

The influence Rent-seeking dynamics on public procurement processes in South Africa: A contingency perspective of knowledge management

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Abstract: Rent-seeking in public procurement is a widespread problem where people engage in it as an effort to maximize their profits out of self-preservation. This study examines the impact of rent-seeking on procurement practices in the South African public sector, using Nkomazi Local Municipality as the case study. When allocating government resources, public procurement is crucial. Nonetheless, it is impacted by both internal and external factors, including ignorance, non-compliance, accountability issues, transparency issues, and rent-seeking. Consequently, these may be harmful to both public finances and economic growth. It is imperative that the government implement policies that foster accountability, equity, and openness. Regulating procurement processes can be greatly aided by the enforcement of explicit rules, policies, and regulations.

By offering a safe and transparent platform for executing procurement procedures, e-procurement can significantly reduce the danger of corruption and human interaction while resolving a number of difficulties related to rent-seeking opportunities. The application of Contingency Theory has become more widespread in acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all method for addressing information exchange within the supply chain. In order to improve the effectiveness of the organization's knowledge base, knowledge management a strategy that encourages the transfer of knowledge among individuals, groups, departments, and sections is crucial in the public procurement industry. The theories that relate organizational structure and leadership make knowledge management the most appropriate and central strategy to handle both internal and external problems that may arise. Therefore, in order to uncover the problems related to rent-seeking in public procurement procedures, this research uses a systematic literature review.

In order to gather systematic literature for the current study on the dynamics of rent-seeking in the public sector, the study selects peer-reviewed works; journals, books, articles, thesis or dissertations with relevant sources. The researcher discovered that municipalities are dealing with issues including inadequate planning, rent-seeking, inadequate expertise, and staff training in procurement. As a result, by safeguarding and exploiting information resources, knowledge management is a discipline whose purpose is to boost productivity for both individuals and organizations, both now and in the future.

Finally, the study suggests using online SCM tools to assess situations for immediate response, such as e-procurement, to help monitor and evaluate impacts progress continuously. The study recommends that research must be undertaken to discover how to react to tactics to manage government strategy based on real-time feedback to minimize any potential repercussions or obstacles.

Keywords: Contingency theory, E-procurement, Knowledge management, Public procurement, rent-seeking.

Introduction

The main purpose of this paper explore dynamics that influence public procurement processes in South Africa. Rent-seeking is based on self-preservation to make more money as possible. It takes place as a detrimental influence on public SCM or procurement processes. Thus, these influences may be both good and bad, and it does not only affect local level of government, but also affects all spheres of government including the public citizens. Rent-seeking involves the practice of manipulating public policy or certain economic conditions to gain favours as a strategy for increasing earnings [1]. It strongly promotes more earnings management, hiding specific information from the market. Rent-seeking activities are bad for an economy because it creates misallocation of resources, but these activities are good. Moreover, rent-seeking may enhance economic growth in a dynamic framework, and it might also shed some light on the role of investment [2].

Nonetheless, solving issues of rent-seeking might be challenging and difficult to address, is it is an issue that involves many sectors. While it has long been convenient to ignore how rent-seeking influences SCM processes, it is vital to consider the extent to which measures such as e-procurement, and the contingency perspective of knowledge management can be used as a tools to eliminate or minimize rent-seeking in the public sector. Furthermore, supply chain management processes can improve efficiency and reduce costs by streamlining operations and improving communication, and transparency which can be increased by keeping accurate records of procurement activities. Municipalities should find ways to minimize rent-seeking as it affects service delivery, municipal budgets and influences individual behaviour.

Review methodology.

This research paper uses systematic literature review, at the aims of gathering and assessing the available research related to the area of interest for achieving results that can be audited or repeated [3]. The researcher uses peer-reviewed journals, articles, relevant published dissertations, and books with relevant sources. The current study is the best fit reason being the concept of rent seeking is an issue that is highly researched. By implementing e-procurement tools for data collection municipalities can be able to monitor and evaluate all data in the system, which will then make it to be easier to detect any contingencies or irregularities that might occur.

Rent-seeking in South Africa

In the South African context rent-seeking happens when there is failure to provide transparent decision making allows special interests to influence government decision making, which may benefit only a few at the expense of the many [4]. Rent-seeking and regulatory capture are the demand for and supply of decision making that is meant to serve specific interests rather than the larger, public interest. Moreover, [5] States that “rent-seeking is done through informal budget policy formulation, such transactional relations, negotiation, collusion, bribery, and political lobbies that result in acts of corruption in budget policies”. Consequently, this leads to constraints and lack of accountability, leading to corruption and financial mismanagement with detrimental consequences for effective and efficient service delivery[6].While, [7] states that it is due to unattached or weakly attached voters that are more responsive to the performance of incumbent officials, they are more likely to deter rent seeking, corruption, and other administrative malpractices.

The link between rent seeking and poor performance in municipalities

At municipal level “rent-seeking happens when there is a failure to provide transparent decision making that creates opportunities for particular interests to influence government decision making that may benefit only a few, possibly at the expense of the many”[4] Literature shows that organizational and external factors are influential in the adoption of performance management systems and the choice of tools and methods for measuring performance in public sectors [8].

Furthermore, the adoption and use of performance measurement (PM) systems by organizations, technology is considered as an important tool, this interaction is also related to structure and the external environment [8]. Thus, the major issue or challenge of SCM is due to the lack of performance measures. Performance measures indicate how organizations are performing to achieve their mission, objectives, values, and goal which include (financial performance ICT, inventory management performance, quality performance, and innovation performance) [9].

The performance measures comprise competence, operations management, and block chain technology [9]. Competency is an essential measure or tool that can be used by companies to promote and achieve their competitive advantage and improve their business performance, financially and operationally [10], Financial performance is influenced by pressure from government agencies and regulatory demands and it is also influenced by e-procurement.

Other factors or drivers influencing sustainable supply chain performance comprises of interrelationship, integration and power [11]. Thus, this is due to the fact that corruption is more dominant amongst administrative and political leaders who are motivated to corrupt the procurement process for their own private gains and for their families. Moreover, this is because of the strategic allocation of state resources buys loyalty which in turn helps them to consolidate their power and gain an advantage over their political competitors [12] (Dávid-barrett and Fazekas 2020).

Performance in the supply chain is enhanced by supply chain practices which require internal and external integration between suppliers and customers to be successful [13]. Therefore, due to the increasing need of improving performance measured in public services restrictions on public finance have attracted the need to achieve value through public procurement [14]

To do so managers, stakeholders, organizations, and companies need to adhere to the SCM principles or pillars comprising of open competition, ethics, value for money, accountability, equity, fairness, and reporting [15]. Value is considered as a managerial strategic essential element that adds value and has a capacity to meet the right quality to satisfy the customers' needs thus, in the public sector actors are involved directly and indirectly in the distribution and creation of value [16,17]

Public organizations have certain ethics, accountability, responsibilities, and goals. Ethics in public sector procurement play a crucial role as it encourages labor laws and codes of conduct [18] and to minimize corruption and promote fairness [15]. Moreover, compliance audit is effective in public procurement practices which are used adhere to policies, legislation, and regulations [19]. Thus, in the public sector effective management of ethics is dependent on compliance and integrity [20].

SCM in the public sector is placed on the public eye because of financial management reform [21], and it is evidence that accountability seems to be a challenge or barrier because of the discovered increasing imperfections due to corruption and inefficiency. Thus, the success of SCM may be due to the availability of skilled individuals including (Supply chain officials or managers, stakeholders, and employees), top management and challenges that prevent the success are lack of management support, costs inappropriate standards and regulations and supplier commitment [22,23]. Consequently, not only skills can be influential but also managers and officials are faced with political constraints which may also hinder the success of SCM [14].

Therefore, SCM public officials are held accountable for municipal financial expenditure, and they need to account for the inefficiencies and ensure that the municipal finance is budgeted for the right purposes, as it is their duty to serve the public needs of the people. SCM regulations are implemented to safeguard value for money and to limit corruption and ensure that it is used effectively to meet required needs [15]. Therefore, laws and regulations need to be adhered to in the process of procurement to achieve public goals to meet service delivery [14].

Political Interference

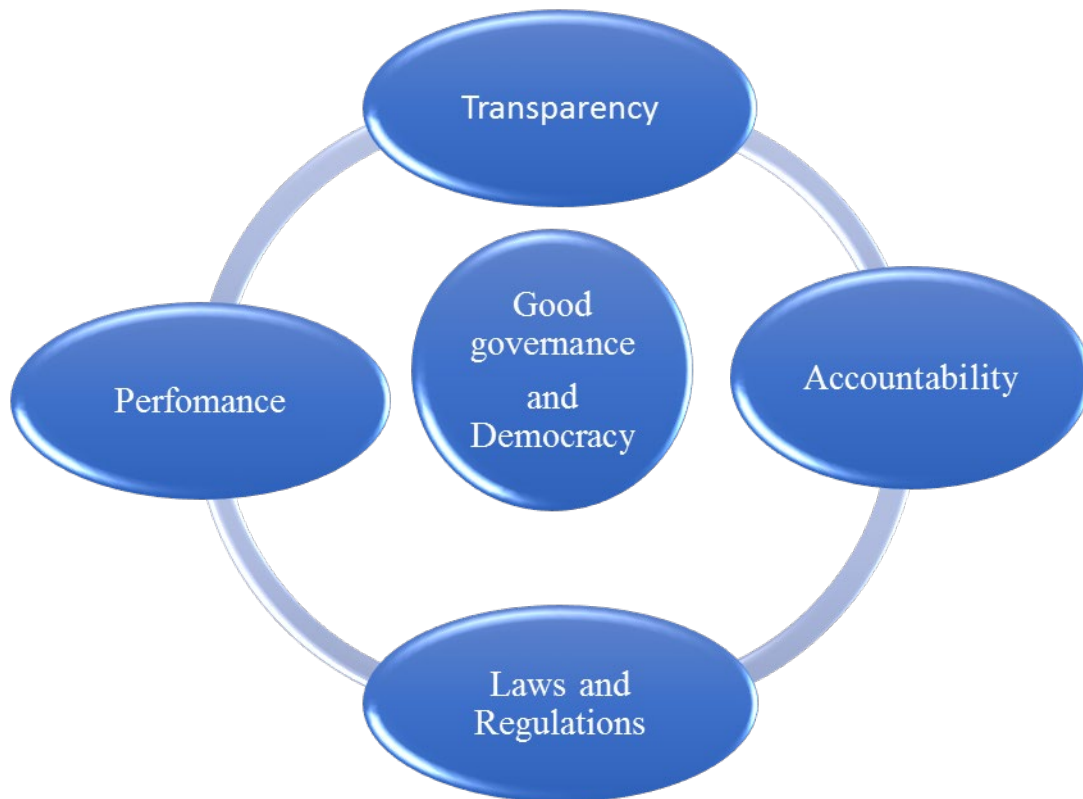
The public procurement process is an area in which the political system is put to a critical test [24]. Political interference in the South African context is an issue towards successful implementation of public SCM and procurement processes. However, not only political interference is an issue, but also institutional interference and community exclusion is a barrier to SCM. In terms of community exclusion as a barrier, local municipalities are responsible and accountable for the lives of the public citizens, therefore it is with their roles and responsibilities to ensure that they interact with the people, and include them throughout, the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the program's success or failure, so that they can be fully aware and accountable of their decisions [25]. Section 153 (a) states the development duties of municipalities, which is to "structure and manage its administration budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community and to promote the social and economic development of the community."

Furthermore, Section 152 of the Constitution states "that local government must provide communities with democratic and accountable government". However, municipal officials believe that community engagement could be improved, as well as skills intervention tools to facilitate community engagement. Thus, the most significant challenge is that most municipalities take community engagement as some compliance practice rather than being concerned about their well-being. While institutional interference has several factors contributing to negative institutional environment that affects the municipal processes, which includes, lack of resources and infrastructure, the hiring of unqualified and unskilled works, high vacancy rates, and lack of incentives [26].

Thus, literature indicates that Political tension in the public sector is unable to meet and take crucial decision, such as procuring or budget, which consequently result to delay of service delivery[27]. Schedule 1 of the Code of Conduct,

by the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), “limits undue political interference. It obliges councillors to disclose and recuse themselves from tender proceedings to ensure compliance and fairness” (Sibanda, Zindi, and Clementine 2020).

According to the knowledge management perspective it can be said that Political interference influences information user’s attitudes toward government information disclosure and their desire to be transparent [28]. Thus, Government openness is about government being able to share information in a transparent manner, trustworthy, and comprehensive information, preserves free expression, and provides individuals with instruments to hold the government responsible [28]. The below diagram indicates elements of good governance:



E-Procurement

[29] the adoption of e-procurement/e-tendering in the SCM public sector is an emerging concept which needs to be assessed if e-government is fit or ready to maintain data using newly modernized global technology. e-Procurement is a digitalized e-commerce concept that involves processes of crafting an annual budget, planning, issuing tenders, conducting technical and financial evaluations, and awarding and implementing projects [31]. There is a relationship between SCM and information system, because SCM relies heavily on information and communication technologies (ICT) for handling transactions, performing communications, developing management insight, and exchanging information [32].

There has been technological advancement since SCM evolved that mostly used by sectors to store and process their data [33]. Data is stored, processed and easily accessible, available and controlled through knowledge management so that organisations can have reliable and valuable information [34]. ICT as a technology aspect is also seen as a key factor in the implementation of a performance management system, helping or preventing data collection and, as a result, to improve productivity [8]. Supply chains are strongly dependent on digitalization to improve their competitive advantage [33] digitalization of procurement minimizes the gap between the suppliers and the government by promoting transparency and accountability, so as for public officials to manage public funds efficiently and effectively for public use purposes.

[29], the innovations of technology improve the quality of public procurement to enhance socio-economic development. Thus, lack of well-equipped warehouses and appropriate digital data processing and storage platforms, cause financial constraints and delay of service delivery [35]. Other factors which may hinder the proper implementation of e-procurement in the public sector include lack of strategic plans, resistance to change, weak security, privacy management systems [29], and limited human and infrastructure resources [16], and lack of trust and transparency amongst stakeholders in the procurement [36].

[37] South Africa is slowly adapting to the use of technology to improve public procurement services or practices. The South African National treasury has seen the important benefits brought by e-procurement in other countries. There appears to be evidence that some of the developing countries like Africa are making use of this technology [37].

Knowledge Management

Lack of knowledge leads to rent-seeking as it might be harmful to people who are not involved in innovation and entrepreneurship, as few skilled people prefer to choose rent-seeking activities [2]. The term of knowledge management appeared in the early 1990s. it arose due to difficulties regarding complexities, increasing competition fuelled using technology, and an increasing number of customer demands [38].

The application of knowledge management in public sector is essential, as it is in its emerging stage. The actions of public sector are increasingly being criticized. [39] in public sector "knowledge is associated with power and employees don't share it with others". Therefore, the public sector is under pressure to increase transparency, confidence, reliability and accountability [40]. [41] states that Knowledge management is a discipline that aims to improve the productivity of individuals and organizations by protecting and using the current and future value of knowledge resources. KM is defined as "systematic management of knowledge resources within an organization in order to create total value and meet strategic needs" [41].

[42] knowledge management theory is essential in public sector procurement as a practice that promotes the transfer of knowledge amongst people, organisations, sections and various departments to increase the effectiveness for knowledge base in the organisation. However, the people's aspects of knowledge transfer have been identified to have some barriers which includes, lack of resources, time, organisational culture, leadership, lack of recognition of individuals, and public sector hierarchical structure [42]. [43] conducted a study on "the role of supply chain processes and information sharing in supply chain management". The study indicated that information sharing in supply chain has a positive and negative impact on business. Thus, it does not have a direct effect on business performance, however, it has a positive effect on organisational performance through supply chain process. some of the firms are uncertain that information might be used in an improper manner for their own gains. Thus, this can lead to conflict of interest and opportunistic behaviour or rent seekers of supply chain partners. According to [44] Trust reduces opportunism and uncertainties while also it encourages greater commitment to supply chain partners. However, high levels of trust cannot be guaranteed, which is also said to be a contingency factor in supply chain management that needs to be handled. Therefore, in knowledge management it is important to promote and enhance learning to allow managers to maintain the benefits of trust, accountability and transparency while managing risks that might occur along the supply chain.

Contingency Plan to Minimize Rent-Seeking

Poor planning can be an influence in public procurement. Therefore, Planning in time is necessary to help avoid delays, and improper planned procurement, which is to open to efficient and effective transparent procurement [45]. Furthermore, when planners face challenges when planning, measures can be undertaken to ensure that contingency planning is in place to address upcoming procurement dynamics such as to avoid issues of rent-seeking. Moreover, planning helps municipalities to be able to survive and thrive in an uncertain situation that might cause disturbance, in order to be successful managers need to learn from previous recovery procedure to track what was effective and efficient to be able have a good plan.

This study views SCM or procurement process from contingency perspective by theorizing dynamic factor which is rent seeking that influence proper implementation in the municipality. SCM is a set of repackaged ideas of existing operations management theories, and it is said to be essential in motivating existing suppliers to identify new ways of building a viable supply base for acquiring innovation sources [6]. The contingency theory comes from the 1960s by [46] studied the use of contingency theory operations management (OM) practice, and found that contingency theory is related to operations management [47]. The contingency theory states that there is no better way to manage the processes related to organization, creation, and leadership. Contingency theory suggests that the various structural

patterns observed in organizations, combined with performance management systems and strategies, affect the organization's performance [8].

The theoretical framework assumes that optimal decisions-making and actions are determined by internal and external environmental factors [48]. Contingency theory predicts that the future of management will be shaped by a complex combination of these factors, which means that it is impossible to predict the results of the organization [47]. The theory asserts that organisational effectiveness is a result of adjustments between two or more factors such as organisation, culture, style, structure (size), environment, strategy, systems and performance outcomes. For an instance, supply chains are said to be a network system or structure that is not static as they tend to change in terms of how they are monitored, shape, size and the way they are controlled. Thus, the main aim of this theory is to find the best fit between contingent circumstances and organisational practices to be able to construct fit propositions that will enhance required performance [44]. Therefore, it is important to adopt contingency theory to the management of supply chains as it helps to have an in-depth understanding and knowledge about nature of dynamics or factors that might affect effective SCM processes in the public sector.

For instance, [49] observed the factors or dynamics that influence the supply chain that are uncertainties inside the demand and timing of the customer. The study proposes that dynamics of supply chain that occur in the ever-changing business environment are influenced by forces or drivers such as delivery reliability, cost reduction, and change in customer demand, which cause organizations to need to re-structure or re-design their supply chains. Further, the mentioned drivers are highly influenced by barriers that are linked with policy constraints, lack of relevant professional skills (human-related barriers), cost, and complexity [50]. While [51] states that in the supply chain there are many types of failure, one of which is persistent failure over time. In an organization with a lack of proper design, lack of manufacturing capabilities or high costs such a failure can be seen. Thus, these factors mentioned my cause complexities in SCM processes. Thus, this study focusses on rent-seeking as a main factor in the municipality.

Contingency Perspective of Knowledge Management in Public Sector

Knowledge management is the best fit and central to address contingencies both internal and external factors, reason being the both the theories link leadership and structure of the organisation. Thus, misfit reduces, finance, performance and leads to change in structure of the organisation in supply chain [44]. With that being said, SCM managers must be able to manage dynamics and adopt structures that are complicated in terms of structural management, decision-making and behavioural aspects [52]. Thus, contingencies or uncertainties in supply chain are seen when decision-makers in an organisation are unable to make proper decisions, reason behind that maybe that the personnel or practitioner lacks information or he or she has no control of the problem or cannot find the root cause of the problem that impacts on proper implementation of the organisational processes [53].

Furthermore, in SCM it is crucial to balance supply and demand through integrated knowledge management processes to create value for beneficiaries [54]. [55] states a knowledge management perspective recognizes the need of requirement for the best fit between decision making and knowledge management systems. Hence, knowledge sharing is effective and important in SCM. Further, public knowledge management allows public participation in decision making to ensure transparency, responsiveness and accountability [56].

Therefore, in relation to this study the knowledge management perspective of the contingency theory recognizes the need to best fit manage the factors or dynamics in the public sector that might arise to affect proper implementation of the SCM processes. Furthermore, in the public sector procurement is said to be the best powerful tool that is highly recommended to better respond to emergency situations that might arise. However, procurement tend to have tend to have complex structures. According to the contingency perspective organisational is better when their structures are aligned with the way they operate [57].

The public sector needs to convert a large amount of available information into high-quality knowledge. Successful organizations are those that can manage uncertainty by creating and disseminating knowledge and can still improve better governance [39]. [58] Knowledge management is the core ability to manage the supply chain and an important element of an organization's multicultural and information environment. There are many factors and instruments to improve the performance of the supply chain, but one of the most important tools is knowledge management.

Contingency Theory (CT) has been increasingly used to recognize that there is no universal solution for how information sharing in the supply chain can be approached [59]. The sharing of information should instead be adapted to the particular context of the supply chain and it asserts that it is crucial to identify solutions within favourable conditions. CT helps to understand how organisations exchange information and what specific mechanisms for sharing information are used to meet supply chain requirements [59]. Knowledge acquisition may have an immediate

impact on innovation. While, the contingency approach, on the other hand, argues that the impact of knowledge acquisition procedures on innovation performance may be boosted more when the practices are matched with regard to KM strategy [60].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the main purpose of this study focuses on the influence of rent-seeking dynamics in the public procurement sector with reference to the Nkomazi local municipality. Rent-seeking in public procurement poses a significant threat to efficient allocation of public resources, service delivery, public trust, economic development and growth. Public procurement has been regulated to achieve economic goals, such maintaining the needs, revenue base, and to ensure transparency is adhered to and that everything is procured within affordable and existing budget. unfavourable economic impacts can weaken the capability of municipalities to sustain themselves in the provision of service delivery from the available financial resources. The government must find ways to prevent rent-seeking, through promoting the use of E-procurement, promoting transparency and accountability. Through this the government can ensure the best interest to promote development and contribute to economic growth.

The findings of the study unveiled that some of the employees tend not to comply with the municipal policies they bypass the law, for their own economic benefits. This has resulted to that the researcher to recommended that municipalities need to find strict ways to resolve the issues of misuse on municipal resources and finance. The study also views knowledge as a powerful tool to minimize contingencies along the supply chain. This study has drawn or painted an insightful information to the researcher, which will also benefit and contribute towards the Nkomazi local municipality and other municipalities at large. The study recommends research should be conducted on how the state can minimize corruption that is happening in the public sector, and on how can it be assured that public officials abide and comply with the laws and policies in place.

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