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Examining the Effects of Procurement Delays on Services Delivery at the Department of Government Printing in Zambia

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Abstract

Efficient public procurement is critical for timely service delivery, transparency, and value for money in government institutions. In many developing countries, including Zambia, procurement inefficiencies continue to undermine public sector performance. The Department of Government Printing plays a pivotal role in disseminating essential government information, yet persistent procurement delays have disrupted the printing of national budgets, gazettes, and examination materials. Despite legislative reforms, such as the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020 and the introduction of the Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) system, the department continues to experience delays due to procedural bottlenecks, poor planning, supplier non-performance, and limited digital adoption.

The study aimed to examine the effects of procurement delays on service delivery at the Department of Government Printing. Specifically, it investigated the relationship between procurement planning and service delivery timelines, evaluated the effects of supplier selection and contract management on service quality, and analyzed the influence of adherence to public procurement regulations on accountability and client satisfaction. Guided by Institutional Theory, the research sought to understand how formal rules, regulatory frameworks, and organizational norms shape procurement behavior and operational outcomes.

A quantitative research design was employed, with data

collected from 100 staff members using structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize responses. Pearson correlation and regression analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between key variables and service delivery outcomes.

Findings revealed a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between procurement planning and service delivery timelines, indicating that planning alone does not guarantee timely outcomes. Supplier selection and contract management also exhibited limited influence on service quality, likely due to systemic inefficiencies and narrow supplier markets. In contrast, adherence to public procurement regulations demonstrated a significant positive effect on accountability and client satisfaction, highlighting the critical role of compliance in enhancing operational performance. The study concludes that improving service delivery requires not only effective planning and supplier management but also robust institutional compliance, digital adoption, and capacity building.

These findings provide practical insights for policymakers, procurement officers, and departmental managers seeking to strengthen procurement processes, reduce delays, and enhance public trust in government services. They also contribute to academic literature by offering a department-specific analysis of procurement inefficiencies within a developing country context.

Keywords: Procurement Delays, Service Delivery, Government Printing, Supplier Management, Procurement Planning, Regulatory Compliance, Zambia

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Globally, efficient public procurement systems are recognized as vital mechanisms for achieving effective service delivery, reducing corruption, and ensuring value for money. In many developing countries, however, procurement inefficiencies remain pervasive. The World Bank (2020) ^[21] estimates that weak procurement practices cost developing economies up to 5% of GDP annually in lost opportunities. Public procurement processes are often plagued by complex bureaucracies, inadequate planning,

and rigid compliance measures, leading to delayed service delivery, cost overruns, and diminished public confidence (OECD, 2019). Moreover, according to UNCTAD (2021), procurement delays are common in state-run institutions due to insufficient capacity and outdated regulatory frameworks that hinder timely acquisition of goods and services.

Across Africa, procurement delays in government departments are widespread and continue to hinder public sector performance. The African Development Bank (AfDB, 2021) ^[1] emphasizes that procurement bottlenecks are among the leading causes of slow implementation of infrastructure, health, and education projects. According to the African Union Commission (2018), most African governments operate under centralized and highly regulated procurement systems, which while intended to promote transparency, often introduce excessive bureaucracy and reduce operational agility. In East Africa, for instance, Odhiambo and Kamau (2020) found that public institutions face prolonged procurement cycles due to procedural inefficiencies and resistance to digital transformation. Similarly, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) developed the Regional Procurement Reform Strategy in 2020 to harmonize procurement policies across member states and improve efficiency and compliance. However, implementation remains inconsistent, and systemic issues such as weak contract management, delayed approvals, and poor supplier performance persist (SADC, 2023).

In Zambia, the Government Printing Department serves a critical role in disseminating government information through printing gazettes, legal notices, national budgets, and examination materials. Its operations are heavily dependent on efficient procurement of specialized materials such as ink, paper, and printing equipment. Despite legal reforms including the enactment of the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020 administered by the Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA) procurement delays continue to undermine service delivery. According to the Office of the Auditor General (2022) ^[17], approximately 15% of scheduled printing assignments at the department were delayed by more than 60 days due to procurement inefficiencies. These delays are often attributed to weak oversight, delayed approvals, and non-responsive suppliers. Furthermore, ZPPA's Annual Report (2022) ^[22] identified key challenges in the implementation of procurement policies across public institutions, citing inadequate planning, lack of professional capacity among procurement staff, and frequent deviations from approved procurement plans. These issues are compounded by slow adoption of the Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) system, which was introduced to streamline procurement processes and reduce human error (ZPPA, 2023). Despite these digital reforms, the Government Printing Department continues to experience operational disruptions that affect timely dissemination of critical information to the public.

In a study conducted by Mwanza and Zulu (2023), it was revealed that procurement delays within the department led to missed deadlines for the printing of national examination materials and delayed gazette publications, causing reputational harm and public dissatisfaction. Procurement inefficiencies not only disrupt operational workflows but also reflect deeper institutional challenges including bureaucratic inertia, leadership instability, and poor market responsiveness. These challenges are consistent with

regional trends observed by Basheka and Mubangizi (2019), who argue that procurement inefficiencies in African public institutions often stem from weak enforcement of regulations and lack of internal accountability.

Despite the Zambian government's commitment to procurement reforms, including decentralization efforts and the introduction of procurement compliance audits, there remains a persistent gap between policy and practice. The Government Printing Department's experience illustrates how institutional rigidity, coupled with poor planning and resource constraints, can derail service delivery. Strengthening procurement practices in this department is therefore critical not only for its internal efficiency but also for safeguarding public access to essential government documents.

Addressing procurement delays in the Government Printing Department will enhance the quality and timeliness of public communication, rebuild public trust in government operations, and support broader goals of transparency, accountability, and institutional effectiveness. Effective interventions must include capacity building, digital adoption, streamlined approval workflows, and robust supplier performance management. Ultimately, bridging the gap between procurement policy and operational execution is essential for improving public service delivery outcomes in Zambia and aligning with both regional and global best practices (Transparency International Zambia, 2021; Banda & Kunda, 2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite Zambia's adoption of the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020, procurement delays remain a persistent issue in public institutions such as the Government Printing Department. These delays are primarily caused by procedural inefficiencies, prolonged internal approvals, poor planning, and limited supplier responsiveness (ZPPA, 2022; World Bank, 2020) ^[22, 21]. The department often struggles to procure essential materials like paper, ink, and machinery parts, leading to disruptions in printing national exams, gazettes, and official notices (Office of the Auditor General, 2022 ^[17]; Mwanza & Zulu, 2023). Supplier non-performance and bureaucratic bottlenecks further compound the delays (Ngoma & Chikumbi, 2021). Although reforms such as the e-GP system aim to improve efficiency, implementation has been slow due to inadequate training and infrastructure (ZPPA, 2023). As a result, service delivery is undermined, leading to reputational damage and diminished public trust in government institutions (Mulenga, 2020). Prior studies often generalize public procurement challenges, lacking department-specific analysis (Tembo, 2022). This study therefore investigates the underlying causes and effects of procurement delays at the Government Printing Department and proposes actionable solutions (Chilufya, 2023).

1.3 Main Objectives of the Study

To examine the effects of procurement delays on service delivery at the Department of Government Printing Zambia.

1.4 Specific objectives of the study

1. To assess the relationship between procurement planning and the timeline of service delivery at the Department of Government Printing.
2. To evaluate the effects of supplier selection and contract management practices on the quality of

printing services offered by the department of government Printing.

3. To analyse the influence of adherence to public procurement regulation on accountability and client satisfaction in service delivery at the department of government Printing.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between procurement planning and the timeline of service delivery at the Department of Government Printing?
2. How do supplier selection and contract management practices affect the quality of printing services offered by the Department of Government Printing?
3. How does adherence to public procurement regulations influence accountability and client satisfaction in service delivery at the Department of Government Printing?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Institutional Theory, which explains how institutional norms, rules, and regulatory frameworks shape organizational behavior. Originally developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and later expanded by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the theory posits that public organizations tend to conform to established structures and expectations to gain legitimacy and stability. In Zambia, public procurement is governed by institutional laws such as the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020, which imposes formalized procedures aimed at ensuring transparency and accountability (ZPPA, 2022) ^[22]. These legal frameworks represent coercive pressures that influence how departments such as the Government Printing Department operate within procurement systems.

However, Institutional Theory also highlights the practical limitations that arise when rigid compliance overrides operational flexibility. Public institutions often imitate “best practices” (mimetic isomorphism) or follow professional norms (normative isomorphism), yet these approaches can cause inefficiencies when not tailored to specific institutional contexts (Scott, 2017). For example, the slow adoption of Zambia’s Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) system has been partly due to institutional inertia, limited ICT capacity, and fear of change among procurement officers (ZPPA, 2023). Thus, although formal structures are in place, implementation challenges persist due to resistance to innovation and lack of alignment with operational realities.

Furthermore, the theory explains how informal institutional practices such as favoritism or political interference can undermine formal procurement systems. According to Transparency International Zambia (2021), nearly 38% of procurement officers acknowledged witnessing irregularities tied to political influence. Such behaviors reflect a decoupling between formal compliance and actual practices. Institutional Theory, therefore, provides a robust framework for understanding the systemic and behavioral challenges faced by the Government Printing Department. It also supports the study's goal of identifying how procurement inefficiencies can be addressed through improved institutional alignment, capacity building, and adaptive reforms.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Procurement Planning and Timeliness of Service Delivery

Procurement planning is vital for ensuring timely, cost-effective, and transparent public service delivery. Globally, effective planning minimizes delays, fiscal inefficiencies, and service disruptions (World Bank, 2020) ^[21]. The OECD (2019) emphasizes that integrating procurement planning within public financial management enhances coordination between budgeting and expenditure tracking, ensuring efficient resource use and service continuity even during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (UNCTAD, 2021). High-income countries like the UK, Canada, and Australia have institutionalized procurement planning within performance management systems, emphasizing transparency and value for money (Flynn & Davis, 2017). The rise of e-procurement has further enhanced planning efficiency by digitizing procurement processes, reducing errors, and improving audit trails. Systems such as ChileCompra and KONEPS have shortened procurement cycles and increased supplier participation (World Bank, 2020) ^[21].

However, in developing economies, procurement planning often remains weak due to limited capacity, poor coordination, and lack of digital tools (McCue *et al.*, 2021). International agencies such as UNDP and WHO stress that inadequate planning undermines donor-funded projects and recommend tools like the Procurement Planning and Monitoring Tool (PPMT) to improve accountability (Global Fund, 2020). Stakeholder involvement, capacity building, and risk-based planning are globally recognized as essential elements of effective procurement systems (CIPS, 2022; ITC, 2022).

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, poor procurement planning continues to cause delays, cost overruns, and incomplete projects (AfDB, 2021). Studies from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania highlight issues such as late approvals, lack of training, and political interference (Ngugi & Mugo, 2019; PPDA, 2022; Kalolo & Masue, 2021 ^[13]). In contrast, Rwanda’s integration of procurement planning into performance-based budgeting has improved service delivery timeliness by 35% (Uwizeyimana, 2020) ^[20]. Persistent regional challenges include weak technical capacity, poor coordination, and limited funding, though digital procurement systems like e-GP are showing promise (ADB, 2020) ^[1].

In Zambia, procurement planning is governed by the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020 and overseen by the Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA). Despite this framework, weak planning remains a major cause of service delays (Auditor General, 2022). Many ministries initiate procurement without approved plans, leading to stock-outs, late tenders, and extended delivery times. Challenges include inadequate technical capacity (Chisanga & Mulenga, 2022) ^[11], late submission of Annual Procurement Plans (ZPPA, 2021), and inconsistent e-GP implementation (Mumba & Kapwepwe, 2023) ^[14].

Political interference, funding delays, and poor stakeholder engagement further hinder planning (Mulenga, 2020). Limited training and weak monitoring systems prevent timely execution and learning from past performance (ZPPA, 2023). Nonetheless, agencies like the Zambia

Revenue Authority (ZRA) and the Road Development Agency (RDA) demonstrate that strategic planning and market research can improve procurement outcomes.

In conclusion, while Zambia has made progress in establishing a sound legal and institutional framework, effective implementation remains limited by capacity gaps, inadequate digital infrastructure, and insufficient stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening professional skills, enforcing compliance, and linking procurement plans to budgets and performance targets are essential for improving timeliness and efficiency in public service delivery.

2.2 Supplier Selection and Contract Management Practices and Quality of Service Delivery

Efficient public service delivery relies heavily on strategic supplier selection and sound contract management, as these processes influence cost, quality, and timeliness (Thai, 2017). In developed countries like the UK, Canada, and Australia, transparent evaluation methods, performance-based contracts, and digital monitoring systems have improved accountability and reduced procurement delays (World Bank, 2020) ^[21]. Digital tools, such as e-procurement platforms, enhance transparency, automate compliance checks, and shorten procurement cycles, contributing to better service outcomes.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, supplier selection and contract management face significant challenges, including limited technical capacity, weak oversight, and political interference (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2019). Studies from Kenya, Ghana, and Uganda show that inadequate supplier vetting, poor monitoring, and lack of performance indicators lead to frequent delays, cost overruns, and reduced service quality (Basheka & Bisangabasaija, 2018; Watermeyer, 2021). These findings highlight the critical need for stronger evaluation committees, clear performance criteria, and professionalized procurement staff across the region.

In Zambia, particularly in institutions like the Department of Government Printing, similar challenges persist. Weak capacity assessments, favoritism, poor documentation, and ineffective contract enforcement contribute to delayed deliveries and substandard outputs (ZPPA, 2022; Chisanga & Mulenga, 2022; Mumba & Kapwepwe, 2023) ^[22, 11, 14]. Political interference and weak monitoring mechanisms further undermine fairness and service quality (Mulenga, 2020; Tembo & Chirwa, 2021 ^[19]). Strengthening procurement oversight, embedding performance-based frameworks, and adopting digital contract management tools are essential steps for enhancing accountability, efficiency, and overall service delivery in Zambia.

2.3 Adherence to Procurement Regulations and Accountability

Adherence to procurement regulations is essential for good governance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and value for money in Zambia's public service delivery. The Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020 provides the legal framework, and compliance helps prevent corruption, promote competition, and ensure efficient use of resources, which is critical given that public procurement accounts for over 60% of the national budget (ZPPA, 2023). Studies show that transparent and enforced procurement processes improve efficiency and service quality, while weak compliance leads to wasteful expenditure and poor outcomes (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2012; Basheka & Bisangabasaija,

2010). Institutional weaknesses, limited capacity of oversight bodies, and insufficient professional training hinder consistent adherence, though initiatives like e-Government Procurement (e-GP) and certification programs offer promising solutions. Strengthening institutions, expanding digital adoption, enforcing penalties, and promoting stakeholder oversight are crucial for improving compliance, safeguarding public resources, and enhancing service delivery.

2.4 Personal critique on Literature reviewed

While the study provides valuable insights into procurement practices and service delivery within the Department of Government Printing, its focus on a single department limits the generalizability of findings to the broader public sector. Political interference, limited staff capacity, and inadequate exploration of e-procurement systems remain key gaps. The study could have incorporated perspectives from external stakeholders such as suppliers and regulatory bodies to provide a more balanced analysis. Furthermore, more specific, actionable recommendations on improving procurement planning, supplier selection, and contract management would have enhanced its practical relevance. Expanding the scope and deepening the analysis of institutional and technological factors would strengthen the study's overall impact.

2.5 Research Gap

Although public procurement has been widely studied (Ameyaw *et al.*, 2012; Basheka, 2008; Odhiambo & Kamau, 2003), little empirical research focuses on specific Zambian departments such as the Department of Government Printing (DGP). This study addresses that gap by examining how procurement planning, supplier and contract management, and regulatory compliance affect service delivery in this strategic institution.

The DGP plays a vital role in publishing official government documents, yet its procurement operations remain understudied. Most research emphasizes high-spending ministries like Health and Infrastructure (Chitimbo & Chibwe, 2020; Mwansa, 2019), leaving smaller but essential departments overlooked.

Existing studies reveal persistent issues poor planning, weak contract management, and political interference that undermine service delivery (ZIPAR, 2022). However, these findings are rarely localized to specialized institutions such as DGP. This study contributes by providing department-specific evidence that can inform policy reforms, capacity-building, and digital innovation in procurement.

By filling this empirical gap, the study enhances understanding of how procurement practices influence service quality in Zambia's public sector and offers tailored recommendations to strengthen efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

3. Methods and Procedures

3.1 Research Design

A research design is the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data in that it maximizes control over factors that could interfere with the validity of the findings.

This study adopted a descriptive research design, which systematically describes a phenomenon without influencing it (Creswell, 2014) ^[12]. The design was appropriate for

examining the effects of procurement delays on service delivery at the Department of Government Printing in Zambia, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. It enabled the identification of patterns among variables such as procurement planning, supplier selection, and regulatory compliance, while combining statistical analysis with narrative interpretation to enhance the depth and reliability of the findings.

3.2 Sampling Technique

Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to gather places or things to study. It is a process of selecting a number of individual or objects from a population such that selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group.

This study used a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was applied to select key informants such as procurement officers, finance staff, and departmental heads who possess relevant knowledge of procurement processes and delays. This ensured that only participants with direct experience and insight into the procurement system were included. Stratified random sampling was then used to divide the staff into categories procurement officers, administrative staff, and printing technicians ensuring that all groups within the Department of Government Printing were fairly represented.

3.3 Sample Size

A sample (n) is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 1985). When dealing with people, it can be defined as a set of respondents (people) selected from a larger population for the purpose of the study. Research conclusion and generalization are only good as the sample they are based on. Hence, in this research, a total sample size of 100 respondents was selected from the estimated 120 employees at the Department of Government Printing. This number was considered sufficient to produce reliable and representative findings while maintaining practical feasibility. The sample included participants from various staff categories to capture diverse perspectives on procurement planning, supplier management, and service delivery. This size also allowed for meaningful statistical analysis and ensured that conclusions drawn reflected the experiences and opinions of the broader workforce.

3.4 Techniques for Data Collection

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the effects of procurement practices on service delivery. Quantitative data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to selected employees, allowing for the measurement of opinions and perceptions in numerical form. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were gathered through semi-structured interviews that provided detailed insights into individual experiences and views on procurement processes. The combination of these techniques enabled triangulation, which enhanced the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the research findings by capturing both statistical trends and in-depth perspectives.

3.5 Instruments for data Collection

Research instruments are mechanism that the researcher will use to capture data and include the following;

questionnaires, inter-view schedule, observation and focus group discussion. Concerning this study, the researcher will use only four instruments: interview schedule, questionnaires, participant observation and the researcher herself as a human instrument.

3.6 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument used for systematically collecting data by asking respondents to answer a set of structured or semi-structured questions. In this study, questionnaires were used as the primary instrument for gathering quantitative data from employees at the Department of Government Printing. Although questionnaires may have certain limitations—such as variations in understanding, possible response bias, and inability to fully capture emotions they were chosen because their advantages outweigh these challenges. Questionnaires are cost-effective, practical, easy to administer, and allow for the collection of data from a large number of respondents within a short time. They also ensure respondent anonymity, which encourages honesty and openness. In this study, the questionnaire was designed to cover all key aspects of procurement processes, including procurement planning, supplier management, regulatory compliance, and their impact on service delivery. This made it a suitable tool for obtaining standardized and comparable data from the 100 selected respondents.

3.7 Participant Observation

Participant observation involves the systematic recording and analysis of behaviors, processes, and interactions in a natural setting. Although this study primarily relied on questionnaires and interviews, limited observation was employed to complement these methods. The researcher observed departmental activities and interactions related to procurement and service delivery, such as how procurement requests were initiated, approved, and implemented. This helped in understanding the real-life dynamics of procurement delays and their effect on service delivery efficiency. Observation allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights, validate responses from participants, and identify practical challenges not easily captured through questionnaires. However, care was taken to minimize observer bias and avoid influencing the behavior of staff members during the observation process.

3.8 Human Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher often serves as the primary data collection instrument because human judgment and interpretation are essential in contextual analysis. In this study, the researcher and one research assistant acted as human instruments in collecting and interpreting data. Their roles included administering questionnaires, conducting interviews, taking observation notes, and ensuring ethical standards were upheld throughout the process. As human instruments, they were able to adapt to different contexts, clarify ambiguous responses, and interpret meanings within the institutional environment. This adaptability was crucial in accurately understanding participants' experiences with procurement delays and their influence on service delivery at the Department of Government Printing.

3.9 Procedure of Data Collection

Data Data collection followed a systematic procedure to

ensure accuracy, completeness, and reliability. The researcher first obtained authorization from the management of the Department of Government Printing to conduct the study. After securing permission, questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents, who were given adequate time to complete them. The researcher and research assistant then conducted follow-up interviews with key informants such as procurement officers, departmental heads, and supervisors. Observation was carried out concurrently to record real-time processes and interactions relevant to procurement activities. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected directly from employees through questionnaires, interviews, and observations, while secondary data were obtained from departmental reports, audit documents, and policy manuals. This combination ensured that the study captured both current and historical perspectives on procurement practices and service delivery performance.

3.10 Document Review

This Document review was employed to supplement primary data by examining existing records and written materials relevant to procurement and service delivery. Documents reviewed included official procurement reports, internal audit reports, Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA) guidelines, and departmental performance reports. This method provided an unobtrusive way of gathering accurate and verifiable information without directly involving respondents. Document analysis helped the researcher validate questionnaire and interview findings, identify trends in procurement performance, and assess compliance with public procurement regulations. Although document review may be limited by accessibility and potential author bias, it proved useful in providing background information, supporting data triangulation, and enhancing the credibility of the study findings.

3.11 Data Analysis Techniques

After gathering data, there is need to process the data before it is analyzed. This involved data organization in line with the themes set to capture the research's specific objectives. Data organization in this study involved 4 stages as follows:

3.12 Pre-Processing

The primary purpose of pre-processing was to correct problems identified in the raw data such as elimination of unusable data, interpretation of ambiguous answers and contradictory data from related questions.

3.13 Development of Coding Schemes

After correcting the errors that may influence data analysis, the researcher will formulate a coding system. The core function of the coding will be to create codes and scales from responses which will then be summarized and analyzed in various ways. The coding will also help in addressing challenges of missing data in that the missing data will be given its own code hence making analysis easy.

3.14 Deciding on Data Storage

After coding the data, the researcher made a decision about the short and long term storage of the data gathered bearing

in mind that this will determine the form of analysis to be used and how easy it will be to transfer the data into systems for more complicated analysis. In this study, both electronic and non-electronic (paper) forms will be used. The coded data will be written on paper before analysis due to the following advantage: paper has low cost, allows speedy retrieval and easy to distribute despite it having the challenge of being bulk and non-extensible. On the other hand, the use of electronic storage will make help in overcoming this challenge since it will make the data extensible and low volume.

3.15 Choosing a Statistical Software Package

After storing the data, the next step was deciding on the statistical software package relevant in data analysis. The software's that will be used in the study are word processor (micro soft word), spreadsheet, data base, statistical systems (SPSS) and graphical systems. This will allow versatile analysis and interpretation of data.

3.16 Data Analysis

After organizing the data, the researcher finally conducted data. The researcher executed two types of data analysis, one during the data collection process at the research site and one following the completion of data collection. Data analysis will involve examining what will be collected and making deductions and inferences. It will also involve uncovering underlying structure, extracting important variables, detecting any anomalies and testing any underlying assumptions, it further goes to involve scrutinizing the acquired data and making inferences to address the initial objectives or propositions of the study. Therefore, the data obtained from secondary sources was evaluated against and compared with the data gathered from primary sources in order to support the balance of evidence and interpretations that will be made in the thesis. The analysis of secondary sources will begin before and during the interview process. The preliminary review and analysis of documents will enable the researcher to identify the key thematic issues; and later during the interviews, will help in redesigning the questions in order to capture the analytical constructs. The secondary sources will provide some elements of quantitative data in the form of statistical tables, charts and graphs, which will enrich the analysis and help to describe, translate and provide meaning to issues captured from the interview.

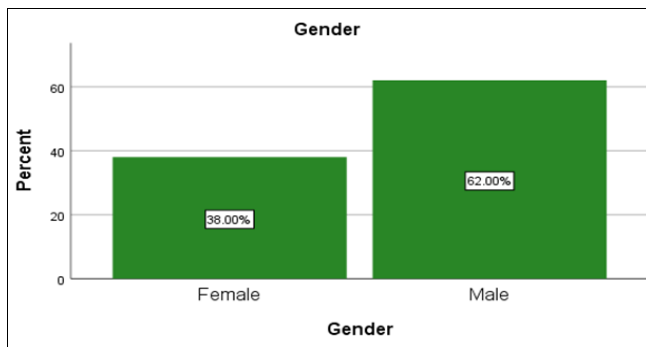
3.17 Theory Triangulation

As evident in the theoretical framework, the researcher will use more than one theoretical approach (theory) to interpret and support data.

4. Presentation of Findings

4.1 Presentation of results on background characteristics of the respondents

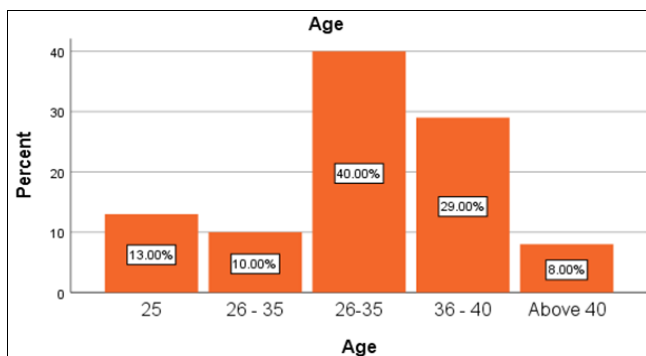
The study included 100 respondents from the Department of Government Printing. Table 4.1 summarizes their demographic characteristics.



Source: Primary Data

Fig 1: Gender Distribution

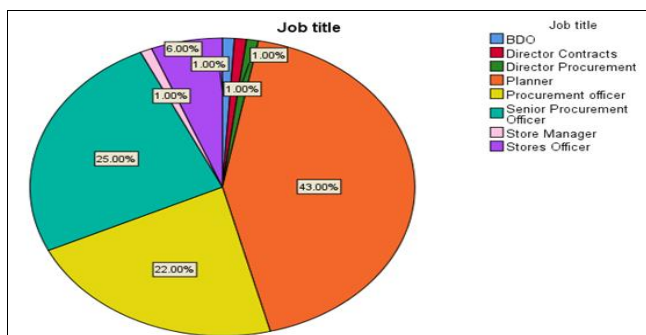
The bar graph indicates that the majority of respondents were male (62%), while females constituted 38% of the sample. This suggests a gender imbalance in the department, with men being more represented in procurement roles.



Source: Primary data

Fig 2: Age distribution of respondents.

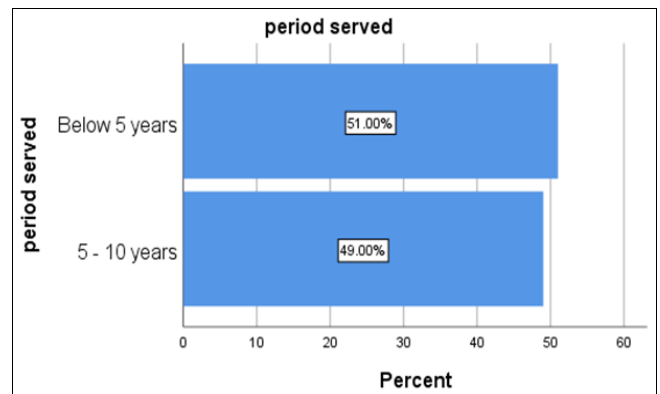
The graph illustrates that most respondents fall within the 26–35 and 36–40 age ranges, accounting for 40% and 29% respectively. The smallest group is those above 40 years (8%). This indicates that the workforce is predominantly young to middle-aged, which may influence adoption of modern procurement practices and digital tools.



Source: Primary data

Fig 3: Job title

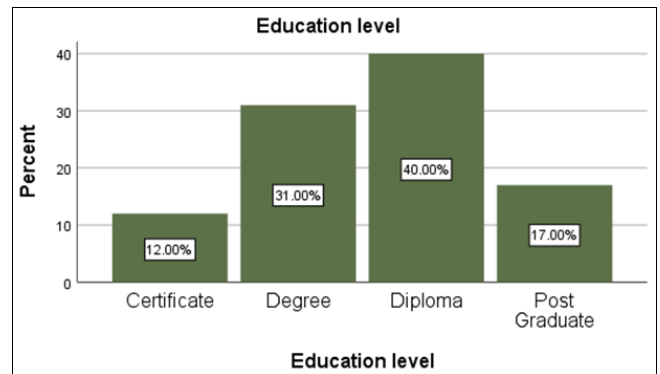
The bar graph highlights that planners form the largest group (43%), followed by senior procurement officers (25%) and procurement officers (22%). Positions such as BDO, Director of Contracts, Director of Procurement, and Store Manager each have minimal representation (1%). This reflects a workforce concentrated at operational and middle-management levels rather than senior management.



Source: Primary data

Fig 4: Period served by respondents in the department

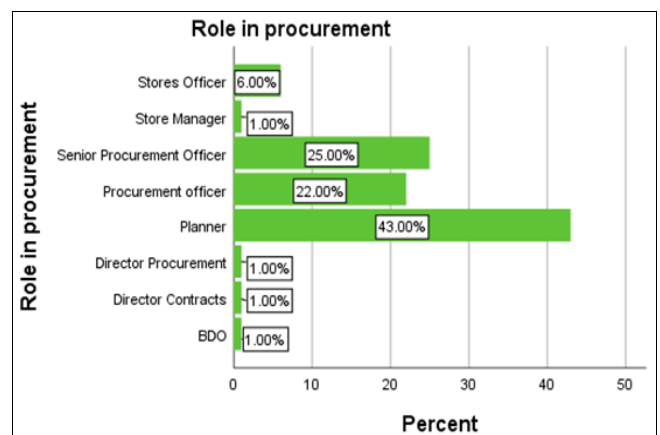
The graph reveals that service duration is relatively balanced: 51% of respondents have served below 5 years, while 49% have 5–10 years of experience. This indicates a mix of relatively new employees and experienced staff, which may affect institutional knowledge and continuity in procurement processes.



Source: Primary data

Fig 5: Education level of respondents

The bar graph shows that most respondents hold diplomas (40%) and degrees (31%), while 17% have postgraduate qualifications, and 12% hold certificates. This suggests that the department has a fairly well-educated workforce capable of understanding and implementing procurement policies effectively.



Source: Primary data

Fig 6: Respondents' role in procurement

This figure mirrors the job title distribution, with planners (43%) being the largest group, followed by senior procurement officers (25%) and procurement officers (22%). Other roles such as BDO, Directors, and Store Manager each account for 1%, while stores officers constitute 6%. The distribution underscores that the majority of staff are directly involved in operational procurement activities rather than top-level management.

4.2 Relationship Between Procurement Planning and Service Delivery Timelines

This section examines whether effective procurement planning affects the timeliness of service delivery at the Department of Government Printing.

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Procurement Planning Mean	2.96	0.609
Supplier Management Mean	2.96	0.704
Regulatory Compliance Mean	2.92	0.629
Service Delivery Impact Mean	2.86	0.646

Source: Primary data

Procurement planning recorded a mean of 2.96 (SD = 0.61), suggesting that respondents were generally neutral to moderately satisfied with current planning procedures. The relatively moderate score implies that planning activities such as budgeting, coordination, and scheduling are not fully optimized, which may contribute to procurement delays and late service delivery.

4.2.2 Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation test was conducted to examine the relationship between procurement planning (procplan_mean) and service delivery timelines (impact_mean). This analysis aimed to determine whether the extent and quality of planning activities within the Department of Government Printing are associated with improvements in the timeliness of service delivery.

Table 2: Correlation Between Procurement Planning and Service Delivery

S. No	Variables	1	2
1	Procurement Planning	1	
2	Service Delivery Impact	-0.085	1

If $p = 0.399$ (not significant at 0.05 level)

The correlation coefficient of -0.085 indicates a very weak negative relationship between procurement planning and service delivery timelines. This means that, within the sampled respondents, higher levels of perceived procurement planning are not associated with faster or more efficient service delivery. The negative direction, albeit very weak, suggests a slight tendency that as planning improves, service delivery timelines do not necessarily improve and could even experience minor delays; however, this relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.399$).

The lack of a significant correlation implies that other factors beyond planning may play a more decisive role in determining service delivery outcomes. For instance, delays may result from supplier performance issues, procedural bottlenecks, bureaucratic approvals, or inadequate resource

allocation. This finding is consistent with studies suggesting that while planning is an essential component of procurement processes, its effectiveness is contingent on the operational environment, staff capacity, and integration with other organizational processes (Ameyaw, Mensah & Osei-Tutu, 2012^[3]; Flynn & Davis, 2014).

In practical terms, this result highlights that focusing solely on improving procurement planning may not be sufficient to enhance service delivery timelines. Instead, a more holistic approach is required one that addresses supplier management, compliance with regulations, resource availability, and process efficiency. It also underscores the importance of aligning planning activities with actual operational realities and institutional constraints to ensure that planning contributes meaningfully to performance outcomes.

4.3 Effects of Supplier Selection and Contract Management on Service Quality

4.3.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Between Supplier Management and Service Delivery Impact

S. No	Variables	1	2
1	Supplier Management	1	
2	Service Delivery Impact	0.068	1

$p = 0.502$ (not significant at 0.05 level)

The correlation result ($r = 0.068$, $p = 0.502$) shows a very weak positive but statistically insignificant relationship between supplier management and the quality of service delivery. This implies that current supplier selection and contract management practices do not significantly predict improvements in service quality. The finding may suggest that the department experiences persistent supplier delays regardless of the existing selection mechanisms.

4.4 Influence of Adherence to Procurement Regulations on Accountability and Client Satisfaction

This section assesses whether compliance with procurement regulations improves accountability and client satisfaction in service delivery.

4.4.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Correlation Between Regulatory Compliance and Service Delivery Impact

S. No	Variables	1	2
1	Regulatory Compliance	1	
2	Service Delivery Impact	0.294	1

$p = 0.003$ (significant at 0.01 level)

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.294$, $p = 0.003$) reveals a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between adherence to procurement regulations and service delivery. This indicates that compliance with established procedures, such as timely audits and approval processes, enhances accountability and client satisfaction.

4.4.2 Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression was performed to assess how procurement planning, supplier management, and regulatory compliance jointly influence service delivery.

Table 5: Regression Results

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	2.183	0.480	—	4.548	0.000
Procurement Planning	−0.108	0.103	−0.102	1.051	0.296
Supplier Management	0.037	0.089	0.040	0.411	0.682
Regulatory Compliance	0.304	0.100	0.296	3.037	0.003

Model Summary: $R = 0.314$; $R^2 = 0.098$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.070$; $F(3,96) = 3.49$; $p = 0.019$

The regression model was statistically significant ($p = 0.019$), explaining approximately 9.8% of the variance in service delivery outcomes. Among the predictors, only regulatory compliance significantly predicted service delivery ($\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.003$). This finding implies that strict adherence to procurement rules, audits, and approval processes contributes positively to accountability and customer satisfaction, while planning and supplier management had no significant effect in this sample.

4.5 Discussion of Research Findings

The study examined the effects of procurement delays on service delivery at the Department of Government Printing in Zambia. Results showed that **procurement planning** had a weak and insignificant relationship with service delivery timelines ($r = -0.085$, $p = 0.399$), suggesting that planning processes alone do not guarantee timely delivery. This may be due to procedural rather than strategic planning, inadequate coordination, and limited technical capacity. Similar observations were made by Ameyaw, Mensah and Osei-Tutu (2012) [3], who noted that public procurement plans often fail due to weak implementation and bureaucratic constraints.

Findings on **supplier management** also revealed a weak and insignificant correlation with service quality ($r = 0.068$, $p = 0.502$). Although supplier relationships were rated moderately effective, limited competition, poor contract enforcement, and lack of performance monitoring reduced their impact. This aligns with Mlinga (2009), who found that ineffective contract management contributes to persistent supplier underperformance in public institutions.

Conversely, **regulatory compliance** showed a positive and statistically significant effect on service delivery ($\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.003$), indicating that adherence to procurement laws enhances accountability and client satisfaction. This supports Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), which emphasizes that conformity to formal rules promotes organizational legitimacy and performance. The finding is consistent with studies by Ngugi and Mugo (2012) and Mzyece (2019), who reported that strong compliance mechanisms improve service outcomes in public entities.

Overall, the results highlight that while procurement planning and supplier management are essential, their effectiveness depends largely on a strong regulatory framework. Hence, governance and compliance remain the most decisive factors influencing procurement performance and service delivery in Zambia's public sector. Strengthening compliance systems, enhancing staff capacity, and integrating e-procurement are therefore key to reducing procurement delays and improving service efficiency.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The study revealed that procurement delays at the Department of Government Printing stem from both operational weaknesses and institutional constraints. While procurement planning exists, its impact on timely service delivery is limited by inadequate coordination, procedural rigidity, and resource constraints. Supplier management also showed weak influence on service quality, largely due to limited competition, weak contract enforcement, and internal inefficiencies. However, regulatory compliance emerged as the most significant factor positively influencing accountability and client satisfaction, underscoring the importance of adhering to established procurement laws and ethical standards.

Overall, the findings indicate that improving service delivery requires a holistic approach combining effective planning, strong supplier oversight, and strict compliance mechanisms. Enhancing institutional capacity, promoting transparency, and fostering accountability are essential for minimizing procurement delays and improving performance in Zambia's public sector.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the Department of Government Printing strengthen procurement planning through realistic timelines, thorough needs assessments, and staff training; improve supplier management by enforcing transparency, monitoring performance, and maintaining a supplier database; streamline regulatory procedures to reduce approval delays while ensuring accountability; fully adopt e-procurement systems with proper training for staff and suppliers; institutionalize continuous monitoring and periodic audits to align procurement with service delivery goals; and implement policy reforms to balance efficiency with compliance, supported by timely budget releases and adequate funding.

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