CFI, which provides a uniform measure of fit model (Montoya & Edwards, 2021).

The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) assesses the fit by comparing the null model to the observed covariance matrix, determining the extent of fit improvement achievable by transitioning to the specified Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) model (Brown, 2015). It has a numerical value between 0 and 1, with values nearer 1 showing greater significance and superior model fit. Middleton (2020) characterises a satisfactory model fit as achieving a threshold value of 0.9 or higher, indicating that the model in question can reproduce 90% or more of the co-variation present in the data. One must constantly interpret the results considering the research issue and the available data because no one fit index can definitively evaluate the quality of a model (Montoya & Edwards, 2021).

6.6.5 Incremental Fit Index (IFI)

The IFI is one of several fit indices that are used to assess how well the proposed model fits the data. Due to the comparison between the fit of the hypothesised model and the fit of a reference or null model, it is regarded as an incremental fit index (Sahoo, 2019). Since there are no correlations between the variables in the baseline model, it fits the data the least well. The IFI determines the increase in fit between the proposed model and the baseline model. The

IFI is like the NFI in terms of model fit, with the exception that it also considers degrees of freedom (Sideridis & Jaffari, 2021).

To address the parsimony and sample size issues with the NFI, Bollen (1990) developed this index. The statistical value of IFI varies from 0 to 1, with 1 denoting the best match. The IFI value, however, may occasionally be greater than one (Sahoo, 2019). IFI should ideally have a guideline value of 0.9 or higher to produce a satisfactory model fit (Sideridis & Jaffari, 2021). Higher values denote better model fit, and the IFI typically ranges from 0 to 1. A number that approaches 1 denotes a satisfactory fit between the proposed model and the baseline model.

6.6.6 Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)

The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), derived from an index formulated by Tucker and Lewis in 1973, is commonly known as the non-normed fit index (NNFI). The NNFI addresses certain problems related to negative bias and may, at times, exhibit values beyond the typical 0 to 1 range. Like the IFI, the TLI is based on the concept of comparing the chi-square goodness-of-fit statistic of the suggested model with that of the reference model (Shi, DiStefano, Maydeu-Olivares, & Lee, 2022). The TLI, on the other hand, includes a degrees-of-freedom adjustment, making it a more reliable fit index, particularly for models with complicated structures or small sample sizes (Cai, Chung & Lee, 2023).

Brown (2015) asserts that the NFI and NNFI values should both fall within the range of 0 and 1, with a cut-off of 0.90 indicating a good model fit. The average magnitude of the data's correlations is inversely proportional to the TLI. The TLI will also be low if there is a low average correlation between the variables. Cai, Chung, and Lee (2023) emphasised that it is critical to remember that no one fit index offers a comprehensive picture of model fit, and researchers should interpret the findings considering other fit indices, theoretical considerations, and the context of their research.

6.6.7 The Normed Fit Index (NFI)

An alternative to CFI's construction is that of NFI, a model fit index. The Bentler-Bonnet normed fit index (BBNFI), also known as Delta 1, is another designation for the NFI. The NFI measures the model's contribution to the overall covariance, as outlined by (Sideridis & Jaffari, 2021). The research model's improvement in model fit (random variables) over the null model is quantified. NFI values range from 0 to 1, where 1 signifies an optimal fit, 0.9 or higher

indicates a favourable match, and 0 denotes no fit. An NFI value of 0.9 or above signals a satisfactory model fit, in contrast to values below 0.9, suggest a need for model modification (Sahoo, 2019). Scores above 0.80 continue to denote a satisfactory fit (Forza & Filippini, 1998). The GFI is discussed in the subsequent section.

6.6.8 Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)

The proportionate variation predicted by population covariance estimations is quantified by GFI (Jin et al., 2020). Sideridis and Jaffari (2021) posited that the GFI metric can be used to assess how well the projected model matches the actual covariance matrix. The covariance and variances that the model considers are used to construct this similarity index. The GFI metric is employed to gauge a model's capacity to explain a segment of the observed covariance. Apart from the fact that it cannot be understood as the percentage of model error, it is comparable to R2 in multiple regression. According to this, GFI is more interested in precisely reproducing the variance-covariance matrix than R square, which is more interested in the error variance in multiple regression. The GFI statistic typically has a value between 0 and 1. Nye, Joo, Zhang, and Stark (2020) hypothesise that the index might occasionally produce findings that are unreasonably low. As the sample size and the number of calculated parameters increase, the index values also increase. As noted by Bollen (1990), achieving a satisfactory model fit demands a GFI score of at least 0.90.

Jin, Vegelius, and Yang-Wallentin (2020), on the other hand, stressed that any value more than 0.80 is acceptable for model fit. Model fit cannot be determined only by GFI due to its high sensitivity, particularly to sample size and the amount of parameter estimations. Against this background, the GFI is combined with the above-mentioned alternate model fit indices. The next section presents the outcomes of the SEM model fit.

6.7 SEM RESULTS BASED ON THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Table 6.28: Results of the structural equation model

Fit Index	Actual Results	Recommended	Sources
Chi-square/ d. f. (CMIN/DF)	3.252	≤ 3 = acceptable fit ≤ 5 = reasonable fit	Kline (1998); Marsh & Hocevar (1985);
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.088	<0.08 = Good fit	Malkanthie (2015);
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR)	0.079	≤ 0.07 = acceptable fit	Steiger (2007);
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.921	≥ 0.90 = acceptable fit	West et al. (2012); Fan et al. (1999)
Normal Fit Index (NFI)	0.809	A value close to 0.90 reflects a good fit.	MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara (1996); Malkanthie (2015)
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	0.844	A value close to 0.90 reflects a good fit.	MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara (1996); Malkanthie (2015)
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.902	≥ 0.90 = good fit	Sideridis & Jaffari, 2021)
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.801	≥ 0.90 = good fit	Forza & Filippini (1998);
Goodness Of Fit Index (GFI)	0.838	A value close to 0.95 reflects a good fit.	MacCallum, Browne & Sugawara (1996); Malkanthie (2015)
Parsimony ratio (PRATIO)	0.909	≥ 0.90 = good fit	Jin, Vegelius & Yang-Wallentin (2020)

Source: Data analysis (2023).

The measurement model, as shown in Table 6.28, generated a chi-square value to the degree of freedom ratio of 3.252, which is acceptable for a model fit as it has degrees-of-freedom values less than 5 (Hung, 2020). Table 6.28 also shows values for CFI, IFI, and PRATIO that are larger than or equal to the advised threshold of 0.9 (0.921, 0.912, and 0.909, respectively). Table 6.28 reports NFI, TLI, RFI and GFI values of (0.809, 0.844, 0.801), and 838 which are slightly below 0.90 but still sufficient for model fit (Jin, Vegelius and Yang-Wallentin, 2020; Malkanthie, 2015).

The RMR value in Table 6.28, which is 0.079 and below the threshold of 0.08, signifies a favourable model fit. Additionally, the table indicates that the RMSEA value, measuring 0.088 and falling within the acceptable range of 0.05 to 0.08, also demonstrates a satisfactory fit as it lies within this specified range. The results of the actual CFA model fit are presented in Table

6.28 above, with the selection of 10 model fit indices aimed at ensuring the structural model attains an adequate level of overall fitness to the provided sample data.

6.7.1 SEM conceptual model

According to the study, the service delivery is positively impacted by procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, and procurement management. On the other hand, procurement objectives, procurement process, and procurement expertise were mediated by service delivery, which had a significant impact on value for money. It was also hypothesised that procurement management would have a positive impact on value for money. In this section, the research explores the proposed linear connections illustrating the impact of procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, procurement management, and service delivery on value for money, as depicted in Figure 6.1 below.

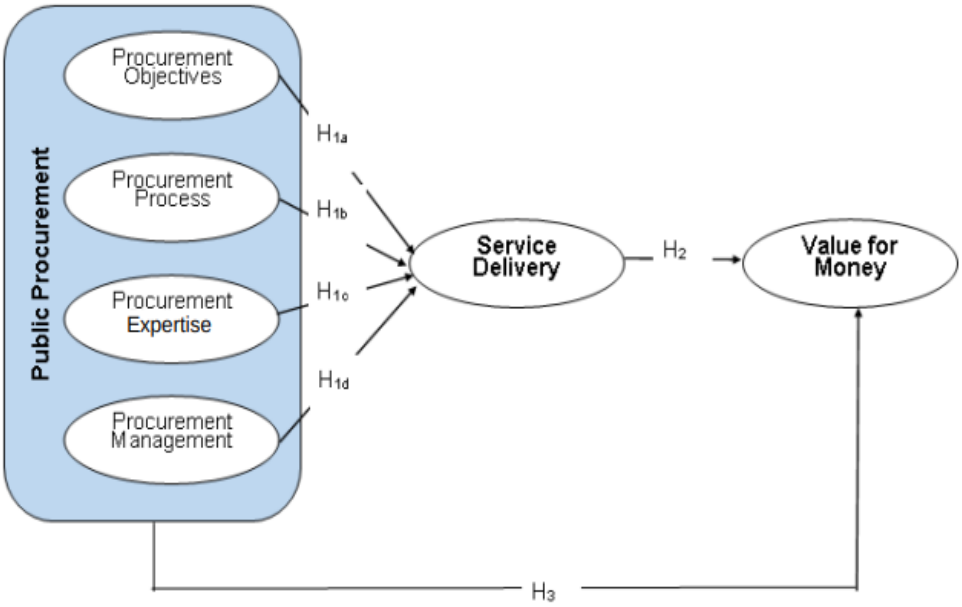

Figure 6.1 Research conceptual model.

Source: Author's Compilation (2023).

As depicted in the above Figure 6.1, there exist six suggested linear associations among the six latent variables investigated in the research: procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery, and value for money. As seen in Figure 6.1, procurement objectives have a positive and significant effect on service delivery (H_{1a}), procurement process has a positive and significant impact on service delivery (H_{1b}), procurement expertise has a positive and significant effect on service delivery (H_{1c})

while procurement management has a positive and significant impact on service delivery (H_{1d}) as well as on value for money (H_3). Finally, the figure demonstrates that service delivery has a positive and significant effect on value for money (H_2). Figure 6.2 shows the outcomes of the hypotheses testing, and the next part provides an explanation.

6.7.2 Hypotheses testing and results.

The SEM results shown in Tables 6.29, 6.30, 6.31, 6.32, 6.33, 6.34, and Figure 6.2 below are used to evaluate the six hypotheses that were tested and determine whether they are significant or insignificant. After the conceptual model was modified, findings were found that supported the remaining assumptions. Following are the findings of the hypotheses:

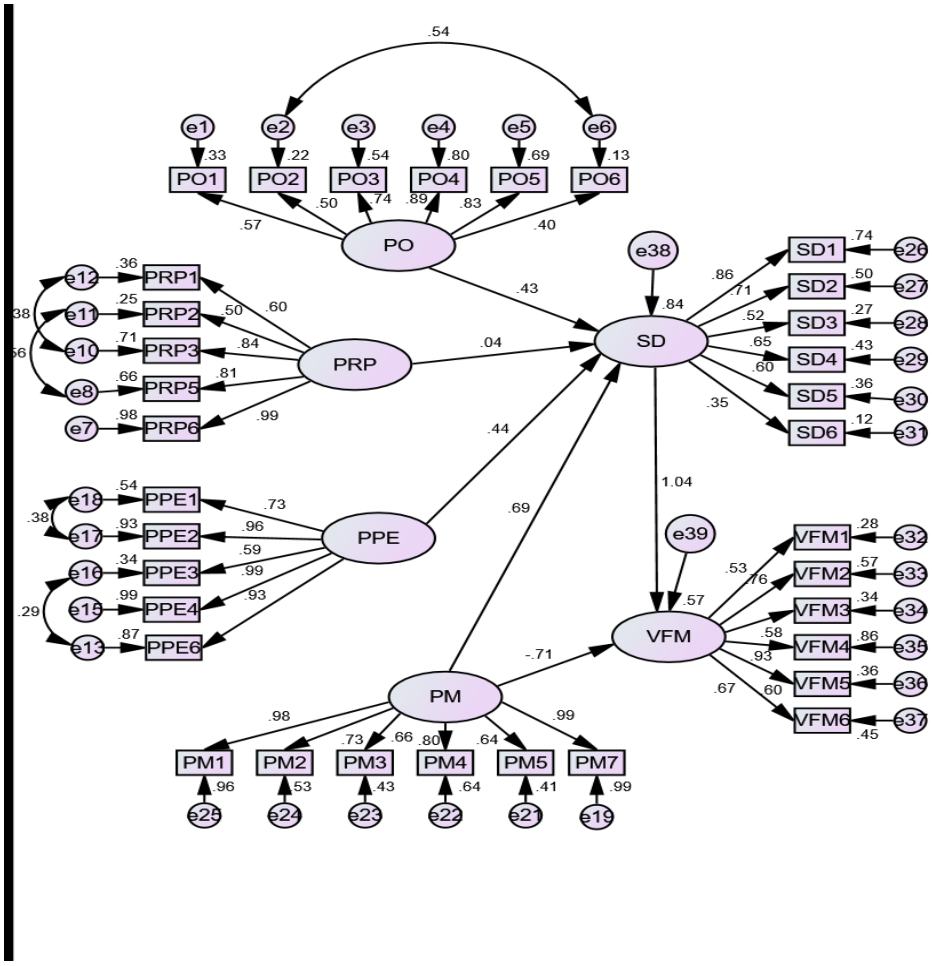

Figure 6.2: SEM conceptual model.

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The model in Figure 6.2 demonstrates complex interrelations between latent variables/ellipses (procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise, procurement management) and their impact on service delivery and value for money and observable variables (rectangles). Multiple observable variables were used to measure each latent variable (Rectangles). For example, PO is quantified by PO1, PO2, PO3, etc., whereas SD is quantified by SD1, SD2, etc. Regression routes (showing direct links between variables) are represented by single headed arrows. For example, PO → SD (.40) that is Procurement Objectives have a moderate positive impact on Service Delivery; PPE → VFM (.69), meaning Procurement Expertise had a strong positive influence on Value for Money and is positively correlated with Procurement Management (PM). PM → VFM (-.71) denoting that Procurement Management had a strong negative influence on Value for Money which indicate inefficiencies or challenges embedded in management that adversely affect outcomes. The double headed arrows represent covariances or correlations such as the correlation between PO and PRP (.54) with error terms or unexplained variance (e1, e2, etc.) for each observed variable. For example, PO1 has an error of .33, while SD1 has an error of .86.

SEM-PATH ANALYSIS

H_{1a}: Procurement objectives positively influence service delivery.

The current study shows that there is a weak but positive and moderate linear relationship between the procurement objectives and service delivery. The moderate level of correlation between procurement objectives and service delivery is shown by a coefficient of 0.43. The formulation of this hypothesis aimed to explore how procurement objectives impact service delivery. Table 6.29 below displays the SEM findings that confirm or deny this notion.

Table 6.29: Hypothesis One SEM Results.

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Procurement Objectives	→	Service Delivery	H_{1a}	0.43	0.083	6.552	C***

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The table illustrates the weak but positive link between procurement objectives and service delivery (path coefficient of 0.43; C *** - p-value less than 0.05; t-value of 6.552). Since the path coefficient of 0.43 is slightly below the proposed threshold value of 0.5, the influence is

weak. This suggests that higher levels of procurement objectives are linked to higher levels of service delivery, in line with the coefficient's positive sign. This is in line with the widespread belief that when procurement objectives are clearly established and pursued, service delivery performance will be enhanced.

With a t-value of 6.552, which is high, there is clear evidence of a significant connection between service delivery goals and procurement targets. This suggests that RDCs' capacity to deliver high-quality services to the community is favourably impacted when they establish clear and practical procurement targets. This relationship was confirmed by Awanyo (2019) who observed that goal alignment, which occurs when procurement objectives are in line with the objectives and needs of the local community, can result in a more effective and efficient procurement process and improving service delivery. The study findings also imply that a strategic planning for service delivery should include clearly defined procurement objectives, which can act as a road map for accomplishing service delivery improvement targets.

A study by Adewumi-Audu (2023) established that efficiency, economy, and transparency goals are important in the application of this relationship, where improved procurement objectives can result in more efficiency in allocating resources, minimising waste, and ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed which enhance improved service delivery. This position aligns with the findings of Nani and Ali (2020) who observed that focusing on cost saving objective by local governments in rural areas can stretch their budgets and provide more services while also experiencing cost savings with improved service delivery and value for money. These findings contribute to the understanding that the observance of quality procurement objectives leads to selection of high-quality service providers which result in better service delivery outcomes and higher service level standards.

The study's analysis of the literature in Section 4.2 confirmed the existence of a link between RDCs' procurement objectives and service delivery. For instance, the study by Agaba and Emenike (2018) supported the idea that service delivery is influenced by procurement objectives. The acknowledged point of convergence was the consensus that there is a substantial connection between procurement objectives and service delivery, which was shared by both the findings and literature review.

H_{1b}: Procurement process has a positive influence on service delivery.

The current study also suggested that the procurement process and service delivery have a linear relationship that is positive and significant. To ascertain how the procurement process affects service delivery, this hypothesis was established. The results of the SEM that support or refute this hypothesis are shown in Table 6.30 below. According to the findings of the hypothesis (H1b) with a path coefficient of 0.04 and the statistical tests (C *** - p-value 0.284; t-value 1.072) indicate a relatively weak and statistically insignificant relationship between the procurement process and service delivery in rural local authorities.

Table 6.30: Hypothesis Two SEM Results.

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Procurement Process	→	Service Delivery	H_{1b}	0.04	0.024	1.072	0.284

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Based on the data and research used, these results imply that there is a statistically insignificant association between the procurement process and service delivery in rural local authorities. This indicates that, in the researched environment, modifications or alterations to the procurement process may not significantly affect the results of service delivery. The p-value in this instance is 0.284, exceeding the usual significance cut off 0.05. At a 95% confidence level, a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the coefficient estimate (C) for the association between the service delivery process and the procurement process is not statistically significant. On the other hand, a t-value of 1.072 is somewhat low and suggests scant support for a meaningful association between the service delivery process and the procurement process.

Although earlier studies (Agama et al., 2021; Panganayi, Msipa and Mazhazhate, 2021) suggest that service delivery objectives are achievable if procurement officers adhere to the laid down procurement procedures, the study findings indicate that following procurement procedures alone by officials when procuring requirements does not translate to improved service delivery. By examining Table 6.30 where the t-value is somewhat low on 1.072, suggest that there are other underlying factors causing a scant relationship. In their study, Munyede and Mapuva (2020) observed that in remote rural local authorities, various elements like financing accessibility, infrastructure, human resources, governance, and community involvement have

a more significant impact on the results of service delivery than the mere laid down procurement process. Their findings contribute to a better understanding that there are some elements that might be more important than the effects of the procurement process on service delivery. On the other hand, the precise elements of the procurement process under investigation were not directly connected to the results of the service delivery process. The investigation, for instance, concentrated on administrative or procedural elements of procurement, yet these elements may not have a direct impact on the effectiveness or quality of service delivery.

These findings have implications, including the possibility that service delivery outcomes in rural local authorities may not be primarily determined by the procurement process. The complex challenges of service delivery in various contexts may not be well captured by the procurement process as measured by the study. This position was confirmed by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) who noted that procurement process may not be able to address capacity, infrastructure, or resource issues that rural local authorities may experience. Nyama and Mukwada (2023) reinforced this assertion when they observed that in contrast to the procurement process alone, other elements like money availability, community involvement, leadership, and governance structures may have a more immediate influence on service delivery.

H_{1c}: Procurement expertise has positive effect on service delivery.

Furthermore, the study asserted that procurement expertise had a favourable, significant impact on the provision of services in RDCs (H1c). Table 6.31 summarises the findings of the SEM path analysis with respect to the validity of the hypothesis (H1c).

Table 6.31: Hypothesis Three SEM Result

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Procurement Expertise	→	Service Delivery	H_{1c}	0.44	0.097	3.311	C***

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Based on the SEM results for hypothesis H1c, it appears that there is a statistically significant association between procurement expertise and service delivery in rural local authorities. The

direction and strength of this link are indicated by the path coefficient of 0.44. A positive coefficient implies that as procurement expertise increases, so does the service delivery quality in the rural local authorities.

To determine statistical significance, a p-value of 0.05 or less was utilised in this study. It indicates that, in this instance, the coefficient estimate (C) for the association between procurement expertise and service delivery is statistically significant at a 95% level of confidence. A moderately high t-value of 3.311 shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between procurement expertise and service delivery. This indicates that rural local authorities typically give higher-quality services when they have stronger procurement expertise. This relationship's existence is supported by the statistical significance (low p-value and high t-value). This is consistent with the findings of Rengshik (2020) which also established a positive relationship between procurement expertise and service delivery.

The study findings show that expertise in procurement can result in better resource allocation, ensuring that resources are utilised to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner resulting in improved service delivery. The findings are also consistent with Bosio, Djankov, Glaeser and Shleifer (2022) who noted that cost savings and enhanced service can arise from procurement personnel's competence to select best suppliers and negotiate advantageous contracts. In their study, Ganfure and Kedir (2020) also established that expertise in procurement enhances the recognition and selection of reputable vendors which improves service delivery performance. Chikwere et al. (2022) also noted that procurement expertise result in improved vendor selection which result in improved service delivery outcomes and fewer service delivery disruptions in rural local authorities. The findings by earlier studies of Changalima (2016); McArdle and Gunning (2018) also reinforce the assertion by this study that there is a positive relationship between procurement expertise and service delivery.

An earlier study by Mutembei (2019) also noted that experts in public procurement are frequently knowledgeable about the governing laws and regulations which reduces the dangers and legal issues that can impair service delivery by ensuring compliance with the regulations. The relationship between procurement expertise and service delivery was also confirmed by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) who noted that the strength of procurement professionals' expertise in contract management, monitoring and evaluation of service contracts and timely correction of errors results in improved service delivery in local authorities.

H_{1d}: Procurement management positively influence service delivery.

A positive linear association between procurement management and service delivery was also shown by the current study. To ascertain how procurement management influences service delivery, this hypothesis was established. The SEM results shown in Table 6.32 below, show whether this hypothesis is true. The investigation's findings confirmed the hypothesis of the present study, which was that service delivery is advanced by procurement management. Hypothesis H1d with a path coefficient of 0.68 and statistical tests (C *** - p-value less than 0.05; t-value of 5.096) show a significant relationship between procurement management and service delivery in rural local authorities, suggesting that procurement management has a significant impact on service delivery outcomes.

Table 6.32: Hypothesis Four SEM Results

Variables	**Path**	**Variables**	**Hypothesis**	**Path coefficient**	**Standard Error**	**Critical Region**	**P-Value**
Procurement Management	→	Service Delivery	***H_{1d}***	0.68	0.087	5.096	C***

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

The association between procurement management and service delivery is strong and in the right direction, as indicated by the path coefficient of 0.68. In this instance, a positive coefficient of 0.68 indicates that there is a significant correlation between successful procurement management and service delivery in rural local authorities. Service delivery typically improves as procurement management procedures do. The findings are consistent with a study by Mungu (2021) who noted a positive relationship between procurement management and service delivery. To determine statistical significance, a p-value of less than 0.05 was employed. In this instance, it means that, at a 95% level of confidence, the coefficient estimate (C) for the association between procurement management and service delivery is statistically significant. With a t-value of 5.096, which is high, there is strong evidence that procurement management and service delivery are significantly correlated.

The study's findings imply that procurement management provides for infrastructure, community requirements, and current practices, specific criteria although its relative relevance

may differ from one RDC to another. In addition, Adewumi-Audu (2023) confirmed that procurement management during the procurement process through stakeholder engagement to better understand the local requirements and preferences positively influence service delivery. This finding corroborates earlier findings by Munyede and Mapuva (2020) who noted that procurement management through stakeholder engagement can lead to improved service delivery options that match more closely with what the community anticipates.

The study's results also imply that effective procurement management ensures that procurement procedures are completed on schedule. Service interruptions caused by procurement delays can be reduced with effective procurement management. This is consistent with earlier findings by Karanja (2021) who emphasised the importance of accounting officers and procurement staff in managing suppliers and procurement activities effectively and efficiently to get the best value out of it. A similar study conducted by Chikwere et al. (2023) confirmed the relationship after observing that efficient and effective allocation of resources is ensured by competent procurement management to achieve service delivery. These findings show that RDCs with effective procurement management can better employ their resources to deliver improved services. Consequently, the study offers novel insights and confirms existing literature on local governments that when they employ effective procurement management from selecting reputable and capable vendors to contract management, service reliability and delivery quality increases.

H_2: Service delivery has a positive influence on value for money.

A substantial and positive linear association between service delivery and value for money was also proposed by the current study. To ascertain how procurement management influences value for money, this hypothesis was established. The SEM results shown in Table 6.33 below, show whether this hypothesis is true. The results of the fifth route (H2) demonstrate that service delivery has considerable association with value for money (path coefficient of 1.03) and is strongly positive (C *** - p-value less than 0.05; t-value of 6.169).

Table 6.33: Hypothesis Five SEM Results

Variables	Path	Variables	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Standard Error	Critical Region	P-Value
Service Delivery	→	Value for Money	H_2	1.03	0.141	6.169	C ***

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

A hypothesis (H2) was used to investigate the connection between service delivery and value for money in the rural local authorities. The findings of the study show the association between the variables to be strong and going in the positive direction by a path coefficient of 1.03, (Table 6.33). A path coefficient of 1.03 indicates a favourable correlation between value for the money and service delivery. In other words, the value for money increases as service delivery in rural local authorities improves, and the relationship between the two is reasonably high as indicated by path coefficient of 1.03.

The coefficient estimate's distance from zero is indicated by the t-value, which is a measure of standard errors. Consequently, the association between service delivery and value for money is statistically significant as shown by the high t-value of 6.169, (Table 6.33). This finding is in line with existing theory which suggest a significant relationship between service delivery and value for money (Osborne 2020; Li, & Shang 2020; Wang, & Teo 2020). To determine statistical significance, a p-value of 0.05 or less was utilised. It indicates that the coefficient estimate (C) for the correlation between service delivery and value for money in this instance is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

The study findings established that value for money is directly impacted by the service delivery quality. The findings concur with the findings of Uzir et al. (2021) in their study on the effects of service quality, perceived value in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It can be deduced that when rural local authorities provide residents with high quality services that match or surpass their expectations, the perceived value of the money spent on those services is improved. On the other hand, the results show that efficient service delivery can help reduce costs which enable rural local authorities to meet their goals with less resources and giving the community a better value for their money.

The research's findings contribute to a better understanding of how service delivery affects value for money in rural local authorities. An effective and efficient quality service delivery

not only maximise resource usage but also improve residents' overall experience (Haverila, & Twyford, 2021; Uzir et al., 2021). The RDCs that give priority to cost efficiency, quality services, outcome-based approach, customer centric, innovation and leveraging technology are better positioned to offer services that give value for money to the community.

H_3: Procurement management positively impacts value for money.

The current investigation proposed that value for money and procurement management have a positive linear association. The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine how procurement management affected value for money in public procurement in Zimbabwe's rural local councils. The SEM findings that support or refute this claim are shown in Table 6.34 below. The third hypothesis (H3)'s findings demonstrate that procurement management offers extremely significant (path coefficient of -0.71) and significantly positive value for money (C *** - p-value less than 0.05; t-value of -3.676).

Table 6.34: Hypothesis Five SEM Results

Variables	**Path**	**Variables**	**Hypothesis**	**Path coefficient**	**Standard Error**	**Critical Region**	**P-Value**
Procurement Management	→	Value for Money	***H_3***	-0.71	0.106	-3.676	C ***

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

Procurement management and value for money are said to be related, according to hypothesis H3. However, the outcomes of the statistical study do not back up this claim. Value for money and procurement management have a strong and positive association, as shown by the Path Coefficient of (-0.71). The negative sign (-) in this case denotes an inverse relationship, which suggests that as procurement management advances, the value for money declines by 0.71 units.

This statistical outcome may seem irrational, but investigation on the nature of this negative association in the rural local authority setting suggest that it may be attributed to some underlying challenges in the procurement process. A sizeable number of scholars suggest that when procurement management fails to effectively address certain issues, it can undermine the goal of obtaining value for money. In addition, cumbersome and bureaucratic procurement processes lead to inefficiencies, delays, and increased costs. Overly rigid procurement policies associated with public procurement results in inflexibility leading to missed opportunities for cost savings and improved value for money (Carter and Whitworth, 2015; Coviello et al., 2018, Sloan, 2018).

The findings also suggest that financial constraints impact on the type and quantity of goods and services bought. This position was affirmed by Adewumi-Audu (2023) in a study of value for money in public procurement in Nigeria who found that inadequate funding, budgeting, scheduling as well as delays in training were factors negatively influencing achievement of value for money in the presence of procurement management. Other underlying conditions that result in this relationship include lack of adequate funding, a lack of commitment from top management, poor information sharing between RDCs procurement departments, unmotivated staff, a lack of government support, constantly evolving procurement regulations, corruption, and political meddling have a negative impact on cost effectiveness of procurement and value for money outcomes. Given that multiple other traits emerged from the findings which suggest an inverse relationship between procurement management and value for money, this suggests a gap in the study which can be explored further by future researchers.

A p-value of less than 0.05 implies that there is very little likelihood that this association could have developed by chance alone. This makes the case for a genuine strong relationship. The t-value being a measurement of how far the route coefficient deviates from zero by standard errors, therefore, the path coefficient of -0.71 in this instance which has a t-value of -3.676, means that it is 3.676 standard errors away from zero. This lends more evidence to the statistical significance of the connection involving procurement management and value for money in the rural local authorities.

Table 6.35: Summary of Hypotheses

S/n	Hypothesised relationship			CR	P-value	Remarks
H_{1a}	Procurement Objectives	→	Service delivery	6.552	C ***	Significant
H_{1b}	Procurement Process	→	Service delivery	1.072	0.284	Not Significant
H_{1c}	Procurement Expertise	→	Service delivery	3.311	C ***	Significant
H_{1d}	Procurement Management	→	Service delivery	5.096	C ***	Significant
H_2	Service Delivery	→	Value for money	6.169	C ***	Significant
H_3	Procurement Management	→	Value for money	-3.676	C ***	Significant

Notes: CR - critical ratio, C*** - significant at $p < 0.05$

Source: Data Analysis (2023).

6.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter 6 covered six main issues, including model fit in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), descriptive analysis, principal component analysis, testing for measurement accuracy, and principal component analysis. It also covered multiple regression analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM) to examine the offered hypotheses, and the SEM results were ultimately evaluated. The research revealed that the measuring items were adequately acceptable, indicating their reliability and validity. Crucially, the results of this study's research model demonstrate that the proposed model fits well with the selected sample data.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws conclusions from both the empirical study and the reviewed literature. It reflects on the achievement of the study's goals and objectives, assessing the extent to which they were fulfilled. Additionally, it examines the theoretical and practical implications arising from the research findings. The chapter's recommendations are meant to help the rural local authorities in Zimbabwe and other developing countries with both policy development and strategy execution. The chapter concludes by outlining the study's shortcomings and pointing to areas that need further investigation.

7.2 HOW THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY WERE ACHIEVED

The scope of this research study covers all the 60 rural district councils located in all the eight non- metropolitan provinces of Zimbabwe. The main goal of the research was to enhance a conceptual model that addresses procurement management, service delivery, and the optimisation of value for money for rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. A framework for public procurement that was hypothesised and based on several models from the literature was used in the research. The framework created contains six variables which are procurement objectives, procurement processes, and procurement expertise, procurement management, service delivery and value for money. The study used a quantitative research methodology that made it possible to achieve objectives through quantitative data. By achieving the following six secondary goals, which are covered in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5, the study's main objectives were successful. The following subsections show how the study's secondary goals were met.

7.2.1 Objective 1: To establish the effect of procurement objectives on service delivery.

The first secondary objective was to establish the effect of procurement objectives on service delivery. In terms of theory, Chapter 2 covered an overview of Zimbabwe's public procurement management while chapter 3 examined theories and literature on how procurement objectives affect service delivery. In Chapter 4, an empirical study was done to confirm the objective. Consequently, the achievement of this objective was done using the quantitative PCA results

and the literature review. As a result of this study, it has been determined how procurement objectives affect service delivery.

7.2.2 Objective 2: To determine whether procurement process influences service delivery.

On the other hand, the research sought to determine whether procurement process influence service delivery. As the study was grounded on theory, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 explored the literature on how the service delivery is influenced by the procurement process. This study was able to ascertain the influence of the procurement process on service delivery using the quantitative research approach findings that were reported in Chapter 6 of the study. As a result, the goal was achieved through a comprehensive assessment of the literature and gathering of quantitative data. The study's findings show that the influence of the procurement process on service delivery was determined.

7.2.3 Objective 3: To determine whether procurement expertise affect service delivery.

The study sought to determine whether procurement expertise affect service delivery. The literature on procurement expertise and service delivery was reviewed in Chapters 3 and 4, and the impact of procurement expertise on service delivery was covered in Chapter 6 considering the empirical results from the quantitative method approach. A review of the literature and the findings of the quantitative data helped to achieve the study's objective. This study concluded that there is an effect of procurement expertise on service delivery.

7.2.4 Objective 4: To examine the effect of procurement management on service delivery.

Additionally, research was conducted to examine the effect of procurement management on service delivery. Theoretically, Chapters 3 and 4 explored the literature on how service delivery is influenced by procurement management. This study was able to ascertain the influence of procurement management on service delivery using the quantitative research approach findings that were reported in Chapters 6 of the study. As a result, the achievement of the objective was done through an assessment of literature and the gathering of quantitative data. The study's findings show that the influence of procurement management on service delivery was determined.

7.2.5 Objective 5: To establish the relationship between service delivery and value for money.

The research aimed to determine the connection between service delivery and the value obtained for the money spent. The connection between service delivery and value for money was covered in chapters 3 and 4. A positive correlation between service delivery and value for money was established by quantitative data analysis. Moreover, the empirical investigation using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in Chapter 6 demonstrates a positive and significant impact of service delivery on value for money. This outcome contributes to the fulfilment of the study's fifth objective. This study concludes that value for money is directly and favourably influenced by service delivery.

7.2.6 Objective 6: To examine the effect of procurement management on value for money.

Moreover, the research aimed to evaluate how procurement management influences the achievement of value for money. According to theory, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 explored the impact of procurement management on value for money. The results of the SEM analysis in Chapter 6 indicate that the influence of procurement management on value for money is very weak but significant. The sixth study goal was fulfilled considering the aforementioned information.

7.3 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.3.1 Summary of key findings

The study identified key procurement management aspects in public procurement which include procurement objectives, procurement processes, and procurement expertise as well as the challenges faced in service delivery and realising value for money in rural local authorities. It also established the relationships between procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise and procurement management on service delivery as well as the relationship between service delivery and procurement management on value for money in rural district councils. To solve problems with procurement management in service delivery and the realisation of value on money spent in rural district councils, the study also recommended strategies that can be adopted.

The quantitative research approach findings established a positive correlation involving procurement objectives and service delivery in the RDCs. The findings match with most of the literature which links procurement objectives to service delivery, (Agaba & Emenike, 2018; Awanyo, 2019; Nani & Ali, 2020). It also identified efficiency, economy, and transparency objectives as the most important in the application of this relationship which corroborate earlier findings by Adewumi-Audu (2023). The study findings also established a statistically insignificant association between the procurement process and service delivery in rural local authorities which corroborate the earlier findings of Munyede and Mapuva (2020). This finding suggests that there are other underlying factors like financing accessibility, infrastructure, human resources, governance, and community involvement causing this scant relationship which is supported by prior studies of Agama et al. (2021); and Panganayi, Msipa & Mazhazhate (2021).

The research acknowledged a common point of agreement between the findings of the quantitative research approach and the insights from the literature review which suggested a significant connection between procurement expertise and service delivery. This corroborates the earlier findings of a positive relationship of the studies by Changalima (2016); McArdle and Gunning (2018). It also identified resource allocation, vendor selection, cost savings, negotiation, and legal framework compliance as the most important expert aspects in the application of this relationship. This assertion reflects the results of a study by Rengshik (2020); Ganfure and Kedir (2020) on the expert dimension.

Further, the study findings identified a positive linear association between procurement management and service delivery which agrees with the theories underpinning the study (Mungu, 2021; Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). The study cited contract management, ethical considerations, effective resource allocation and risk management as the most important considerations consistent with this relationship. The study also noted that community requirements differ from one RDC to another hence, community engagement during the procurement process is critical to understand the local requirements and preferences better. The study confirms the findings of prior study by Karanja (2021) which link procurement management to service delivery. This can lead to improved service delivery that match more closely with what the community anticipates.

The research also acknowledged a common point of agreement between the findings of the quantitative research approach and the insights from the literature review which point to a substantial and positive linear association between service delivery and value for money which support earlier studies by Uzir et al. (2021) and Adewumi-Audu (2023). The study also established that the link between the cost of services and the results or benefits obtained must be optimised to give services which enable achievement of value for money. It also noted that value for money in service delivery can be successfully attained by incorporating several crucial factors like cost efficiency, quality services, outcome-based approach, customer centric, innovation and leveraging technology which agrees with existing literature (Osborne, 2020; Li, & Shang, 2020; Wang, & Teo, 2020).

The quantitative research approach findings established an inverse association involving procurement management and value for money. The investigation on the nature of this negative association in the rural local authority setting pointed to some underlying challenges embedded in the public procurement which agrees with prior findings of Adewumi-Audu (2023). The main issues that rural district councils faced when managing procurement in pursuit of achieving value for money were also identified. These issues included a lack of funding, a lack of commitment from top management, poor information sharing between RDCs procurement departments, unmotivated staff, a lack of government support, constantly evolving procurement regulations, corruption, and political meddling in the operations of the rural local authorities (Munyede & Mapuva, 2020). The following section focused on the study conclusion.

7.3.2 Conclusions

The main aim of the study was to assess how public procurement management impacts service delivery and the value for money within the Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe. To achieve the main goal outlined in introduction chapter (Chapter 1), six sub-objectives were created. According to the quantitative research methodology used in the study, procurement objectives, processes, and expertise all have a positive impact on service delivery and value for money. This means that to attain service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe, rural local authorities' stakeholders must truly comprehend the sync between these variables.

The positive connection involving procurement objectives and service delivery in the rural district councils led to the conclusion that when procurement objectives are clearly established

and pursued, service performance is improved. It follows therefore that, improved procurement objectives result in efficient allocation of resources, minimising waste, and ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed which enhance improved service delivery. The research also inferred that a proficient and streamlined procurement process results in enhanced service delivery if other administrative or procedural elements of procurement factors like financing accessibility, infrastructure, human resources, governance, and community involvement are put into consideration. The investigation concluded that the effectiveness or quality of service delivery may not be directly influenced solely by the procurement process. These discoveries have consequences that the outcomes of service delivery may not be primarily determined by the procurement process owing to complex challenges of service delivery in various contexts in rural local authorities.

The study also concluded that procurement expertise result in better resource allocation, vendor selection, cost savings, tender negotiation, and regulatory compliance which ensures that resources are utilised to deliver services in an efficient and effective manner resulting in improved service delivery. It concluded that public procurement officials who are knowledgeable in procurement management can fulfil their responsibilities which reduces the obstacles that can impair service delivery. Further, the study concluded that effective procurement management in rural district councils ensure that public procurement processes are completed on schedule. Hence, service delivery interruptions caused by procurement delays can be reduced by implementation of effective procurement management. The study also concluded that contract management, ethical considerations, effective resource allocation and risk management are the most important procurement management traits that improve performance of service provision in the rural areas.

The study also concluded that value for money is directly impacted by the service delivery quality. It follows therefore that when rural local authority provides residents with quality services that match their expectations, the perceived value of the money spent on those services is also improved. It can also be deduced that an effective and efficient quality service delivery maximise resource usage and improve residents' overall service experience. Therefore, the rural local authorities that give priority to cost efficiency, quality services, outcome-based approach, customer centric, innovation and leveraging technology are better positioned to offer services that give value for money to the community.

The study concluded that an inverse association concerning procurement management and value for money is attributed to some challenges embedded in the public procurement which impact on the type and quantity of goods and services the rural local authorities can buy. Therefore, the study concluded that lack of funding, a lack of commitment from top management, poor information sharing between RDCs procurement departments, unmotivated staff, poor government support, constantly evolving procurement regulations, corruption, and political meddling in the operations of rural local authorities were the most critical challenges bedevilling service delivery and achievement of value for money. The next section focuses on the research implications to theory, policy, and practice.

7.4 IMPLICATIONS TO THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

The section highlights the research implications to theory, policy, and practice.

7.4.1 Implication of service delivery and value for money in public procurement to Theory.

The influence of procurement management on service delivery and value for money in rural local authorities is not well documented as remarked in the previous sections. The study unquestionably helps to build theories for subsequent research by highlighting opportunities for scholars in emerging economies who are interested in service delivery and VfM in rural local authorities. The theoretical foundation for upcoming empirical investigations in the country has been established by this research.

The influence of managing public procurement on service delivery and value for money in a developing economy, specifically within the African context, has been researched in this study by using existing literature to reconceptualise a positivist methodological approach. This study demonstrates that a quantitative approach might yield more comprehensive results on the variables affecting service performance and cost effectiveness in government procurement in emerging economies. This researcher used quantitative empirical methodologies, as opposed to other researchers who have used qualitative approaches in their empirical studies.

Furthermore, ethics and integrity are topics that are frequently included in studies on procurement processes and this study was not spared. On that basis, the study empirical data relating to ethical decision making in procurement can be improved, resulting in a greater

understanding of how ethical issues affect service delivery and value for money. The creation and improvement of performance management theories in the context of public procurement are also guided by research findings. Empirical data can be used to improve theoretical frameworks for assessing and enhancing service delivery performance and value for money outcomes. On the same note, theoretical frameworks relating to the social and environmental effects of procurement procedures may also benefit from this research on service delivery and value for money. As a result, theoretical frameworks that direct organisations in considering and managing the social and environmental dimensions of procurement decisions may be developed.

On the other hand, the study can assist in the development and improvement of theories pertaining to strategic public procurement. The development of theoretical frameworks that direct strategic decision making in public procurement can be aided by an understanding of how procurement methods affect service delivery and value for money. Government agencies, vendors, and the public are just a few of the many stakeholders involved in service delivery and cost effectiveness in public procurement. The extension of stakeholder theory, which emphasises the significance of considering the various interests and expectations of stakeholders in procurement process may be aided by the research.

Finally, theories about compliance and governance in public procurement can be developed by considering how legal and regulatory frameworks affect service delivery and value for money in the rural local authorities. In conclusion, research on service delivery and value for money in public procurement advances several theoretical frameworks. It aids in improving current theories, creating fresh viewpoints, and encouraging a deeper comprehension of the intricate dynamics affecting procurement processes and outcomes in the public sector.

7.4.2 Implication of service delivery and value for money in public procurement to Policy

Policy creation and execution may be strongly impacted by the findings of research on service delivery and value for money in public procurement. Empirical data can be used by policymakers to create procurement procedures that improve service delivery and guarantee the best possible value for money outcomes. Policies might be developed, for instance, to encourage competition, openness, and ethical behaviour in the procurement process.

Performance based contracting may be adopted in procurement policies owing to this study which highlights the significance of value for money outcomes and service delivery. Instead of concentrating only on inputs and processes, policies can be created to motivate contractors based on the accomplishment of predetermined outcomes.

The study's results can play a crucial role in formulating policies aimed at addressing service delivery issues and value for money issues using proposed service delivery framework. The results of this study on public procurement management are crucial for developing policies that support accountability, openness, efficiency, and sustainable development while lowering the likelihood of corruption and inefficiency in public spending. To create and carry out efficient procurement policies that benefit society as whole in terms of service delivery and value for money, policymakers can make use of this knowledge. The study also demonstrates that transparency and accountability objectives in public procurement can yield more comprehensive results on service performance and value for money in rural local authorities which the policy makers can emphasise in similar procurement scenarios. The value of openness and responsibility in public procurement was also demonstrated in previous research by Mutandwa (2020) and Adewumi-Audu (2023). This information can be used by policymakers to create laws that support transparency in the procurement process which can guarantee fair competition, and shield against corruption and bias.

Furthermore, the identification of external interference, bottlenecks, and inefficiencies in the procurement process of RDCs made by this study demonstrates a weak institution. This is a scenario in most developing countries as noted by Alhassan and Kilishi (2019); and Thai (2017). This information can be used by policymakers to simplify processes, lower administrative barriers, and introduce e-procurement technologies to increase effectiveness and efficiency. The establishment of policies that promote the adoption of technology in public procurement management may also be influenced by findings regarding the effects of technology on procurement efficiency and transparency. In pursuit of encouraging the use of e-procurement systems and other technical tools in public procurement, policymakers may enact requirements or incentive programs.

The study also demonstrated that the concepts of value for money are exceedingly complicated and ambiguous, and that the public face challenges in understanding the procurement regulatory framework's emphasis on value for money. To close this gap and eliminate any

misunderstandings in future evaluations, availing of policy documents is necessary. Particularly in the context of public value, failing to address such uncertainties by the policy makers will not make procurement in the RDCs more effective.

The creation of policies that place a strong emphasis on ethics and integrity may be influenced by the research after exposing ethical difficulties in public procurement. Policymakers may also implement policy changes to streamline and modernise these regulations after the research shows that complex and continuous regulatory changes hinder effective procurement. This may result in more responsive and agile procurement procedures being formulated by the central government. In conclusion, studies on service delivery and value for money in public procurement might be a useful tool for decision makers. It offers data supported insights that can direct the creation of regulations targeted at enhancing the efficacy, effectiveness, and overall efficiency of public procurement process, which can ultimately result in greater service delivery and value for money.

6.4.3 Implication of service delivery and value for money in public procurement to Practice.

It is essential to shape and enhance improved procurement procedures by considering the consequences of research on service delivery and value for money in public procurement in the RDCs. The outcomes of study may have an immediate effect on how procurement professionals carry out their daily procurement business in the public sector. The research findings can also be used by procurement professionals to guide their decision-making. As a result, procurement professionals can customise their procurement strategies to get better results when they are aware of the elements that affect value for money and efficient service delivery.

This study makes a significant contribution to assuring value for money in procurement by identifying the variables that affect how public procurement is carried out across the rural local authorities in Zimbabwe. Considering the study recommendations provided, it becomes clear that the government would have to deal with the variables that have been identified as influencing service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils. The study may also provide opportunities for public procurement process enhancement and productivity improvement which can be utilised by the procurement professionals. Based on

data supported insights from the study, procurement strategies in rural local authorities can be improved, resulting in streamlined procedures, shortened lead times, and increased operational effectiveness. The study also identified some procurement best practices in public procurement. Hence, procurement practitioners can use strategies that have been demonstrated to improve value for money and service delivery by incorporating these tested ideas into their daily operations. The research findings also point to knowledge or skill gaps among procurement professionals and made recommendations for deliberate capacity building through tailor made programs aimed at upgrading the expertise of procurement practitioners.

The use of digital tools and e-procurement systems can be influenced by understanding how technology affects public procurement efficiency and value for money as drawn in this study. Consequently, technology tools may be incorporated into research informed practices to improve data sharing between procurement departments in the rural local authorities, effective communication, and transparency in the procurement process. The procurement practitioners can also be guided in creating effective risk management strategies informed by identified procurement risks and challenges in this research to mitigate risks that might affect service delivery and value for money.

Strong frameworks for evaluating the effectiveness of procurement processes may be established owing to research findings highlighting the significance of monitoring and evaluation in assuring service delivery and value for money. The research also highlighted the need for monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of procurement activities through periodic evaluations which may benefit the procurement practitioners. The study also places a strong emphasis on accountability and transparency to change behaviours by encouraging direct and honest communication throughout the procurement process. Hence, procurement practitioners in public procurement may put measures in place to increase transparency, such as clear reporting procedures and stakeholder involvement.

Finally, the findings from the study can promote a continuous improvement culture in public sector procurement. Using feedback, experience, and newly emerging best practices, practitioners can develop a mindset of routinely reviewing and improving procedures as identified by the study on service delivery and value for money in public procurement acts as a catalyst for improvement in practice. It offers a basis for making decisions based on facts,

promotes the use of best practices, and aids in the continual development of procurement procedures to better meet the service delivery demands of the public in rural local authorities.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The prime objective of study was to develop a conceptual model that addresses procurement management, service delivery, and the optimisation of value for money for Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe. This was only possible after determining the relationships between procurement objectives, procurement process, procurement expertise and procurement management on service delivery as well as the relationship between service delivery and procurement management on value for money. The study's recommendations are two-fold, that is, those that relate to rural local authorities and the recommendations made to policy makers which is the central government.

7.5.1 Recommendations to rural local authorities/ Rural District Councils.

7.5.1.1 Adoption of electronic procurement

Electronic procurement enables the whole RDCs' procurement process from requisition to payment to be automated, seamless, fast, and streamlined using digital technologies. Some of the best e-procurement platforms the RDCs can choose from include Pipefy, Kissflow Procurement Cloud, Coupa Procurement, Procurify, or SAP Ariba. When implemented they provide automated workflows that reduce the need for manual labour, speed up the approvals process, cut down on paperwork and the purchase process more transparent to allow smooth management of procurement activities. This effectiveness causes procurement cycles to move more quickly, allowing for timely service delivery and lowering costs which translate to value for money. Stakeholders can simply keep tabs on and oversee procurement activities, ensuring that choices are responsible, compliant with laws, and free from corruption threat.

E-procurement enables RDCs to work with a bigger and more varied pool of vendors which increase competition among suppliers which can result in better value for their money. Overall, e-procurement improves management of procurement processes through increased efficiency, openness, and accountability leading to enhanced service delivery and value for money in RDCs. However, they need some investment in uninterrupted internet connection, hardware equipment and caution should be taken to get rid of cyber security incidents.

7.5.1.2 Incentivisation of best performers

It is very critical for RDCs to reward top achievers in service delivery performance and achievement of value for money to promote best practices, efficiency, and further achievement of favourable results. The RDCs can employ some effective motivators like Weitzman scheme, Additional vacation days, Tuition reimbursement or Monetary bonuses for both individuals and teams incentives. The RDCs personnel encounter various difficulties including insufficient resources and results are inherently hinged on individual initiatives, hence, rewarding top performers is crucial for the improvement of service delivery and attainment of value for money. Excellence driven employees and departments are more likely to improve the effectiveness and quality of services delivered to rural communities which improves clients satisfaction and attainment of value for money.

By rewarding and recognising top performance, some talented individuals are attracted to RDCs which would improve service delivery and attainment of value for money. The top performers incentive schemes make employees feel valued and appreciated which solve labour turnover and preserving institutional knowledge in the rural local authorities. Overall, rewarding top performers in RDCs promotes efficiency, positive outcomes, and a culture of continuous improvement in service delivery and value for money. However, care should be taken to ensure the incentives are transparent, straightforward, and integrated into RDC's IT and performance management systems.

7.5.1.3 Performance measurement of vendors

To realise quality service delivery, value for money outcomes and smooth management of procurement, RDCs should use clear performance metrics (KPIs) in tracking purchasing goods and services to control cost, quantity, quality, and delivery speed. Some of the KPIs for implementation are Contract compliance rate, Defect rate, Delivery time and Carbon Footprint. Performance should also be aligned with clear objectives to enable RDCs identify areas for improvement, maximise resource allocation, and guarantee value for money. Additionally, long term sustainability measurement should be implemented to avoid short term cost cutting initiatives that jeopardise long term sustainability. However, care should be taken to ensure that data used to measure KPIs is accurate, reliable, and up to date as inaccurate data can lead to incorrect conclusions and decisions which can hit back at RDCs.

7.5.1.4 Education and Training

They are knowledge and skills gaps in procurement management, and service delivery in some RDCs. Those gaps should be closed by initiating capacity building activities through training programs for employees to improve the service delivery and cost effectiveness. The training workshops or seminars should be centred on sustainable procurement methods, and electronic procurement to improve efficiency in procurement processes execution, and collaboration. The achievement of quality service delivery and value for money outcomes in RDCs is heavily dependent on training and education of employees.

Additionally, the expertise of employees in procurement management is critical for RDCs to enhance service delivery and achieve value for money through implementation of efficient procurement processes, negotiating favourable contracts, and effective resource management. Continuous development of employees would also foster a culture of accountability and innovation, enabling RDCs to adapt to ever changing public procurement regulations and market conditions, thus driving sustainable improvements in procurement outcomes and overall performance. This can also ensure optimal use of public funds to improve the quality and timeliness of services provided to the rural community.

7.5.2 Recommendations to the central government.

7.5.2.1 Proposed conceptual framework.

The conceptual framework that was hypothesised and proposed considered all relevant factors (procurement management, procurement objectives, and procurement expertise) in an integrated manner to ensure service delivery and value for money are optimised. This research suggests the theoretical conceptual framework for implementation in the RDCs, as indicated in Figure 7.1, based on the important findings of the investigation, the theoretical frameworks analysed, and the literature review of earlier studies.

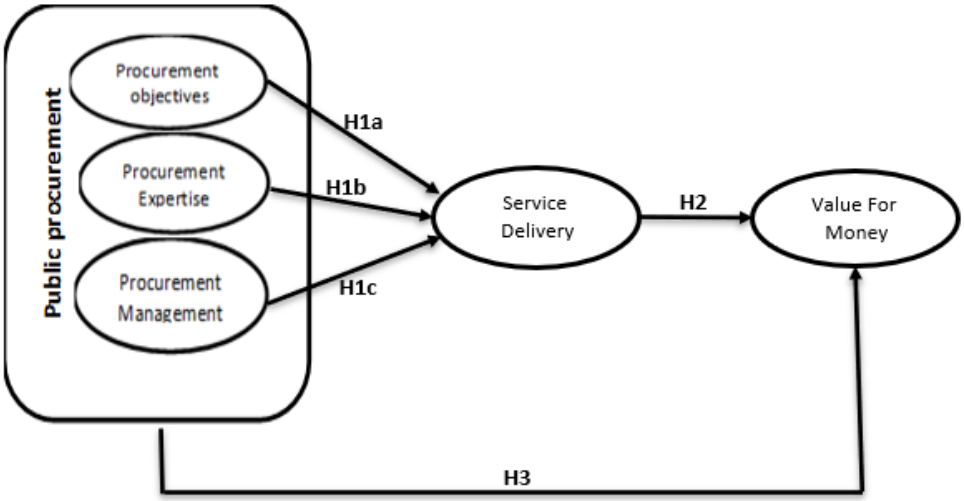

Figure 7.1: Proposed conceptual model in procurement management for RDCs.
Source: Author's Compilation (2024).

This framework can address the challenges within the rural local authorities as it provides a thorough and efficient approach to procurement management that improves service delivery and guarantees the best value for money by implementing these conceptual framework components. By proposing several facets of procurement management in RDCs, the central government may help improve service delivery and value for money by making well informed procurement decisions. However, for sustained improvement, regular assessments and modifications based on performance measures will be required.

7.5.2.2 Local authority independence

The rural district councils' independence is essential for influencing service delivery and attaining value for money as the rural communities often have distinctive qualities and requirements. Central governments should allow RDCs to operate independently through full implementation of devolution in line with section 264 of the Constitution (20/2013). Political meddling should also be avoided to enhance RDCs ability to effectively manage local affairs and serve their communities. Rural local authority autonomy allows decision-makers to address the unique circumstances, challenges, and priorities of their communities without influence. This independence promotes resource efficiency and ensures that funds are directed towards initiatives with the greatest positive impact on service delivery and community development.

The central government should reduce interference in the affairs of RDCs through political meddling to enable creation of service delivery models that are customised to the unique

requirements of the rural district. This could entail using cutting edge strategies, forming alliances with neighbourhood organisations, or tailoring services to the problems rural communities experience. It encourages responsibility, builds a sense of community ownership, and makes it easier to implement services that benefit rural people's growth and well-being thereby improving value for money outcomes.

7.5.2.3 Funding improvement on procurement projects

Effective procurement processes positively influence service delivery and achievement of value for money in RDCs through improved government funding. The government can improve their funding to RDCs by offering unconditional grants, and religiously commit to the 5% budget allocation to local authorities in line with the Constitutional threshold. RDCs requires adequate funding from the central government to conduct procurement tasks that enhance service delivery and value for money. The funding goes towards purchasing products and services, maintaining infrastructure, and carrying out construction projects within their jurisdictions. Effective service delivery depends on timely project completion which is made possible by improved government funding. Project delays are frequently caused by procurement process delays and disruptions brought on by insufficient finance hence, rural district councils can only fulfil deadlines with better funding, thereby ensuring that services are provided on time.

A lack of resources prevents councils from providing services that meet the needs and expectations of the community, whether such services are in the healthcare, education, public works, or other sectors. Consistent financing is needed to deliver services sustainably as the long-term viability of services is enhanced by improvements in government financing, which make it possible to carry out continuing maintenance, renovations, and new projects to satisfy the community's changing demands. However, measures should be in place to ensure the funds are allocated to the intended projects.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study provides novel empirical evidence on the impact of procurement management on service delivery and value for money in Zimbabwe's RDCs, as well as major contributions to theory development, policy, and practice. This study is no different from the many others that have shortcomings.

7.6.1 Single nation focus

Considering that this study focused on Zimbabwe, caution is necessary when generalising the results to public procurement procedures and service delivery in the region. However, the findings have significant implications for other developing countries in Africa and the Global South in general with similar procurement procedures. It is important to recognise that the political, cultural, ethical, and economic contexts of African developing countries can vary significantly. However, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to the existing research and serve as a foundation for future studies on the impact of public procurement on service delivery and value for money in rural local authorities across the region.

7.6.2 Inability to conduct a longitudinal study

The primary drawback of this study is the inability to perform a longitudinal study that would have included procurement officers at each level of the procurement process stages to evaluate the foundation of their procurement procedures in line with service delivery and their achievement of value for money outcomes. Data from the same participants should have been gathered over a prolonged period for a longitudinal study to enable researcher to track changes and advancements through time. However, longitudinal investigations are often time and resource consuming. Therefore, the researcher is justified in avoiding longitudinal study as doing research for an extended period in RDCs was logistically difficult and require ongoing financing, dedication, and participation from participants.

7.6.3 Criticism related to reliance on positivism paradigm

The study's philosophical orientation can be criticised based on the complex nature of service delivery and value for money in rural district councils which may be oversimplified by the dependence on positivist approach, which overlooks the social, cultural, and contextual nuances affecting these processes (Dawadi, Shrestha, & Giri, 2021). Hamida-Bibi and Shabir (2022) also argue that positivism posits an objective, observable, and quantifiable reality, often overlooking the subjective experiences of those involved in service delivery. Despite this, a positivist approach was most effective for achieving the goals and objectives of the current study.

7.7 AVENUES FOR FUTURE STUDY

While the study has significant implications for other African developing countries, future research could benefit from examining various rural local authorities with similar procurement procedures. This approach is critical for capturing diverse political, cultural, ethical, and economic contexts, enabling broader generalisation of results about public procurement procedures in the region. The study also revealed that lengthier than anticipated processes are involved in contract award and procurement litigation. More research on time as the influence should be done in practical terms. Such a study would aid in the creation of greater insights into the rural local authorities' procurement activities and would assist in determining if value for money is guaranteed at the conclusion of the project cycle.

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9.0 APPENDICES

Please note that minor variations in the research title may be observed in some documents owing to modifications made to the title during the research process.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is David Chikwere (C21147795K), a PhD research student at Chinhoyi University of Technology. In fulfillment of the PhD research degree, I am supposed to carry out research in a given area under the supervision of two supervisors. In this context I am conducting research on "***The influence of public procurement management on service delivery and value for money: Evidence from Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils***". As part of this research, a survey questionnaire should be administered to Rural District Councils. Kindly spare some of your valuable time to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires are anonymous, it will not be linked to anyone, and participation is voluntary. All the collected information will be used only for the purposes of writing the academic thesis.

Looking forward to your kind support.

David Chikwere
Email: chikwered@gmail.com
Cell Number: +263 772 259 951

Section A

How much do you agree with the following submissions in this section about a Zimbabwean Rural District Council where you work?
(Scale: **1**- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, **3**- Not Sure, **4** - Agree, **5** - Strongly Agree)

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT							
CODE	PROCUREMENT OBJECTIVES	Scale					
		1	2	3	4	5	
PO1	Integrity, accountability, transparency, and value for money are the main procurement objectives in RDCs.						
PO2	The RDC's procurement goals enable efficient service delivery.						
PO3	Adherence to objectives exposes RDCs' unethical conducts in its procurement management system.						
PO4	The clarity of RDC's procurement objectives determines the level of service delivery.						
PO5	Transparency objective in RDCs procurement guarantees high quality service delivery.						
PO6	Unclear public procurement objectives in RDCs delays service delivery.						
Please qualify your statements, if possible:							

Section B

How much do you agree with the following submissions in this section about a Zimbabwean Rural District Council where you work?
(Scale: **1**- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, **3**- Not Sure, **4** - Agree, **5** - Strongly Agree)

CODE	PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESS	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
PRP1	The RDC's contracts in public procurement are always won by the best evaluated bidder.					
PRP2	During the evaluation, only the criteria listed in the bid document are applied.					
PRP3	All discounts and alternatives are read out at the bid opening to guarantee transparency in RDCs.					
PRP4	The RDC employs only official communication when contacting bidders or their representatives.					
PRP5	The bidder or its agents have no influence over the RDC's bid evaluation process.					
PRP6	The RDC's protracted procurement processes are the cause of delays in service					

	delivery.					
Please qualify your statements, if possible:						

Section C

How much do you agree with the following submissions in this section about a Zimbabwean Rural District Council where you work?

(Scale: **1**- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, **3**- Not Sure, **4** - Agree, **5** - Strongly Agree)

CODE	PUBLIC PROCUREMENT EXPERTISE	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
PPE1	All the RDC's procurement activities are carried out by trained procurement professionals.					
PPE2	The main procurement skills set are supplier relationship management, negotiation, risk management and data analytics.					
PPE3	The RDC can access procurement knowledge and guidance when it requires it.					
PPE4	The RDC's procurement expertise enhances efficient and effective service delivery.					
PPE5	Procurement expertise is needed to strengthen performance of public procurement operations in the RDC.					
PPE6	The RDC uses procurement expertise to get the most out of their money spent on services supplied (Value for money).					
Please qualify your statements, if possible:						

Section D

How much do you agree with the following submissions in this section about a Zimbabwean Rural District Council where you work?

(Scale: **1**- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, **3**- Not Sure, **4** - Agree, **5** - Strongly Agree)

CODE	PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
PM1	All the RDC's procurement activities are managed by a specialized procurement department.					
PM2	The RDC has systems for comparing deliverables to procurement specifications.					
PM3	The RDC has mechanisms for detecting poor performance in service delivery.					
PM4	The RDC has a clear record management system of supplier performance for all procurements.					
PM5	The RDC makes timely payments to suppliers to reduce service delivery disruption.					
PM6	All the RDC's departments have clear procurement plans.					
PM7	All the RDC's procurement requirements are carried out on schedule.					
Please qualify your statements, if possible:						

Section E

How much do you agree with the following submissions in this section about a Zimbabwean Rural District Council where you work?

(Scale: **1**- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, **3**- Not Sure, **4** - Agree, **5** - Strongly Agree)

CODE	SERVICE DELIVERY	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
SD1	The RDC's procurement guarantees the efficient use of limited budgetary resources.					
SD2	All the RDC's projects have monitoring and evaluation tasks in their schedules.					
SD3	The RDC has a Procurement Management Unit in line with procurement regulations.					
SD4	All the RDC's procurement is based on value for money.					
SD5	The RDC's procurement caters for the disposal of assets after use.					
SD6	The RDC's best value procurement projects demonstrate high service delivery.					
Please qualify your statements, if possible:						

Section F
How much do you agree with the following submissions in this section about a Zimbabwean Rural District Council where you work?

(Scale: **1**- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, **3**- Not Sure, **4** - Agree, **5** - Strongly Agree)

CODE	VALUE FOR MONEY	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
VFM1	The RDC uses correct procurement procedures in its service delivery.					
VFM2	The RDCs' evaluation committees adequately analyze bids.					
VFM3	The Public Procurement Act of 2018 has strengthened the RDCs' spending control.					
VFM4	The RDC compares its purchase plan to the procurement budget to identify expenditure inconsistencies.					
VFM5	The RDC's projects are commissioned immediately after completion.					
VFM6	The RDC uses procurement best practices to reduce costs.					
Please qualify your statements, if possible:						

SECTION G:	RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Several demographic-related questions are posed to you. May you please answer each question by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate box and writing where applicable.

1. Age Range: 1. Less than 30 ☐ 2. 30-39 ☐ 3. 40-49 ☐ 4. 50-59 ☐ 5. 60+ ☐

2. Gender: 1. Male ☐ 2. Female ☐ 3. Other (Specify)..... ...

3. Highest qualification: 1. Certificate ☐ 2. Diploma ☐ 3. Degree ☐ 4. Postgraduate ☐
5.Other (Specify).....

4. Employment type: 1. Contract ☐ 2. Casual ☐ 3. Permanent ☐

5. Length of employment: 1. Less than 5 years ☐ 2. 5-10years ☐ 3. 11-15 years ☐
4. 16-20 years ☐ 5. Over 21 years ☐

6. Area of employment at the RDC: 1. Human Resources ☐ 2. Finance ☐ 3. Procurement ☐
4. Engineering ☐ 5. Administration ☐ 6. Other (Specify) ☐

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

+ANNEX 19 Form GRSD 17 SEBS 05/2023

CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH CLEARANCE LETTER

NAME OF RESEARCHER(S): David Chikwere **ID:** 75-362402-D-75

Student Registration number: C21147795K

SCHOOL OF: Entrepreneurship and Business Sciences

APPROVED RESEARCH TITLE: The influence of public procurement management on service delivery and value for money: Evidence from Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils.

I hereby confirm that the above mentioned Researcher is a Postgraduate Researcher at Chinhoyi University of Technology. The proposed study met all the requirements as stipulated in the University Policies and guidelines and has been approved by the relevant committees.

The proposal adheres to ethical principles as outlined by the University. Permission is hereby granted to carry out the research as described in the attached approved proposal.

The main objective of the research is to: To examine the effect of public procurement on service delivery and value for money in developing countries

Expected Outcome: To gain an understanding of how the various methods and techniques in public procurement can be utilized to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

In addition, the Researcher is urged to adhere to international and national ethical guidelines and all requirements by Chinhoyi University of Technology.

Best Regards

O. L.Kupika

27/02/2023
Date

Chairperson, University Research and Innovation Committee - Research Ethics

Tel: +263 6721 22203-5

E-mail: researchandgraduatestudies@cut.ac.zw

APPENDIX 3: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Chinhoyi University of Technology,
School of Business and Entrepreneurship
72 Off Harare-Chirundu Road
Chinhoyi

26 May 2023

Ministry of Local Government, Public Works, and National Housing
Makombe Building, Corner Leopold Takawira & Herbert Chitepo
Harare

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research in the Rural District Councils of Zimbabwe.

My name is David Chikwere, a PHD research student at Chinhoyi University of Technology. In fulfillment of the PHD research degree, I am supposed to carry out research in a given area under the supervision of two supervisors. In this context I am conducting research on "***The influence of public procurement management on service delivery and value for money: Evidence from Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils"***. As part of this research, a survey questionnaire should be administered to Rural District Councils.

I am seeking permission to do research in the Rural District Councils where one RDC shall be randomly chosen from each non – metropolitan province. Individuals will be invited to participate in this study through answering a questionnaire which may take at least 10 minutes.

Participants will be asked to give their consent before the research begins and their responses will be treated confidentially. The results will be communicated through a dissertation and there are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

I therefore request permission in writing which should be on your organization's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

David Chikwere
Cell: +263774104488
Email: chikwered@gmail.com

APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF APPROVAL TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Telephone 263 4 707615
Fax 263 4 797706
REF: **ADM/23/8**

ZIMBABWE

Office of The Secretary
P. Bag 7706
Causeway,
Harare

16 June 2023

Mr David Chikwere
Chinhoyi University of Technology

APPROVAL TO UNDERTAKE A FIELD RESEARCH: MR DAVID CHIKWERE: CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENT

The above subject matter refers.

Please be advised that the Head of Ministry has approved your application to undertake a field research on **The influence of Public Procurement Management on Service Delivery and Value for Money: Evidence from Zimbabwe's Rural District Councils.**

Kindly, be advised that the research findings should not be subject to external consumption and must be solely used for academic purposes. You are required to sign the Official Secrecy form before commencement of the research project. In addition, a copy of the completed research project should be submitted to the Office of the Permanent Secretary of this Ministry.

It is hoped that the research findings will help the Ministry in coming up with relevant strategies in the study area undertaken.

MIN. OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC WORKS AND NAT. HOUSING DEP. DIRECTOR (HUMAN RESOURCES) 16 JUN 2023 P. BAG CY 7755, CAUSEWAY ZIMBABWE

I. Chazuka
Principal Human Resources
FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Cc Chief Director Local Authorities
Director Procurement
The District Development Coordinator-

APPENDIX 5: SIMILARITY INDEX REPORT

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