



Public procurement as a strategic tool for the achievement of sustainable development goals in Tanzania: Experience from public higher learning institutions in the Dar es Salaam Region

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ABSTRACT

The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a key priority for developing countries, with governments increasingly using public procurement as a strategic tool to support their attainment. This study examined public procurement as a strategic instrument for attaining the SDGs in Tanzania, with a specific focus on public higher education institutions in the Dar es Salaam Region. Specifically, the study examined the influence of gender consideration, youth participation and sustainable procurement in achievement of sustainable development goals. Data were collected using questionnaires from 161 randomly selected respondents drawn from a target population of 271. Out of the 161 questionnaires distributed, 155 were returned and properly completed and were therefore included in the analysis. The research utilized a quantitative cross-sectional methodology to collected data from the respondents and employed multiple linear regression to analyze the gathered data. The findings indicated that all three examined variables, specifically; sustainable procurement practices, gender considerations in procurement, and youth participation in procurement exhibit a substantial positive correlation with sustainable development goals. The study concluded that public procurement practices widely contribute to poverty alleviation, gender equality and environmental sustainability if is well managed by the procuring entities. The study recommended that procuring entities should address challenges faced by youth-led enterprises, particularly regarding size related barriers in competitive bidding. Secondly, the government should strengthen and fully integrate gender-sensitive policies into supplier selection criteria to improve access for women-owned businesses. Third, government should prioritize environmental sustainability by promoting the use of renewable materials and requiring suppliers to demonstrate sustainability commitments.

Keywords: Gender Consideration, Public Procurement, Sustainable Development, Sustainable Procurement, Sustainable Procurement Practices, Youth Participation

I. INTRODUCTION

Public procurement pertains to the procedure of obtaining products, materials, services, and public works by governmental bodies across all levels (Changalima & Mdee, 2023). Public procurement utilizes substantial public resources and can markedly affect market circumstances (Basheka, 2018). In 2020, public procurement constituted 14.9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2021) and as much as 40% in sub-Saharan Africa, exceeding 30% of total government expenditure in certain nations (Williams et al., 2020). Public procurement is regarded as a crucial tool for advancing socioeconomic and environmental goals, given its substantial portion of governmental annual expenditures (Arrowsmith, 1998; Thai, 2017). Public organizations procure diverse commodities to fulfill their requirements, including education, healthcare services, construction projects, and goods. The public procurement function can serve as a strategic tool for advancing the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (Manta et al., 2022).

Sustainable development is characterized as progress that fulfills the requirements of the current generation without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own demands (Emas, 2015). Sustainable development aims to preserve economic growth and advancement while ensuring the enduring worth of the environment; it encompasses the integration of environmental policy and developmental methods. In 2015, the United Nations (UN) instituted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), referred to as the Global Goals, as a universal initiative to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that by 2030, all individuals experience peace and prosperity (UN, 2015).

Among them are Goal No. 5, Gender Equality, and Goal No. 8, which aims to reduce inequities. Goal 13: Climate Action (UN, 2015). This paper will examine how the public procurement function can serve as a strategic

instrument to facilitate the attainment of sustainable development goals, which are vital for the welfare and sustainability of communities and the global environment. The justification for choosing these three objectives lies in their significance as major challenges impacting society globally. These objectives are pivotal for attaining sustainable development and significantly influence several facets of human welfare and societal advancement (UN, 2015). The researcher seeks to enhance comprehension and tackle essential difficulties within these domains by examining these objectives.

Beginning with Goal 5, Gender Equality; public organizations may implement a specific provision within their procurement function that offers preferential chances for women entrepreneurs to engage in procurement activities. According to McCrudden (2018), public procurement serves as a policy instrument to promote the interests of excluded populations, such as women. Research indicates that in several countries such as Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Ecuador, and Brazil, preferential schemes for women in procurement roles have been established; however, their level of participation remains minimal (Uehara, 2020; Ahmad & Buniamin, 2020; Basheka, 2018a). The authors disclosed that a mere fraction of public procurement tenders is allocated to women (Basheka, 2018b). It is estimated that over 1% of the US\$11 trillion in global public procurement expenditure was allocated to WOBs in 2012 (Hetland, 2012).

A further objective of sustainable development is the mitigation of inequality. Inequality constitutes a significant challenge in numerous emerging nations (Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Manda & Ben Dhaou, 2019). The public organization may attain this objective via the procurement function by implementing a preferential system that guarantees disadvantaged or marginalized populations receive favorable consideration in securing procurement opportunities. Numerous nations have implemented these tactics; for instance, the Canadian government initiated a program in 1995 to motivate economically disadvantaged populations to participate in economic activities by offering various incentives, including tax reductions and complimentary transportation (Bolton, 2006).

The final objective of this study is to implement measures for climate action. The necessity for immediate measures for climate protection is a critical concern (Caro et al., 2022; Perera & Nadeau, 2022). The world has encountered numerous tragedies related to climate changes, such as global warming, floods, and droughts (Upadhyay, 2020). Public organizations may implement sustainable procurement strategies, ensuring that environmental considerations are addressed in every procurement transaction conducted by the organization (Masoud, 2023). Implementing sustainable procurement practices is believed to enable purchasing organizations to reduce costs and waste by critically assessing the necessity of purchases, decreasing quantities when appropriate, conserving water and energy, minimizing packaging, promoting reuse and recycling, and enhancing transportation efficiencies (Suleiman, 2023). Research suggests that the degree of applicability remains inadequate, notwithstanding the benefits received by the county or organization from sustainable procurement (Masoud, 2023; Suleiman, 2023).

In Malaysia, Omusula et al. (2026) indicate that the degree of sustainable practices (SP) implementation in manufacturing firms is marked by insufficient commitment from senior management, a limited understanding of environmental issues, and the belief that social responsibilities would diminish their profits. Similarly, as illustrated by Biswal et al. (2017) in India, a significant barrier to the effective execution of sustainable procurement in manufacturing enterprises is the lack of governmental policies and cooperation on the matter. Moreover, Zaidi et al. (2021) indicate that the execution of sustainable public procurement is adversely affected by the insufficient commitment of senior management.

Africa, like to other regions globally, has initiated several efforts to achieve the United Nations' proposed and ratified sustainable development objectives by 2030. Studies indicate that numerous countries favor providing women with possibilities to participate in the procurement sector to attain gender equality. Nonetheless, their degree of involvement is minimal (Basheka, 2020). Notwithstanding the adequate participation of women in many economies, a minimal fraction of public procurement tenders is allocated to women (Basheka, 2018). Hetland (2012) states that women obtained roughly 1% of the global public procurement expenditure; amounting to US\$11 trillion in 2012. Basheka (2018) identifies several barriers hindering women's participation in procurement opportunities, including corruption, insufficient capacity, bureaucratic processes, a male-dominated procurement environment, a lack of managerial expertise and skilled personnel for quality proposal preparation, inadequate funding for bidding expenses, and limited knowledge of information and communications technology (ICT).

To attain the objective of diminishing disparity between the affluent and the impoverished, the South African government instituted a preferential policy for black citizens who suffered discrimination during the apartheid period (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). Similar experiences have been observed in Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria, where public procurement rules have been customized to empower excluded groups (Gatere & Shale, 2014; Mwangi, 2017; Tesha & Nsimbila, 2020). Nevertheless, research demonstrates that contracts awarded to impoverished and marginalized communities hold less value (Basheka, 2018). The preponderance of tenders was held by huge, esteemed companies, rendering the attainment of equality between the affluent and the impoverished increasingly elusive (Dávid-Barrett & Fazekas, 2020). Regarding environmental protection, research indicates that the majority of

procurements undertaken failed to incorporate sustainability considerations, as evidenced in Ghana and Nigeria (Ramadan, 2022; Ogunsanya et al., 2019; Mensah & Ameyaw, 2022).

The United Republic of Tanzania (URT) has exerted considerable effort to attain the sustainable development objectives by 2030, as advocated by the United Nations - incorporating the objectives of gender equality, mitigating inequities, and addressing environmental issues (Masoud, 2023). The government has revised the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2011 and its 2014 regulations to incorporate marginalized groups, including women, youth, and individuals with disabilities, into the nation's social and economic activities. This is achieved through the inclusion of Section 64(2) (as amended) and Regulation 30C (2) of GN No. 333 of 2016, mandating public procuring entities (PEs) to allocate 30% of their procurement volume to these special groups (PPA, 2011 as amended in 2016). Furthermore, regarding sustainable procurement, the Public Procurement Act of 2011, its 2013 Regulations, and the Environmental Management Act of 2014 are among the legislation enacted by the URT. Furthermore, URT recently made significant modifications to the tender documents by incorporating additional criteria for evaluating sustainable procurement (URT, 2011). However, besides of those initiatives that have been undertaken the level of sustainability availability for many communities is something questionable; thus, the researcher indeed did the study on how procurement can be used by the buying organization to foster the availability of sustainable development goals.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The availability of sustainable development goals has become a sensitive agenda item for most developing countries, as many citizens live in poor conditions that prevent them from meeting their basic needs, such as access to better education, health services, clean and safe water, and improved security for their lives and property (World Bank, 2018). To alleviate these problems and improve the standard of living of the citizens, countries throughout the world have undertaken many initiatives, like having free primary and secondary education, providing free health services, providing opportunities for special groups to participate in public procurement, proposing many policies that eliminate the level of segregation between men and women as well as environmental conservation. (UNDP, 2029; Basheka, 2028; Masoud et al., 2022).

However, besides of those initiatives that have been undertaken, the level of the engagement of women and other marginalized groups, including individuals with disabilities, is minimal, as well as the degree of environmental conservation in the procurement function (Tesha & Msimbila, 2021; Masoud, 2023). Consequently, the procuring entity's failure to involve these essential groups in public procurement undoubtedly hinders the attainment of the three sustainable development goals through the procurement process (Jönsson & Bexell, 2021). Numerous researchers have examined the determinants of sustainable procurement (Masoud, 2023; Khamis et al., 2020; Suleiman, 2023); the impact of gender inequality on procurement opportunities for women (Masheka & Auriecombe, 2018; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015); and the involvement of special and marginalized groups in the procurement process (Masoud et al., 2022). To the researcher's knowledge, none of these experts have incorporated procurement strategies with the attainment of sustainable development goals. These are the deficiencies that this study aimed to address.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To assess the effect of gender consideration on attainment of sustainable development goals in the high learning institutions in Dar es Salaam region.
- ii. To assess the effect of youth participation on the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in higher learning institutions in the Dar es Salaam Region.
- iii. To assess the effect of sustainable procurement on attainment of sustainable development goals in the high learning institutions in Dar es salaam region.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is guided by Sustainable Development Theory. The Brundtland Commission termed sustainable development as "development that addresses the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to fulfill their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). This definition is equivalent to the term "sustainable development." Development is defined not solely in relation to its prior association with economic growth, which implied that a country's advancement is contingent upon a large GDP, but also as a process that fulfills the "needs of" individuals. This concept prompts an inquiry into the utilization of limited resources today, given the necessity for their preservation, hence highlighting the concern of depletable resources (Markandya et al., 2002).

Sustainability does not imply the prohibition of resource exploitation; instead, it necessitates that current generations utilize resources judiciously to avert depletion for future generations. Pearce and Warford (1993) posited that theoretical interpretations of sustainable development focused on environmental and economic aspects, neglecting the social dimension. Sustainable development is defined from an economic standpoint as “the development that ensures no future generation is worse off than the present generation.” A World Bank development report from 2001 emphasizes the prioritization of growth quality by considering long-term poverty alleviation. Munasinghe's (2000) offers a more complete perspective on sustainable development, encompassing environmental, social, and economic factors. The solutions connecting the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development are essential, as each of these three aspects holds significant importance.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Gender considerations on attainment of sustainable development goals

The United Nations (2002) articulated gender equality as the pursuit of opportunities to reduce gender disparities and promote enhanced equality between women and men, while Heywood (2007) characterizes gender as a cultural distinction between females and males, rooted in their differing social roles and positions. Public procurement can be utilized to reduce gender disparity by offering preferential treatment to women in the procurement process, a strategy implemented by numerous countries (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). Nevertheless, despite the ability to engage in the procurement process, their level of participation remains very minimal (Islam et al., 2017). Basheka (2018b) and Islam et al. (2017) contend that barriers impeding women's participation in procurement opportunities include corruption, insufficient capacity, bureaucratic processes, a male-dominated procurement environment, inadequate managerial expertise and skilled personnel for quality proposal preparation, lack of funding for bidding expenses, and restricted access to information and communications technology (ICT), among others. Also, the tendency of setting high evaluation criterion is among the factors that hinder the special groups to participate in public procurement (Gericke, 2019; Mwangi, 2017).

2.2.2 Youth engagement on attainment of sustainable development objectives

Numerous governments globally have instituted a preferential policy that enables minorities or marginally marginalized communities to engage in the procurement process. This approach aims to diminish the current economic inequality between affluent and impoverished individuals (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). The United States and Canada are among the emerging nations that have adopted this approach (Bolton, 2016; MacCruden, 2007). This policy has been implemented in developing nations such as South Africa to provide possibilities for black populations marginalized during the apartheid era (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012; Omusula et al., 2026). Nations such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania have implemented this initiative by providing opportunities for youth, women, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities to engage in procurement operations (Gatere & Shale, 2014; Mwangi, 2017; Tesha & Nsimbila, 2020). Nonetheless, despite the existence of this preference scheme, studies indicate that many individuals did not secure the bids due to insufficient awareness, inadequate procurement expertise, weak financial standing, and a deficiency in administrative abilities, among other factors (Mwangi, 2017; Basheka, 2018; Suleiman, 2023).

2.2.3 Sustainable procurement on attainment of sustainable development goals

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply Adebayo et al. (2024) defines sustainable procurement as the process of making ethically and socially responsible purchases, minimizing environmental impact throughout the supply chain, and implementing financially viable solutions within a robust business framework. The procuring entity must examine these elements early in the procurement process, ensuring their incorporation throughout the whole procurement cycle of the project (Manda & Ben Dhaou, 2019; Suleiman, 2023). The procuring entity should develop specifications that are environmentally sustainable and sourced from suppliers who prioritize environmental considerations in the production, transportation, packaging, and disposal of waste from end products as recommended by Charter Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) (Ramadan, 2022). Research by Islam et al. (2017) indicates that engaging in sustainable procurement offers numerous benefits for companies, such as minimizing packaging and waste, and enabling the assessment of suppliers based on their environmental commitment, safety records, labor rights, capacity to produce eco-friendly products, and effectiveness in reducing carbon emissions associated with goods transportation. Nonetheless, its applicability is minimal (Khamis et al., 2022). Research indicates that insufficient awareness, inadequate top management support, the absence of sustainable policies, and a fragmented legislative framework are identified as barriers to sustainable procurement (Zaidi et al., 2021; Da Costa & Da Motta, 2019; Omusula et al., 2026).

III METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study used an explanatory research design as it examined the causal effects relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. The study examined the influence of the procuring entities' engagement of youth participation, gender consideration, and sustainable public procurement practices toward the achievement of sustainable development goals.

3.2 Study Area

The study area for this study is thirteen higher education institutions located in the Dar es Salaam region. These institutions were selected because of the large volume of procurement that occurs annually across different categories, which can provide opportunities for youth and women while also considering sustainable aspects in the execution of the procurement function.

3.3 Target Population

The population of this study comprised 271 respondents who were procurement professionals and tender board members from thirteen public higher education institutions in the Dar es Salaam region. The researchers selected these respondents due to their significant engagement with the procurement function in their purchasing organizations.

3.4 Sampling techniques and sample size

The sample size was calculated via Yamane's Formula (1967), as demonstrated as follows, whereby n = the required sample; N = target population, i.e., 271; and e = marginal error, i.e., 5%. Therefore, 161 respondents were randomly selected from higher learning institutions. This sample size is regarded as enough, as it is more than the minimum sample size of 30, which is considered sufficient for data processing (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.5 Data collection tools and procedures

The study used structured questionnaires to collect data from the respondents. A five-point Likert scale was used for data collection through the questionnaire. The Likert scale was employed to assess the internal consistency of questionnaire elements (Likert, 1932). The scale went from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating significant disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. Out of 161 questionnaires, which were distributed to the respondents, only 155 were returned and properly filled and, therefore, were used for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the data, as it was the most suitable method for validating the causal links among the variables (Hair et al., 2019). The multiple linear regression model employed was as follows: Y (SDG Achievement) = $\beta_0 + \beta_1$ (Youth Participation) + β_2 (Gender Considerations) + β_3 (Sustainable Procurement Practices) + ϵ . However, before the multiples analysis was conducted, data were tested for reliability, sampling adequacy, and multicollinearity.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues related to this study were well addressed by the researcher, who inquired about the respondents' willingness to participate. Additionally, the respondents indicated that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and the researchers took measures to protect them from any harm while ensuring the confidentiality of their information.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability Test

In order to ascertain the reliability of the variables, a reliability test was conducted on the study variable. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.820	20

The reliability test employed Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as recommended by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). The authors assert that a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 signifies the reliability of the data gathering instrument. The dependability coefficient for this investigation was .820. Consequently, all variable instruments are dependable.

4.2 Results of the Multi-Collinearity Test

Tolerance and variance inflation factors were employed to evaluate the correlation of the study's independent variables. Table 2 below presents the results of the multicollinearity assessment.

Table 2

Multi-Collinearity Test Result

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Youth Participation	.420	2.379
Gender Consideration	.447	2.237
Sustainable Procurement Practices	.607	1.646

The tolerance and variance inflation factors were utilized to assess the multicollinearity of the independent variables. According to Hair et al. (2019), Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) should be below 5, and tolerance levels should exceed 0.1. The study's findings indicate that the tolerance thresholds for the following factors are as follows: Youth Participation = .420, Gender Consideration = .447 and Sustainable Procurement Practices = .607. The results indicate that the variables are not collinear. Youth Participation, Gender Consideration, and Sustainable Procurement Practices each have Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) below 5, which is deemed acceptable (2.379, 2.237, and 1.646, respectively). Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation evaluated the extent of correlation between the variables. A substantial difference was identified with 95% confidence.

4.3 The sampling adequacy Test Results

The research additionally assessed sample adequacy by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.778
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	339.201
	df	6
	Sig.	.000

This study employed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test to assess the sampling adequacy of the model and its variables. Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded statistically significant results ($p = .000$), while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test demonstrated a sample adequacy value of 0.778, beyond the criterion of 0.5 (Magasi, 2020). This outcome corroborates the factorability of the variables in the research.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

4.4.1 Gender Consideration in Procurement

Table 5 displays the respondents' responses regarding the variable of gender consideration in procurement function.

Table 4

Gender Consideration in Procurement

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Procurement policies at PE prioritize gender equality in supplier selection.	155	1.00	5.00	3.6025	1.15260
There is equal representation of women and men in PE's procurement teams.	155	2.00	5.00	4.2112	.93815
PE actively promotes women-owned businesses in its procurement processes.	155	2.00	5.00	3.4969	.96258
Gender-sensitive policies are integrated into the supplier selection criteria at PE.	155	2.00	5.00	3.3168	.88333
PE ensures equal access to procurement opportunities for both men and women.	155	2.00	5.00	4.2733	.89434
Valid N (listwise)	155				

The result highlights varying levels of agreement regarding the integration of gender equality in procurement practices within Public Entities (PEs). The mean score of 3.60 for the statement "Procurement policies at PE prioritize gender equality in supplier selection" suggests moderate agreement that gender equality is a priority in procurement policies. This indicates that while gender considerations are acknowledged, there is still room for improvement in fully embedding them into procurement practices. This finding aligns with Basheka (2018), who observes that while gender equality is often recognized, it is not always fully prioritized in procurement processes. In contrast, the mean score of 4.21 for the statement "There is equal representation of women and men in PE's procurement teams" reflects stronger agreement, suggesting that gender balance within procurement teams is more consistently achieved. This result supports the notion that PEs are making significant strides toward creating more inclusive and diverse teams, which, according to Mwangi (2017), leads to better decision-making and a broader range of perspectives in procurement. Also, the mean score of 3.50 for the statement "PE actively promotes women-owned businesses in its procurement processes" indicates moderate agreement, suggesting that while efforts are being made to support women-owned businesses, these efforts may not be as widespread or robust as needed. Vyas-Doorgapersad and Kinoti (2015) and Gericke (2019), highlight that, despite growing recognition, women-owned businesses still face barriers in accessing procurement opportunities, which may explain the moderate response here. Moreover, the mean score of 3.32 for the statement "Gender-sensitive policies are integrated into the supplier selection criteria at PE" suggests that while gender-sensitive policies exist, they are not yet fully integrated into supplier selection criteria. This finding aligns with Islam et al. (2017) who argue that while gender-sensitive policies are becoming more common, their full implementation in procurement processes remains a challenge. Finally, the mean score of 4.27 for the statement "PE ensures equal access to procurement opportunities for both men and women" indicates strong agreement that PEs are committed to providing equal access to procurement opportunities. This reflects positive progress toward gender equality in procurement, supporting Khamis and Munishi (2022), who emphasize that ensuring equal access is crucial for fostering gender equality in business.

4.4.2 Youth Participation in Procurement

Table 4 displays the respondents' responses regarding the variable of youth participation in procurement function.

Table 5

Youth Participation in Procurement

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
PE allocates a specific percentage of procurement opportunities to youth or special groups.	155	2.00	5.00	4.1801	.94133
PE provides training and capacity building for youth to improve their involvement in procurement.	155	1.00	5.00	3.9503	1.04164
Youth are aware of tendering opportunities and have access to procurement information.	155	2.00	5.00	4.2981	.87924
Youth-led enterprises face challenges in bidding for government contracts due to their size.	155	1.00	5.00	4.2422	.96032
PE's procurement policies are inclusive of youth and consider their specific needs and challenges.	155	2.00	5.00	4.2298	.82347
Valid N (listwise)	155				

The result reveals strong support for the involvement of youth in procurement, with the mean values indicating a generally positive view of Public Entities' (PEs) efforts to include youth in the process. The mean score of 4.18 for the statement that PEs allocates a specific percentage of procurement opportunities to youth or special groups suggests that respondents largely agree with this practice. This finding aligns with Gatere and Shale (2014), Mwangi (2017) and Tesha and Nsimbila, (2020) who asserts that targeted procurement policies help foster inclusivity, particularly for marginalized groups. Similarly, the mean score of 3.95 for the statement that PEs provides training and capacity-building for youth shows moderate agreement that such efforts are being made. While respondents acknowledge the presence of these initiatives, the variation in responses may suggest that the implementation and effectiveness of these programs could be inconsistent. Tesha and Nsimbila (2020), Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012) and Omusula et al. (2026), argue that while capacity-building programs are important for empowering youth, gaps remain in their reach and effectiveness, which may explain some of the mixed views. The finding also, shows that youth are generally aware of tendering opportunities and have access to procurement information, with a high mean of 4.30. This indicates that respondents believe there is adequate transparency and access to procurement opportunities for youth. This aligns with the views of Suleiman (2023), who emphasize the importance of providing the right information to enable youth participation in procurement. However, despite improved awareness, the mean score of 4.24 for the statement that youth-led enterprises face challenges in bidding for government contracts due to

their size suggests that these enterprises still struggle to compete. This supports the findings of Tesha and Nsimbila (2020), who notes that smaller enterprises often face barriers in public procurement, which likely impacts youth-led businesses as well. Finally, the mean score of 4.23 for the statement that PEs' procurement policies are inclusive of youth and consider their specific needs and challenges indicates strong agreement that policies are designed to be inclusive. This is in line with the work of Bolton (2016), who highlights that inclusive procurement policies not only address the specific challenges faced by youth but also reduce inequalities in the procurement process.

4.4.3 Sustainable Procurement Practices

With regards to sustainable procurement practices, respondents were asked to provide their opinion as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Sustainable Procurement Practices

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
PE considers the environmental impact of products during the procurement process.	155	1.00	5.00	3.6770	1.19688
Suppliers are required to demonstrate commitment to sustainability (e.g., waste reduction, energy use) before being selected.	155	1.00	5.00	4.2174	.86383
PE has a policy that promotes the use of renewable or eco-friendly materials in procurement.	155	3.00	5.00	4.3043	.63289
PE ensures that procurement decisions support fair labor practices and human rights.	155	3.00	5.00	4.3416	.63350
PE works with suppliers who have a strong track record in corporate social responsibility (CSR).	155	1.00	5.00	4.2795	.79224
Valid N (listwise)	155				

The finding reveals a generally positive outlook on the integration of environmental and social responsibility factors in Public Entities' procurement processes. The mean score of 3.68 for the statement "PE considers the environmental impact of products during the procurement process" suggests that while environmental considerations are acknowledged, they may not always be a primary factor in decision-making. This reflects an emerging awareness of sustainability in procurement, but also highlights that further integration of environmental concerns could be necessary. Manda and Ben Dhaou (2019) and Suleiman (2023) note that, sustainability is often recognized but not always consistently applied in procurement practices. In contrast, the mean score of 4.22 for the statement "Suppliers are required to demonstrate commitment to sustainability (e.g., waste reduction, energy use) before being selected" indicates a stronger emphasis on sustainability in supplier selection. This suggests that PEs are increasingly requiring suppliers to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices, aligning with Islam et al. (2017) who argues that sustainability criteria should be integral to the procurement process. Moreover, the mean score of 4.30 for the statement "PE has a policy that promotes the use of renewable or eco-friendly materials in procurement" indicates strong support for sustainability policies, with PEs actively promoting the use of eco-friendly materials. This is consistent with the views of Ramadan (2022), who emphasize the importance of policies that encourage the use of renewable materials to minimize environmental impact in public procurement. Likewise, the mean score of 4.34 for "PE ensures that procurement decisions support fair labor practices and human rights" reflects a strong commitment to social responsibility. It suggests that PEs place significant importance on ethical considerations, including labor rights and human rights, in their procurement decisions. This is in line with Zaidi et al. (2021), who emphasize the need for ethical sourcing to promote fair labor standards and human rights within procurement systems. Lastly, the mean score of 4.28 for the statement "PE works with suppliers who have a strong track record in corporate social responsibility (CSR)" indicates that PEs prioritize working with suppliers who demonstrate a commitment to CSR. This reflects the growing recognition that suppliers with strong CSR practices help enhance the overall sustainability and ethical standards of the procurement process. Zaidi et al. (2021); Da Costa and Da Motta (2019) and Omusula et al. (2026) similarly highlight that selecting CSR-conscious suppliers is crucial for promoting broader social and environmental goals in public procurement.

4.4.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Achievement

Respondents' opinions regarding sustainable development goals achievement are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Achievement

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Procurement practices have contributed to the reduction of poverty in society.	155	1.00	5.00	4.4472	.86531
Public procurement has reinforced human rights, such as labor rights and equality.	155	1.00	5.00	4.2547	.85352
Procurement practices have promoted gender equality and the empowerment of women in society.	155	3.00	5.00	4.3106	.61478
Procurement decisions have helped protect the environment by prioritizing green products.	155	3.00	5.00	4.3230	.61849
Procurement has supported efforts to reduce social inequalities, such as through inclusive policies for special groups.	155	1.00	5.00	4.3106	.78451
Valid N (listwise)	155				

The findings highlight a generally positive perception of the role of public procurement in addressing social, environmental, and economic issues. For example, the mean score of 4.45 for "Procurement practices have contributed to the reduction of poverty in society" suggests a strong belief that procurement plays a significant role in poverty alleviation. This aligns with Yusof et al. (2021) and Upadhyay (2020), who asserts that public procurement can be a powerful tool for economic development, particularly in supporting marginalized communities and local businesses. Correspondingly, the mean score of 4.25 for "Public procurement has reinforced human rights, such as labor rights and equality" reflects a positive view of procurement's impact on human rights, particularly labor rights and gender equality. This supports the findings of Tesha and Nsimbila (2021) and Uehara (2020) who highlights the role of procurement in reinforcing human rights by ensuring that suppliers adhere to labor standards and promote equality in the workplace. With a mean score of 4.31 for "Procurement practices have promoted gender equality and the empowerment of women in society," the finding suggests strong support for the idea that procurement practices contribute to gender equality. This aligns with Suleiman (2023) and UN (2021) who argue that public procurement can empower women by creating opportunities for women-owned businesses and fostering a more inclusive economy. The mean score of 4.32 for "Procurement decisions have helped protect the environment by prioritizing green products" indicates strong agreement that procurement decisions support environmental sustainability. This reflects the growing importance of green procurement in public policy, which Ramadan (2022), argue is essential for mitigating environmental damage and promoting sustainable development. Moreover, the mean score of 4.31 for "procurement has supported efforts to reduce social inequalities, such as through inclusive policies for special groups," suggests that procurement practices are perceived as effective in promoting social inclusion. This supports the views of Ahmad and Buniamin (2020), who emphasize that inclusive procurement policy can help reduce social disparities and provide opportunities for marginalized groups.

4.5 Regression analysis results

A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between sustainable procurement practices, gender consideration in procurement, youth participation in procurement and sustainable development goals achievement. Tables 8 to 10 present the findings.

Table 8
ANOVA F Test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.978	3	14.659	76.569	.000 ^b
	Residual	30.058	157	.191		
	Total	74.036	160			

Table 9
Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.771 ^a	.594	.586	.43755

Table 10
Regression Model Result

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.394	.231		1.707	.000
	Youth Participation in Procurement	.662	.070	.598	9.415	.000
	Gender Consideration in Procurement	.650	.064	.625	10.105	.000
	Sustainable Procurement Practices	.489	.062	.512	7.840	.000

Results in Tables 8 to 10 demonstrate that the overall model was statistically significant ($R^2 = 59.4$, $F(3,157) = 76.569$, $p < .01$). The individual predictors were examined further, and it was found that all three predictor variables notably, sustainable procurement practices ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < .01$), gender consideration in procurement ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < .01$), and youth participation in procurement ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted sustainable development goals achievement. This translates to a 66% increase in sustainable development goals achievement for every unit increase in youth participation in procurement. Additionally, the coefficient for gender consideration in procurement is 0.65 (p -value = 0.00) which translates into a 65% increase in sustainable development goals achievement for every increase in gender consideration in procurement. Also, sustainable procurement practices have a coefficient of 0.48 (p -value = 0.00) indicating that a 48% increase in sustainable development goals achievement for every unit increase in sustainable procurement practices. These findings indicate that, in higher education, all studied independent variables (sustainable procurement practices, gender consideration in procurement and youth participation in procurement) had a positive influence on sustainability. This finding is in line with the findings of Uehara (2020), UN (2021), and Yusof et al. (2021), who revealed that if the procuring entities provide opportunities for gender consideration, youth participation, and sustainable procurement, they assist in the attainment of sustainable development goals. The provided regression equation summarizes this; Sustainable Development (Y) = $.394 + .662X_1 + .650X_2 + .489X_3 + e$.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study aimed to assess the whether sustainable procurement practices, gender consideration in procurement, and youth participation in procurement predict sustainable development goals achievement. The study concluded that public procurement practices widely contribute to poverty alleviation, gender equality and environmental sustainability. Youth-led enterprises face challenges in bidding processes due to their size, despite strong support for their involvement in procurement. Although the study acknowledge gender-sensitive policies, but still need to improve the integration of gender equality in procurement practices and increase our efforts to create opportunities for women-owned businesses. Similarly, while environmental sustainability is a recognized priority, further integration of green procurement practices in decision-making is necessary. Furthermore, the promotion of human rights, fair labour practices, and social inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups, views public procurement as a crucial tool.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends several actions to enhance procurement practices. First, public entities (PEs) should address challenges faced by youth-led enterprises, particularly regarding size-related barriers in competitive bidding, through targeted programs and incentives. Secondly, the government should strengthen and fully integrate gender-sensitive policies into supplier selection criteria to improve access for women-owned businesses. Third, government should prioritize environmental sustainability by promoting the use of renewable materials and requiring suppliers to demonstrate sustainability commitments. Fourth, government should expand inclusive policies for marginalized groups and implement capacity-building programs to ensure their effective participation. Lastly, PEs should regularly monitor and evaluate their procurement practices, engaging stakeholders to refine policies and better meet the needs of all groups.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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