

Assessment of the moderating effect of political interference on the relationship between staff competence and procurement performance in Tanzanian parastatal organizations

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ABSTRACT

Public procurement performance is critical to the public sector due to the substantial public funds spent on acquiring goods, works, and services. The study aimed to examine the moderating effect of political interference on staff competency toward the achievement of procurement performance in parastatal organizations in Tanzania. Grounded on the stakeholder and the resource-based view theories, the study adopted the explanatory research design. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from heads of departments from 93 state-owned organizations in the Dar es Salaam Region. A sample of 256 respondents was randomly selected using the Yamane formula from a population of 712 heads of departments. Data were analyzed using SPSS and the PROCESS macro (Model 1) to examine whether political interference moderates the relationship between procurement staff competence and procurement performance. The findings revealed that staff competence has a positive influence on the performance of the procurement function within the organization. On the other hand, the study found that political interference in the procurement process, particularly during the tendering stage and contract implementation, negatively affects procurement performance. However, the results further indicated that political interference does not significantly moderate the relationship between staff competence and procurement performance. The study concluded that improved procurement performance within the organization is largely attributable to competent staff, whereas political interference contributes to poor procurement performance. The study recommends that organizational management should invest in enhancing staff competence, particularly through training, certification, clear career paths, and competence management systems in order to improve procurement performance, and should ensure that the procurement function is protected from political interference; as such interference has a detrimental effect on procurement processes.

Keywords: Political Interference, Procurement Performance, Staff Competence

I. INTRODUCTION

Procurement is one of the prominent functions within public entities. It deals with the acquisition of goods, works, or services required by organizations (Changalima et al., 2022). It consumes about 70 percent of the budgets of most developing countries and around 30 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP), according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2021). It is believed that the procurement function represents the second largest expenditure after staff enumeration (Changalima et al., 2022). Due to the huge amount of funds spent on procurement, the governments and other development partners have undertaken a lot of efforts to improve its performance so as to ensure that public funds are effectively and efficiently spent and value for money is achieved (Dávid-Barrett & Fazekas, 2020).

However, besides those efforts undertaken by the organizations for the sake of improving procurement performance by ensuring scarce public funds are used efficiently, the performance of the procurement function in most of the procuring entities is not impressive as revealed by Controller and Auditor General (CAG) report of 2021/2022 (CAG, 2022; Masoud, 2023). Studies show that the procurement function is characterized by poor quality goods, late completion of the project, an unnecessary increase in price, and alike (Matto, 2021; Masoud, 2023). Among the causes of this misery, as proclaimed by Sarawa and Masud (2019) are a lack of staff competence and political inference in the procurement process. Hui et al. (2011) revealed that political interference led to efficiency in the procurement performance in Malaysia. The same has been revealed by David Barrett and Fazekas (2020), who found that political interference, has had a negative effect on procurement performance in Hungary. Additionally, studies revealed that political interference forced procurement professionals to set aside their technical expertise and comply with political

directives, which ultimately had a negative impact on the procurement performance (Matto, 2021; Chikwere et al., 2019).

The competence of the procurement professionals is crucial aspect for overall performance of the procurement function (Hamza et al., 2016). The procurement professionals need to be very competent so they can execute the procurement function while complying with legal requirements and bringing value for money from the procured goods and services (Chiappinelli, 2020; Lyson and Farrington, 2016). As argued by various scholars, procurement experts need to be competence in many activities as far as procurement function is concerned, like on the preparation of the specification, preparation of the procurement documents, be able to evaluate the tenders, have negotiation skills, and prepare the contract document as well as administer the procurement contracts (Chiappinelli, 2020; Masoud, 2023). However, surprisingly Eyaa and Oluka (2011) came up with the opposite conclusion that staff competence has an insignificant effect on organizational performance.

In Africa, the aspect of political intervention in the procurement process is not left behind. The studies show that politicians interfered with professionals' ability to execute their responsibilities as directed by rules and regulations (Chikwere et al., 2019). They interfered with the procurement function in different ways, like the preparation of the procurement plan, the awarding of contracts, changing the procurement laws, the promotion and demotion of the procurement officers, and so on (Myeza et al., 2021). Morakinyo et al. (2020) argued that political interference affects the effective implementation of the Public Procurement Policy in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Also, the studies revealed the situations whereby the procurement experts are being directed to award tender to the suppliers without considering the evaluation criteria that are in the tender documents (Titl, & Geys, 2019). However, there are occasions whereby the poor performance is caused by the lack of competence of the procurement professional and not by pressure from outside (Mutesi & Safari, 2021). For instance, a procurement expert might fail to make a proper specification of the requirement, set appropriate evaluation criteria, or properly prepare the contract document (Basheka, 2017; Mchopa, 2015). Studies show that failure to make proper specifications leads to poor quality delivery, and in the case of poor contract preparation, the rise of disputes and the liquidation of damage are like aspects to be realized (Basheka, 2011; Elhage et al., 2020).

In Tanzania, the issue of staff competence is well-emphasized. The procuring entities have carried out a lot of capacity-building programs from time to time, and the procurement experts have been facilitated to attend various professional conferences from time to time (Changalima, 2023; Masoud, 2023). Additionally, Fundi and Lyimo (2019) argued that staff competence has a significant impact on the performance and timeliness of construction projects in Tanzania. However, studies show that on some occasions, procurement experts failed to utilize their expertise as required due to political interference when executing their responsibilities (Matto, 2021). The procurement Rada and Richmond sagas are good examples of how politics interfered with the procurement process and, as a result, caused poor performance of the procurement function, where a lot of scarce public funds went missing. Also, various Control Auditor General (CAG) reports show that for the financial year of 2016/2017 shows that TZS 6,536,468,043 and USD 120,000.00 were spent on procurement without competitive tendering as required by the law. Moreover, TZS 2,997,009,109.00 was spent without tender board approval and TZS 1,453,204,154.68 was spent without binding contracts. The same trend was revealed in the financial year 2017/2018 in which TZS 5,373,435,190.36 was spent on procurement without tender board prior approval as required by law. Also, there were payments for non-delivery of goods and services procured worth TZS 5,356,549,884.76. Also, financial reports for the years 2017/18 and 2018/2019 show that TZS 5.379.6 billion was lost at the Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) alone through procurement irregularities (CAG 2018; CAG 2019; CAG 2020).

Studies show that politicians interfered with the procurement process in the selection of procurement method, implementation of procurement planning, awarding the contract, or deployment of the procurement officer to another organization which eventually affect the performance of the procurement process (Pastory, 2019; Matto, 2022). Many scholars have been drawn to study this sensitive function that affects the lives of the general public, with the goal of determining the cause of this misfortune and making constructive recommendations to reduce any shortfall that led to poor procurement performance. However, the problem of poor procurement performance is still experienced in many procuring entities in Tanzania, thus compelling the researchers to study the influence of the mediating effect of political interference on staff competence toward procurement performance to see its effect as among the important factors that have been stressed by many scholars (Matto, 2023).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Public procurement in Tanzania, as in other developing countries, has been associated with many challenges, for instance, late completion of projects, corruption, cost overruns, poor-quality goods/projects, and the like (CAG, 2022; CAG, 2023). Consequently, various initiatives have been undertaken to enhance procurement performance by the government and other development partners. For instance, the United Republic of Tanzania, through the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) and Control Auditor General Office, has undertaken the Procurement Compliance and Value for Money Audit every year for all procuring entities, aiming to detect the weaknesses and

propose the appropriate recommendations so as to curb those shortfalls (Masoud et al, 2021). Furthermore, the United Republic of Tanzania amended the Public Procurement Act and its regulation in 2023, aiming to remove all loopholes that cause poor procurement performance and conduct capacity-building programme for the procurement professions to improve their competence in undertaking the procurement function (PPRA, 2023; CAG, 2022). However, the performance of the procurement function is still not impressive, according to reports from both the Controller Audit General and the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) (CAG, 2023; PPRA, 2023).

Many scholars have studies on different factors to evaluate their influence on procurement performance. For instance; Changelima et al. (2022) investigated the impact of staff competence and procurement planning on procurement performance. Masoud (2022) investigated the impact of conflict interests on procurement performance. Cheptora et al. (2018) investigated how information and communication technology affects procurement. Adjepong and Anane (2021) investigated the impact of staff competence and procurement planning on procurement performance in a sample of municipal assemblies in the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. Zai (2021) in Indonesia studied the effect of staff competence, ethics, and information and communication technology on procurement performance. However, to the best of the researchers' competence, there are few studies that study the moderating political interference effect on staff competence on procurement performance in parastatal organizations in Tanzania. The gap that is intended to be filled by this study is due to the fact that on some occasions the staff might be competent, but due to pressure or undue influence from politicians, the procurement officer is forced to perform poorly (Matto, 2021).

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To determine the effect of staff competence on the procurement performance in the parastatal organization in Dar es salaam regions
- ii. To determine the influence of political interference on procurement performance in the parastatal organization in Dar es salaam regions
- iii. To determine the effect of moderating effect of political interference on staff competence on procurement performance in the parastatal organization in Dar es salaam regions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Stakeholder theory and resource-based view theory are the grounded theory for this study. Freeman introduced the concept of stakeholders in 1984. He defined a stakeholder as any group or person who has the potential to influence or be affected by the accomplishment of an organization's goals and named four stakeholder groups: suppliers, customers, investors, and employees. Friedman and Miles (2006) widened the scope of the term "stakeholder" to encompass a wider range of parties that might affect an organization's objectives, including the media, the general public, suppliers, the government, regulators, political parties, trade associations, policymakers, and others. According to Donaldson and Preston, (1995). The stakeholders do not require equal participation from all parties in all processes and decisions. They suggest that some types of stakeholders may be much more involved in a given function than other types of stakeholders. For instance, empirical research demonstrates that politicians interfere with the procurement process more frequently than other stakeholders (Boatemaa-Yeboah & Tamakloe, 2019; Nuerthey et al., 2018). Politicians were selected as a stakeholder type for this study because of how closely they are related to procurement performance (Chikwere et al., 2019; Sarawa & Mas'ud, 2020).

This study also lends support to Coase (1937) Resource-Based View Theory (RBV), which is another theory. It emphasizes how important resources are to raising productivity within businesses. RBV contends that in order to achieve distinctive, improved performance, organizations need distinctive resources. The level of competence of human resources is a key factor in enabling better performance of organizational practices. High-competence employees can use their imagination to enhance the organization's use of ethical procurement (Boak et al., 2016).

Helfat and Peteraf (2003) assert that effective adherence to organizational and a professional standard is facilitated by having staff members who have received professional standards training. The top priority for any organization is to have a skilled procurement staff because they are essential to the overall success of the company's procurement process (Lyson and Farrington, 2016). They are responsible for managing the whole procurement process. Such as establishing a procurement planning, selecting suppliers, and preparing the tender and contract documents according to Public Procurement Regulations (PPR) (PPR, 2013). These theories are very relevant to this study as they show on how the competence of the staff influence the organization performance and show the impact of the involvement of the stakeholder (politicians) in the procurement process affect the organization performance.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Political interference on procurement performance

Political interference is the act of politicians or other public officials attempting to impose or exert influence without adhering to the proper administrative and project protocols or moral principles (Batalla et al., 2018). According to studies, the procurement process has drawn numerous stakeholders, including politicians, because of the enormous amount of money that is spent on it (Gray, 2015; Thai, 2005). Politicians get involved in the procurement process in a number of ways, such as contract award, procurement planning, budget allocation, hiring of procurement staff, development of policies and regulations, and more (Boatema-Yeboah & Tamakloe 2019; Chikwere et al., 2019; Nuerthey et al., 2018). According to Gray (2015), politicians are much more drawn to large, expensive projects, as has been experienced in the Rada and Richmond saga in Tanzania, the procurement of election equipment for the 2007 elections in Kenya (Rono, 2013) and in Uganda, where politicians interfered with the procurement procedure to facilitate the Commonwealth meeting, leading to the disappearance of a sizable sum of public money (Muhumuza, 2016).

From a few of the cited examples, we can conclude that political interference in the procurement process always has a detrimental effect on the process in one way or another (Hui et al., 2011; Chikwere et al., 2019). This is due to the fact that most of the awarded companies were unable to carry out the contracted assignments as required, as most of them lacked the necessary competence, experience, equipment, and machinery, which ultimately resulted in the assignment's being completed late, the delivery of subpar goods, or the requirement's high cost (Matto et al., 2021). Evidence shows that the threat of suspension or dismissal has scared off public employees, causing them to obey unlawful political orders and waste public funds (Nuerthey, 2018; Owusu-Bempah, 2018; Chikwere et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Staff competence on procurement performance

Boyatzis (2008) defined competency as a person's inherent quality or capacity that has a tenuous connection to successful or exceptional performance. Competence is the term used to describe the skills and competence required to successfully complete tasks (Armstrong & Baron, 1995). Public procurement professionals, according to Errigle and Mellroy (2002), must strike a balance between three competing interests: those of the public, workforce concerns, social inclusion, and economic growth; those of the commercial sector, which emphasizes economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; and those of the regulatory sector, which emphasizes competition, openness, fairness, and compliance. To meet these demands, businesses constantly look for personnel with the skills necessary to handle the enormous variety of tasks faced by procurement specialists (Monczka & colleagues, 1998).

According to Leenders and Fearon (2002) the skilled procurement practitioners are very important for achievement of the five primary justifications for an effective procurement system that are; the need for conformance and a value-for-money audit trail, severe consequences of subpar performance, the substantial contribution of the procurement processes to organizational operations, the large number of items and huge amounts of money spent on procurement. Additionally, competence boosts productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and job satisfaction by enabling employees to make wise decisions, collaborate successfully, and adapt to change (Hamza et al., 2016).

Better procurement performance is the result of skilled and competent procurement staff (Mahuwi & Panga, 2021; Odero and Ayoub, 2019). A critical part of the implementation of all procurement processes within organizations is played by procurement practitioners in the public procurement function (PPA, 2011). They are tasked with overseeing all procurement-related tasks. As a result, it coordinates with the user department to prepare the requirement specification and plans the procurement process, conduct the negotiation, and contract documents (PPA, 2011; Mwihaki, 2018).

However, aside from the necessity of competence for procurement professionals to perform better within organizations, some organizations hire employees based less on their qualifications and more on their connections to top management or political figures (Hamza et al. 2016). This evidence points to the incompetent staff as the cause of the subpar performance (Sanawa & Masud, 2019). Additionally, studies show that occasionally, even when the procurement staff is competent, the interference and excessive pressure from the politicians cause them to carry out the procurement function improperly, which ultimately results in subpar procurement performance (Matto, 2021; Pastrol, 2022).

2.2.3 Procurement Performance

Performance in the procurement process is measured by how effectively and efficiently the organization procures the goods, services, and works it requires (Baily et al., 2008). An effective procurement process has many benefits for the organization, including lower costs, shorter lead times, department user satisfaction, and compliance with procurement regulations (Bolton, 2006). The procurement function does, in fact, have a direct impact on how well the organization performs because it helps to reduce the cost of the goods and services the organization purchases. The turnover, net income, effectiveness, total expenses, and equity of the company are all impacted by any procurement process savings (Kinyanjui, 2012). In order for public services to be effective and for goods, services, and infrastructure to be of high quality, public procurement must be carefully managed (Lyson and Farrington, 2016). A properly managed

procurement process affects a variety of factors, such as staff competency, management support, procurement officers' independence from political influence, and others (Kirai and Kwasira 2016; Mwihaki, 2018).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The study employed an explanatory research design in order to establish a causal relationship between two variables (Saunders et al., 2012). As the study examined the relationship of staff competence and political interference on procurement performance in parastatal organizations, as well as the effect of political interference on staff competence on procurement performance, this research design was appropriate as it enabled the provision of suitable results.

3.2 Study area

The study was conducted in the Dar es Salaam region because 70.5 percent (103) of all parastatal organizations of the United Republic of Tanzania of different natures as well as sizes are based there, and thus the findings of this study will be applicable throughout the country.

3.3 Target population

The population of the study comprised 712 heads of departments. The researcher has decided to use the heads of departments from parastatal organizations, as they initiate procurement, specify requirements, and utilize procurement materials; therefore, they are well-positioned to evaluate how the procurement of organizational materials was conducted and whether the process met user requirements.

3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

A simple random sampling procedure used to select respondents for this study. The samples of 256 was selected from population of 712 respondents who are the head of departments. The sample size is calculated using a simplified Yamane Formula (1967), where n represents the number of samples required, N represents the target population, and e represents the level of confidence, which was set at 5%. Given the value of $N = 712$ (PPRA, 2018), the value of $n = 256$. The RANDBETWEEN excel command was used to randomly identify participants, after assigning them with unique identifiers from 1 to 712 based on their organizations of origin. In case, the selected number appears in the next stage, were skipped so as to avoid multiple selection of the same respondent. Respondents with numbers greater than 712 were recruited in the study.

3.5 Data collection method

The study used a questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. The structured questionnaires were distributed to the 256 heads of departments who were randomly selected. The drop-and-pick approach was used to collect the questionnaires. The questionnaire was adopted as it was convenient, less costly, and minimized the level of bias as the respondents will be free to answer at their convenience. All study items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Out of 256 questionnaires, which were distributed to the respondents, only 241 were returned and properly completed and, therefore, were used for analysis.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

Data was analyzed using SPSS and the PROCESS macro (Model 1) to examine whether political interference moderates the relationship between procurement staff competence and procurement performance. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and ranges) and bivariate Pearson correlations were computed for all study variables (SC, PI, PP) to assess central tendency, variability, and zero-order associations. Assumptions of linear regression (linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity) were checked through residual plots, variance inflation factors, and tolerance values.

To test the moderation hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression was performed using PROCESS Model 1, with PP as the dependent variable, SC as the focal predictor, and PI as the moderator. Prior to analysis, SC and PI were mean-centered to reduce multicollinearity and to facilitate interpretation of interaction effects. In the first step, SC and PI (main effects) were entered; in the second step, the interaction term ($SC \times PI$) was included. Model fit was evaluated using R , R^2 , MSE, and the F statistic, and the incremental variance explained by the interaction was assessed using the change in R^2 (ΔR^2) and its associated F -test (Hayes, 2018).

Regression coefficients (unstandardized b , standard errors, t -values, p -values, and 95% confidence intervals) were reported for the constant, SC, PI, and $SC \times PI$. A statistically significant $SC \times PI$ term ($p < .05$) was taken as evidence of moderation. To probe the nature of the interaction, conditional effects (simple slopes) of SC on PP was estimated at three values of PI corresponding to the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles (low, medium, and high political

interference), along with their standard errors, t-values, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals. If the conditional effect of SC on PP is non-significant at low PI but increasingly positive and significant at medium and high PI, this was interpreted as political interference amplifying the positive effect of procurement staff competence on procurement performance.

Optionally, the interaction was visualized by plotting predicted PP against SC at low, medium, and high levels of PI, to aid interpretation for practitioners and policy makers. All tests used a two-tailed significance level of $\alpha = .05$, and 95% confidence intervals were reported for all key estimates. Mathematically, the moderating effect of SC on the relationship between PI and PP can be expressed with the linear interaction model; $PP_i = \beta_0 + b_1PI_i + b_2SC_i + b_3(PI_i \times SC_i) + \varepsilon_i$, where b_3 represents the interaction effect between Staff competence (SC) and political interference (PI) while procurement performance (PP) is the dependent variable. The SC is the independent variable of interest and PI is the moderating variable. In this specification, the *conditional* effect (simple slope) of PI on PP depends on the value of SC and is given by;

$$\frac{\partial PP_i}{\partial PI_i} = b_1 + b_3SC_i.$$

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues related to this study were well addressed by the researchers, 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 Demographic information of the Participants

The study examined demographic information of the participants which include; gender, age, professional experience as well as level of education. The explanation of each variable is presented in Table 1 below;

4.1.1 Gender

The gender of the respondents was analyzed, revealing that male respondents constituted 152 (63.0%), whilst female respondents included 89 (37.0%). This indicates that males ascended to the apex of departmental leadership.

4.1.2 Age

The respondents' ages were categorized for the descriptive analysis of this study. A majority of 122 individuals (50.6%) were aged between 31 and 45; while 38 individuals (15.8%) were aged between 20 and 30, and 81 individuals (33.6%) were aged between 46 and 60. A significant percentage of responders (84.2%) are intellectually capable people aged 25 and older.

4.1.3 Professional Experience

31 (12.8 percent) of respondents possessed one to five years of experience. Sixty-four respondents (26.6 percent) possessed between 6 and 11 years of experience; sixty respondents (24.9 percent) had 12 to 16 years of experience; twenty-eight respondents (27.8 percent) had between 17 and 20 years, and nineteen respondents (7.9 percent) had above 21 years of experience. The results demonstrate that a significant percentage of respondents possess over five years of experience.

4.1.4 Educational Level

An analysis of the respondents' educational attainment indicated that 15 (6.2%) possessed a diploma, while 85 (35.3%) held a bachelor's degree. Among the responders, 122 (50.6%) possessed a master's degree, whereas 19 (7.9%) earned a PhD. The data indicates that a significant majority of respondents (93.2%) possessed a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 1*Demographic characteristics of the respondents*

Variable	Frequency	Per cent
Gender		
Male	152	63.0
Female	89	37.0
Total	241	100
Age		
20 -30 years	38	15.8
31-45 years	122	50.6
46-60 years	81	33.6
	241	100
Work experience		
Less than 5 years	31	12.8
6 - 11 years	64	26.6
12-16 years	60	24.9
17 - 20 years	67	27.8
Above 21 years	19	7.9
Total	241	100
Level of education		
Diploma	15	6.2
Bachelor	85	35.3
Master's degree	122	50.6
Doctorate	19	7.9
Total	241	100

4.2 The influence of on Staff competence on procurement performance

To measure how much staff competency affects the effectiveness of procurement in parastatal enterprises, the respondents were asked to rate their degree of agreement on some statements. Table 2 displays the averages and the standard deviation of the responses.

Table 2*Staff Competence on Procurement Performance*

Item	min	Max	mean	S. Dev
Organization develops the procurement staff	1	5	3.39	0.864
Organization values skills and competence of the procurement practitioners.	1	5	3.34	0.837
Procurement staff possess the required academic qualification	1	5	3.4	0.856
Procurement staff possess the required professional qualification	1	5	3.32	0.806
Procurement staff possess professional competency on dealing with procurement circulars	1	5	3.33	0.778
Procurement staff have enough working experience	1	5	3.32	0.817
Procurement staff are efficient to provide procurement solutions	1	5	3.32	0.791
Procurement staff responds to changes in job requirement.	1	5	3.32	0.808

The results show that all items had a mean score of 3.3 (SD = 0.8) on average, with the advancement of procurement staff with the highest mean score of 3.39. However, procurement staff had the needed practical competency, procurement staff had the necessary experience, and procurement staff responded to changes in job requirements, all of which had mean scores that were very similar with little variation in standard deviation. With an average mean score of 3.3, the respondents felt that staff competency has a positive impact on procurement performance. These findings are also corroborated by Otero and Ayoub (2019) who revealed that staff competence affects the organization's procurement performance. Furthermore, these results are in line with those of Kioko and Were (2014) and Sanawa & Masud, (2019) who found that staff expertise significantly affects the success of public procurement function. The findings corroborated Hamza et al. (2016), which demonstrated that workers must have the necessary expertise and experience to perform procurement duties. In a similar spirit, Mwihaki (2018) argued that knowledgeable employees may overcome procurement obstacles and achieve performance targets even when resources are short.

4.3 The influence of Political Interference on Procurement Performance

In order to determine the degree upon which political interference affects procurement performance in parastatal organizations, participants were asked to assess their agreement with a number of claims. Table 3 displays the averages and standard deviation of the replies;

Table 3

Political Interference on Procurement Performance

Item	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Political intervention exists in the execution of the procurement project.	1	5	2.22	1.063
Politicians meddle in the process of choosing suppliers and contractors.	1	5	2.22	1.042
Political meddling affects how procurement officials are hired.	1	5	2.24	0.999
Political influence is present in the selection of the procurement projects.	1	5	2.32	1.058
Politicians meddle in the creation of a procurement policy.	1	5	2.27	0.979
Political meddling accelerated the creation of procurement policy.	1	5	2.33	1.128

The results show that although all of the items had a mean score of 2.2 (SD = 1), Political interference accelerated the creation of procurement policy had the highest mean score of 2.33 (SD = 1.13) and Political intervention exists in the execution of the procurement project and politicians meddle in the process of choosing suppliers and contractors had the lowest mean score of 2.22. (SD 1.04). The mean score was, on average, below average, indicating that respondents disagreed with all statements. This finding is consistent with Chekerwe et al., (2019) finding that political interference in the employment of procurement officers and in the awarding of the procurement contracts. Nuerthey *et al.*, (2018) demonstrated the same thing, asserting that political interference influences procurement through supplier or contractor selection. Politicians interfere with contract awarding by awarding contracts to their own companies or friends. This has a significant impact on procurement performance, as the majority of the time, the companies awarded are incapable. As a result, they fall short of completing the project on time. Additionally, these findings corroborate Boatemaa-Yeboah and Tamakloe (2019) assertion that political interference has a detrimental effect on procurement performance. Additionally, they confirmed that politicians interfered with procurement plans during contract awarding. They preferred that the contracts be implemented nearly simultaneously with the election period in order to garner additional votes from their voters.

4.4 Procurement Performance

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of grading parastatal entities' procurement performance at the period of the study.

Table 4

Procurement Performance

Statement	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The goods/ services are delivered on time	1	5	3.35	1.202
The goods/services are of the right quality.	1	5	3.53	1.029
There are fewer complaints from users about procured good/services.	1	5	3.32	1.104
The procured goods are free from damage	1	5	3.41	1.005
The procurement process save money	1	5	3.4	1.099

To assess procurement performance, five distinct criteria were employed. These factors were quantified using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Each item was scored from 1 to 5. As indicated in Table 6, all categories earned the same mean score of 3.4 (SD = 1.1), with the exception of efficient goods, which received a highest mean score of 3.53 (SD = 1.029) and user departments complaints, which received a lowest mean score of 3.32 (SD = 1.104). Kirai and Kwasira (2016), on the other hand, made a contrasting assessment, contending that the organization receives low-quality commodities and that the procurement function was inefficient in terms of cost-saving measures.

4.5 Analysis using multiple linear regression models

ANOVA F test was carried out to evaluate overall model fit to establish if it fits the acceptable levels on statistical criteria. Table 1 indicates that the overall model fit is satisfactory since the p-value for the regression model F test is .000 which is less than the critical p-value (0.05) at the confidence level of 95%. Therefore, the model is highly significant to conclude that the two independent variables staff competence and political interference together predict the procurement performance as shown in the table 5below;

Table 5*Anova*

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	151.977	2	75.989	202.447	.000 ^b
	Residual	89.333	238	.375		
	Total	241.310	240			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance score

b. Predictors: (Constant), Political Interference, Staff Competence

4.6 Regression Model

The findings indicate that the adjusted R squared was 62.7 meaning that about 62.7 of the change in procurement performance in the organizations could be explained by staff competence and political interference. The remaining 37.3 % variation in procurement performance could be explained by other factors not included in the model. The regression model summary results are presented in Table 6 below;

Table 6*Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.794 ^a	.630	.627	.61266

a. Predictors: (Constant), Political Interference, Staff Competence

In table 7, the multiple linear regression models present the baseline effect of CS and PI on PP without accounting for the moderator (interaction effect). We revealed that both procurement staff competence (SC) and political interference (PI) are statistically significant predictors of the procurement performance. Controlling for PI, each one-unit increase in SC is associated with an average increase of 0.71 units in the procurement performance ($B = 0.709$, $SE = 0.067$, $t = 10.60$, $p < .001$). In contrast, controlling for SC, for each one-unit increase in PI, PP declined on an average of 0.460 units ($B = -0.460$, $SE = 0.049$, $t = -9.45$, $p < .001$). Generally, the higher the procurement staff competence significantly improves procurement performance, whereas higher political interference significantly undermines it. These findings concurred to the finding from other scholars including Hamza et al. (2016) and Changalima and Mdee (2023) who revealed that the staff competence has direct effect of procurement performance. The same has been revealed on political interference as many scholars like; Boatemaa-Yeboah and Tamakloe (2019) Chikwere et al. (2019) and Nuerthey et al. (2018) posits that political interference affect negatively the procurement process with the organization.

Table 7*Multiple Regression Model*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.539	.297		8.537	.000
	SC	.709	.067	.484	10.603	.000
	PI	-.460	.049	-.431	-9.453	.000

Dependent Variable: Performance score

4.7 Analysis using bootstrapping methods

The Table 8 shows that the overall moderation model explains a large proportion of variance in PP: about 66.9% of the variability in PP is accounted for jointly by SC, PI, and their interaction ($R^2 = 0.669$). The F statistic is highly significant ($3, 237 = 159.67$, $p < .001$), indicating that, as a set, these predictors reliably improve prediction of PP compared with a model with no predictors.

Table 8*Model summary for the moderation analysis*

Statistic	Value
R	0.818
R ²	0.669
MSE	0.337
F	159.67
df ₁	3
df ₂	237
P	< .001

Note. Outcome variable: PP; predictors: SC, PI, and their interaction term SC × PI.

4.8 Results from regression coefficients

The multiple linear regression results accounting for the moderating effect of PI on the relationship between SC and PP are as presented in Table 5. We revealed the main effect of SC on PP to be negative, but not statistically significant ($b = -0.22$, $p = .235$), meaning that for each unit score increase in SC, does not show a reliable linear association with PP when PI is held at zero and the interaction effect is in the model. In contrast, PI has a significant negative main effect on PP ($b = -1.45$, $p < .001$), holding SC constant, meaning that for each score increase in PI, the PP declined significantly by 1.45. Crucially, the interaction term $b = 0.31$, $p < .001$ means that the effect (slope) of PI on PP systematically *changes* as SC changes, and that this change is statistically significant.

Thus, for each one-unit increase in SC, the slope of PI predicting PP increases by 0.31 units. Thus, at higher levels of SC, changes in PI are associated with *steeper* changes in PP; at lower SC, the PI→PP relationship is weaker. Moreover, the fact that $p < .001$ indicates strong evidence that SC significantly moderates the PI and PP relationship. The findings that PI had a statistically significant negative effect on procurement performance are in agreement with previous studies, such as Masoud (2023), which revealed that political interference negatively influences procurement processes, including contract administration. Similarly, the findings that SC had a positive effect on procurement performance supports the findings of Mwangi (2025), who found that the competence of procurement professionals has a strong positive influence on procurement performance within the organization.

Table 9*Regression coefficients*

Predictor	B	SE	T	P	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Constant	5.677	0.656	8.65	< .001	4.385	6.969
SC	-0.223	0.187	-1.19	.235	-0.591	0.146
PI	-1.447	0.192	-7.54	< .001	-1.825	-1.069
SC × PI	0.305	0.058	5.30	< .001	0.192	0.418

Note. PP = outcome variable; SC = focal predictor; PI = moderator; SC × PI = interaction term.

4.9 Change in R² associated with the interaction term SC × PI

The results presented in table 6 shows that adding the interaction term SC × PI to the model increases the explained variance in PP by about 3.9% ($\Delta R^2 = 0.039$). This increase is statistically significant ($F(1, 237) = 28.07$, $p < .001$), hence confirming that including the interaction significantly improves model fit beyond the main effects alone and that moderating effect of PI on the relationship between SC and PP is statistically meaningful.

Table 10*Change in R² associated with the interaction term SC × PI*

Effect	ΔR^2	F for ΔR^2	df ₁	df ₂	p
SC × PI (interaction)	0.039	28.07	1	237	< .001

4.10 Conditional effect of SC on PP at values of the moderator PI

This results as presented in Table 11 refers to the simple slopes of SC predicting PP at three values of PI. When PI is relatively low (16th percentile, $PI = 1.33$), the effect of SC on PP is small and not statistically significant ($b = 0.18$, $p = .120$), indicating no reliable association at low PI. At the median level (50th percentile, when $PI = 2.00$), SC has a moderate, significant positive effect of 0.39 on PP ($b = 0.39$, $p < .001$), while at high PI (84th percentile, $PI = 3.33$), the effect of SC on PP is strong and highly significant ($b = 0.79$, $p < .001$). This pattern further supports the revealed moderating effect of PI on the relationship between SC and PP by pinpointing that SC becomes a stronger positive predictor of PP as PI increases, which is exactly the form of moderation implied by the significant interaction. This finding is in line with the findings of Changalima and Mdee (2023), who revealed that staff competence has a positive

influence on procurement performance, however the current study findings provide an extension of conclusive evidence on the moderating effect of PI on the relationship between SC and PP as compared to previous studies.

Table 11

Conditional effect of SC on PP at values of the moderator PI

PI (percentile)	Effect of SC on PP	SE	T	P	95% CILL	95% CI UL
1.33 (16th)	0.184	0.118	1.56	.120	-0.048	0.416
2.00 (50th)	0.387	0.088	4.41	< .001	0.214	0.560
3.33 (84th)	0.794	0.065	12.14	< .001	0.665	0.922

Note. PI values correspond to the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles of the moderator.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the moderating effect of political interference on the relationship between staff competence and procurement performance. The findings revealed that staff competence has a positive influence on the performance of the procurement function within the organization. On the other hand, the study found that political interference in the procurement process particularly during the tendering stage and contract implementation negatively affects procurement performance. Moreover, the results further indicated that political interference had a statistically significantly moderating effect of the relationship between staff competence and procurement performance.

5.2 Recommendation

The study recommends that organizational management should invest in enhancing staff competence particularly through training, certification, clear career paths, and competence management systems in order to improve procurement performance. The positive moderating effect implies that procurement staffs work under pressure of politicians, in politically charged environments where pressures, attempts to bypass procedures, or influence contract awards are more likely. To mitigate this, there should be a clear separation of roles, stricter enforcement of procurement law, transparency and documentation of political inputs. Furthermore, organizations should ensure that the procurement function is protected from political interference; as such interference has a detrimental effect on procurement processes. The study also recommends that future researchers should examine other factors that may influence procurement performance in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the procurement process.

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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