

# Trouncing Barriers to Sustainable Procurement Practices in Public Sector Organizations in Uganda

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**Abstract**— Until recently, sustainable procurement (SP) was seen as unnecessary so long as a procurement function is executed. In fact, in many developing countries, SP is still being treated as a “by-the-way” function. However, SP is the only one surest way of achieving sustainable development goals despite numerous barriers in its implementation. The purpose of this article was to enhance understanding and explanations of barriers to SP implementation in public sector organizations in Uganda as well as to suggest solutions to these barriers. A sequential literary analysis was used, complemented by cross-public sector organizations’ survey from 90 procurement practitioners from both central and local governments in Uganda. These were primarily respondents who were purposely sampled to identify barriers to SP and were engaged through e-mailed questionnaires. Findings from the study show that barriers to SP are due to culture of the organization, inadequate knowledge of SP among employees, management failures, unfavourable work environment, lack of influential constants, improper implementation process and lack of clear guidelines. The study concludes that for public sector organizations to advance on the path of SP, intrinsic issues associated with barriers to its implementation ought to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. The study suggests solutions which public sector organizations can implement in order to unlock the potential values in their SP practices.

**Keywords**— Government Organizations, Open-ended questionnaires, Public Sector, Sustainable procurement practices, Uganda.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable procurement (SP) is the process of obtaining goods and services by taking into account social, economic and environmental impact it has on the people and community (Kalubanga, 2012). It thrives in attaining authenticities of goods and services to be procured through the ingredients, origin, maker, transportation and disposal (Gold, Seuring & Beske, 2010). According to Gormly (2014), SP is centred on a sustainable-oriented culture. It is a culture supported by top management, energized by team work, cemented by organizational learning and tethered on continuously permanent improvement focus (Stephen & Helen, 2011). Carter and Easton (2011) aver SP requires an effective team working to promote sustainable use of product(s) obtained. Björklund (2011) contends the team must ensure full contributions from each of the members. Ho (2010) cautions the team work would be in jeopardy where members do not perform their part professionally. Belfit, Sexton, Schweber

and Handcock (2011) suggest employees’ involvement and participation are the only prerequisite for SP to take on the right path to achieve the goals of the public sector organization.

Recent studies on public sector organizations in Uganda indicated that SP practices are still very low. For example, in his study on the practicality of the implementation of SP in the procurement process, in Uganda, Kalubanga (2012) found that there has been less attention (if any) in investigating how the practice should be prioritized for optimization of business value creation. It appears as though, this unease can be attributed to the many difficulties due to administrative and operational problems that public sector organizations do face as claimed by Carter and Easton (2011). The most certain thing, however, is that these difficulties are causing a strong negative impact on the exploitation level of many public sector organizations when it comes to putting into good use SP practices. Surprisingly, senior managers in the Ugandan PDEs are seriously willing to improve their performance area through applying the latest sustainable procurement practices in order to achieve a high level of improvements (Kalubanga, 2012). Much as Kalubanga (2012) discovered there is an understanding and acceptance of SP concept and its related elements, he articulates that anecdotal evidence indicates that the contribution of public sector procurement to sustainability has not been adequately studied. It would seem despite the fact that there exists some understanding of the concept of SP, a systematic documentation of SP practices is seriously lacking. Even then it’s most likely no serious attempts have been made in driving and guiding SP initiatives. For example, research in the areas of overcoming barriers in SP is terribly lacking in the country. The research focus of this study comes from the day-to-day problems in the implementations of SP in public sector organizations in Uganda, caused mainly by numerous barriers. Thus, the paper presents a critical reflection on the efforts to garner down barriers to SP in Uganda with the best effective ways of trouncing them. It also brings out the practical dimensions of erasing these barriers from the path through which SP should sail to success. Next to this background is the literature review in which reviews of past studies are presented. This shall be followed by the methodology used in the study which forms section 3. In section 4, there shall be presentation of findings intertwined with discussions before a

conclusion is made in section 5. Recommendations and limitations of the study are also alluded to in the paper.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was underpinned by Institutional theory. The theory highlights the growing need and importance of SP, as the scope of procurement function is changing as a result of growing demands for quality goods and services as well as the effect of globalization and technological advancement (Adelbanjo, Ojadi, Laosirihongthing & Tickle, 2013). Kostova, Roth and Dacin (2008) contend that institutional theory is about legitimacy gained by responding to institutional pressures. They argue that the institutional environment creates isomorphism (structures and practices) through coercive, normative and cognitive pressures.

Procurement practitioners and managers can use institutional theory to address problems affecting the implementation of SP. Institutional theory is relevant to SP due to pressures from non-economic institutions as government and NGO but also economic actors such as industry associations and promoting social standards (Greenwood, Hinings & Whetten, 2014). As noted by Zhua, Sarkis, and Lai (2013), the rationale of institutional theory is to advance confidence and determination in the minds of the procurement practitioners. As a result of globalization and unending demands for quality goods and services, organizations are increasingly finding it necessary to rely on SP to compete as a global and networked economy. An economy in which there is a clear policy on control costs that adopts a wider approach to whole life costing, improvement of the internal and external standards through performance assessments, compliance with environmental and social legislation, management of risk and reputation, building a sustainable supply chain for the future, and involvement of the local business community (Stephen & Helen, 2011). There is therefore a demand for an enhanced practice to promote SP needed in nearly all public sector organizations of today (Brammer & Walker, 2011). This highlights to need to uncover the barriers to successful implementation of SP practices and strategies to overcome them. This is because the implementation of SP everywhere is shrouded with many difficulties.

Islam and Siwar (2013) confirm that the implementation of SP is often shrouded with many difficulties. These difficulties may affect the success of SP implementation in any county worldwide (Kioke, 2014). For example, Guenther, Scheibe and Farkavcova (2010) assert national cultural values may complicate the implementation of SP in some countries. A number of researchers studied the obstacles and barriers of sustainable procurement in developing countries. Musanzikwa (2013) concluded that public sector organizations in developing countries are way behind developed countries in sustainable procurement

practices because of copious barriers. In another study, Tukutaa and Saruchera (2015) conducted a cross-country qualitative study on one hundred diverse procurement practitioners from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. They concluded that the main challenges faced by procurement practitioners in promoting sustainable procurement include limited recognition, increasing unethical behaviour, poor supplier service delivery, poor regulatory environment, varying supplier standards and poor corporate governance.

Chelangat, Ombui and Omwenga (2015) evaluated how organizational structure, organizational resource capacity, legal and regulatory framework, cost of sustained products affected effective implementation of SP practices in government Parastatals in Kenya. They concluded that these factors significantly influenced the implementation of SP in Kenya. They are also discovered that factors such as high prices of green products, unavailability of green products in the local market, resistance from suppliers, and lack of environmental specifications on products offered; to a large extent affect effective implementation of SP practices in government Parastatals in Kenya. Kipkorir and Wanyoike (2015) investigated the current difficulties facing SP in multinational organizations in Kenya and concluded that financial resources available, purchasing of the recyclable and cost of purchasing non-ozone depleting substances hinders the uptake of SP. These challenges could perhaps be attributed to inability of developing countries to harmonize SP with their traditional procurement styles and culture (Decarolis, 2014).

Several studies on the status of SP in developing countries point a bleak future for success. As found out by these studies, common among these barriers include:- developing countries are very slow in practicing sustainable procurement (Roos, 2012), procurement practitioners do not have enough knowledge about sustainable procurement (Sourani & Sohail, 2011), managers feel their culture is not suitable for sustainable procurement practices (Mathonsi & Thwala, 2012), d) lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of sustainable procurement (Nasiche & Ngugi, 2014), lack of sustainable procurement management literature in developing countries (Mensah, 2012), and developing countries are lagging behind in sustainable procurement issues (Nasiche & Ngugi, 2014). Other studies show that most of the problems existing within organizations in developing countries are caused by; lack of sufficient knowledge of sustainable procurement methods and techniques (Mensah, 2012); lack of motivation of employees for good sustainable procurement practices (Chelangat, Ombui & Omwenga, 2015); poor procurement specifications, poor procurement procedures and may other technical factors that require more investigation, development and studies (Mathonsi & Thwala, 2012). In his elaborate masters' dissertation on barriers to SP in developing countries, Roos (2012) summarizes the barriers as including:-legal framework does not allow or encourage SP,

lack of knowledge related to environmental and social policies, donor guidelines do not allow or encourage SP, lack of monitoring tools, lack of capacity, market is not prepared to deliver sustainable products and services, lack of guidance material and practical tools, negative impacts on small and medium sized local companies, SP is too complex, SP is expected to increase the cost of public procurement, and inflexible budgetary mechanism.

Accordingly, following earlier researchers and scholars alike espousing the dark side of the implementation of SP in developing countries (Adjarko, Osei-Poku & Ayarkwa, 2014), the researcher proposes that a clearer understanding of the barriers to SP will promote endeavors to find out solutions unto them. Additionally, unconvinced therefore may generate laxity and lapses in its implementation such as SP implementation practices are far more uncertain than traditional procurement *per se* (Kioke, 2014). Therefore, organizations would exercise skepticism when allocating their resources to such advanced initiatives, and rather continue to invest in the traditional procurement that would 'sufficiently' satisfy the needs of the beneficiaries.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Given the insufficiency of original research related to SP issues in developing countries, and the exploratory nature of this study, a sequential process of combining the existing SP literature with real-world practices was adopted (Sekaran, 2013). More specifically, the method combined theoretical formulation with practice-oriented empirical validation (Dane, 2010). Supported by literature (e.g., Bhattacharjee, 2012), this research method is useful especially in developing well-grounded theory and is helpful in explaining how and why events have occurred (Yin, 2013).

The study involved reviewing existing literature on SP and its role in contemporary society, which was confirmed through systematic reviews of empirical researches conducted in the last few years. The questionnaire was designed based on reviewed literatures which were then documented together with a prescription of academically informed solutions to these barriers. Questionnaires were sent to 90 public sector organizations in Uganda where from an equal number of procurement practitioners (heads of procuring and disposing entities or their immediate subordinates) filled the questionnaires. These respondents were experienced in dealing with procurement activities ranging from over 5 to 10 years in diverse public sector organizations' settings. Participating respondents were from diverse backgrounds and had varying qualifications, from ordinary diploma in procurement and supply chain management to professional certification (CIPS) and/or masters in procurement.

Qualitative data were gathered through the open-ended questionnaire. Afterward, they were organized into

thematic areas, analyzed and blended with existing literature. Issues raised in the responses were almost similar- a clear indication that public sector organizations in Uganda are facing almost similar challenges in the SP practice. No much effort is being exerted to overcome these barriers yet they seem to run deep to derail the process of SP implementation in the country.

In all a total of 90 public sector organizations in the country were purposively sampled for this study. Heads of procuring and disposing units in these organizations or their assistants had the questionnaire sent to and were requested to fill in. They were asked not to identify their identity not even their places of work. This was intended to keep confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. The only exception, however, was assigning distinct symbol on each of them strictly for the researcher's personal consumption. On retrieving the questionnaire, only 75 out of 90 potential respondents send back their questionnaires which were eventually used for data analysis. This was a good response rate at 83.3 per cent, far much higher than between 30 and 50 per cent as recommended in social science research (Babbie, 2010). All the 75 the respondents who participated in the study claimed that they were practicing sustainable procurement at a very low level.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The following discussion summarizes the open-ended questionnaires sent to 75 procurement practitioners from different central and local governments in Uganda.

#### A. Concepts and principles of sustainable procurement

Question: *Are there any concept and principles for sustainable procurement being implemented in your organization, and how?*

From the results obtained from the 75 procurement practitioners, all of them agreed and stated that all the employee levels of the organization do not understand sustainable procurement and has little knowledge about it. Does this mean that majority of the respondents don't know much about sustainable procurement practices? Ageron, Gunasekaran and Spalanzani (2011) contend that meager knowledge of sustainable procurement is another important barrier in the implementation process. The procurement practitioners in all the 90 organizations under study give an indication that the concept of sustainable procurement has not been implemented in their organizations. Also they have insisted and assured that the knowledge of the middle and upper levels managers and employees about the implementation of sustainable procurement practices is very low if ever existed, which means that sustainable procurement has never been a subject that has been seriously addressed

and/or introduced by public sector organizations in Uganda, with no strategy for implementing sustainable procurement principles was ever adopted. This shows that it needs a helping hand in understanding for the top management and then to all levels. All 75 procurement practitioners in the organizations under study said that the organizations will carry out those sustainable procurement principles which are essential to their organizational capacities. Also, it is seen unless the organization is completely aware of sustainable procurement principles, they will not be implemented in totally (Carter & Easton, 2011). Two third of the total respondents, noted that the current amendments of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act, 2014 focuses only on smaller portion of sustainable procurement practices and does not promotes its principles. This cannot help to identify what needs to be done to promote sustainable procurement in public sector organizations. They, however, noted that this is one step ahead in the right direction unlike before the amendment of the Act. The most certain thing, they noted however, was that there is no clear legal framework as the existing ones have failed to highlight the relationships between sustainable procurement principles and sustainable procurement practices. Out of the 75 organization studied, 45 procurement practitioners from these organizations felt that the current guidelines for the enforcement of sustainable procurement practices are insufficient to address their needs and that they can do nothing to subject their employees to any more visible sustainable procurement practices, just as discovered by Kalubanga (2012) in his study; whereas the other 30 procurement practitioners prefer enforcing sustainable procurement practices only if they are confident and assured of the possibilities of success and the outcomes of the new initiatives.

#### B. Barriers affecting the knowledge and understanding of sustainable procurement philosophy

Question: *What are the barriers affecting the knowledge and understanding of public sector organizations in Uganda on sustainable procurement philosophy?*

The feedback from the respondents of the case study pointed out that none of the respondents have good knowledge about sustainable procurement. This is very common in developing countries as revealed in a study by Tukuta and Saruchera (2015). The majority of the respondents have only a little bit of knowledge from what they have understood about sustainable procurement practices and implementation during their course of study. 35 per cent of the respondents have indicated that they have attended only a part of an awareness sensitization program on sustainable procurement in government organizations due to the fact that they being busy.

The respondents have assured that the majority of the employees heard about sustainable procurement from the sensitization program and/or conferences. It can be implied

that despite there being a few sensitization programs regarding sustainable procurement practices, 25 per cent of the respondents wrote and assured that their employees do not understand enough about sustainable procurement. It implied that despite there being a few sensitization programs regarding sustainable procurement practices, 25 per cent of the respondents have written and assured that employees in their organizations do not understand enough about sustainable procurement which resulted and showed a lack of employee awareness. Most of the procurement practitioners have expressed their need to hire external consultants from outside the country to help them with the awareness and implementation process as suggested by Uyarra and Flannigan (2010). The respondents insisted that they believe there are consultation firm locally, but they do not believe that those firms are capable and have the abilities, experience and the manpower to depend for consultation and sensitization programs.

Another reasons the respondents mentioned is that sustainable procurement is almost absent in public sector organizations in Uganda, except at some few PDEs at the central government levels where they offer training on sustainable procurement on a regular basis especially to staff from the Users' departments. Also there is a no sustainable procurement follow-up in these organizations. Even though the government had set a training department at the Public Procurement Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDPAA), it mainly conducts training on procurement disposal generally with no specific training/sensitization on the importance of sustainable procurement. 60 per cent of the respondents insisted and confirmed that poor education and training programs represents a major barrier in the implementation of sustainable procurement practices in public sector organizations in Uganda. Similar finding was obtained by Brammer and Walker (2011) in their study on international comparative study on sustainable procurement in the public sector. From these findings, the lack of sustainable procurement awareness, poor education, and lack of training are common barriers in Uganda.

#### C. Management barriers facing public sector organizations from implementing sustainable procurement practices

Question: *What are the management barriers facing public sector organizations to effectively implement sustainable procurement?*

From the results of the responses by all the 75 procurement practitioner indicated and assured that the most important elements of a team are their working members; people with knowledge and experience relevant to the process are required, with a limit of the number of members to keep the team small enough to be manageable. They recorded that there is lack of working in teams and an absence of active and experienced leaderships within their organizations just as the

case was uncovered by Chelangat, Ombui and Omwenga (2015) in the case of government parastatals in Kenya. 31 per cent of the respondents stated that the public sector in Uganda unlike the private sector within the country went through several changes in the last fifteen years in terms of their dependency. Most times they have to follow either ministry of finance, planning and economic development or PPDAAA for directives and guidance. In such scenarios, public sector organizations are impoverished in the implementation of SP just because there are so frequent changes in production of guidelines for the implementation of sustainable procurement. This is evident in terms of the scattered pieces of guidelines in form of finance and procurement/disposal itself that the cause miserable failure on the part of public sector organizations to properly implement sustainable procurement practices. Related scenario was revealed in a study by Francesco, Fabio, Marco and Tiberio (2012) while studying factors influencing uptake of Green Procurement Practices (GPP) in Italy.

Apart from these, the respondents outlined that the presence of hierarchical traditional structure within the organizations makes the management follow of sustainable procurement practices difficult. This finding tallies with what was found by Kumar (2012) in the case of electronics and electrical industry in India. Mostly, the coordination between user departments in these organizations carried out through formal letters between them. For example, user departments of different directorates in the organizations should go through managers officially to follow approved organizational structure and adhere with authorities given to the head of every user department. Every user department according to job description and organizational structure has its responsibilities and authorities. The head of any user department believes that it is important to follow the written department's job description to be a successful head, to satisfy management and to show their qualifications.

Rarely departmental meetings were conducted to discuss the organization's activities related to sustainable procurement in particular and because of which staff remained green about sustainable procurement practices. Kalubanga (2012) earlier on noted the same problem in his study on sustainable procurement in Uganda. Also, there was no effort to communicate the importance of sustainable procurement implementation between the upper level managers and middle level managers or between the middle level managers and the lower level managers as well as other staff.

All the 75 respondents confirms the effect of procurement law and regulations issued by the government and PPADAA respectively such as the PPPDA Act , 2014, PPPDA Regulations, 2014 which imposes restriction on conformity to sustainable procurement dealings by all organizations. This law and regulations with their restrictions in most cases result in unwillingness from the leaders and high

ranking employees to take responsibilities. This barrier confirms finding by Guenther, Scheibe and Farkavoca (2010) in which they called for revival of these restrictions in order to improve sustainable stewardships. It is seen and understood from all respondents' procurement practitioners that they believe the organization's culture helps in providing the basis to form and modify behaviors, attitudes and values deem very important to the power structure of the organization and the problem how to deal with. This reaffirms earlier finding by Rimmington, Smith and Hawkins (2010) in their study of corporate social responsibility and sustainable food procurement. The respondents as a whole contended management in all the organizations was poor in exchange of ideas and information with employees as an effective leadership tool to implement the practices successfully.

The respondents procurement practitioners in all 75 organizations insists that there is lack of employee involvement, empowerment, no continuity in training programs and no concentration of training programs on how the employees in the organization can maintain the practice. This was a common problem in the case of performance of breweries in Kenya as found out by Nderitu and Ngugi (2014) in their study. During the analysis of their responses, it had been concluded that top management experience a lack of commitment and lack of leaderships, where they should focus on high-commitment broad principles. Further analysis of the respondent's response reveals the importance and the necessity which guides the choice of specific practices. This has the potential to assure that the organization introduces high-commitment practices comprehensibly to promote the required employee attitude and behaviors that guarantee the success of sustainable procurement initiatives. First middle level managers and employees must be kept motivated and encouraged to help smooth out the initial transitional stage in sustainable procurement practices as suggested by Srivastava (2013). This can be achieved by strong leadership, training and involvement from staff at all levels.

D. Culture barriers facing public sector organizations from sustainable procurement implementation

Question: *What are the cultural barriers facing the implementation of sustainable procurement in public sector organizations in Uganda?*

In the design of the questionnaire, the researcher asked about the cultural barriers facing public sector organizations in Uganda from implementing sustainable procurement. All the respondents consider that the accounting officers together with the heads of departments are always responsible to bring them sustainable procurement awareness, knowing areas needed improvement, provide resources required by the practice and can guide the organization during all processes for sustainable procurement practices. The respondents in all the 75 organizations indicated that

appointing the accounting officer as a management representative was itself a barrier affecting the implementation of sustainable procurement practices because the management representative is responsible for ensuring that the sustainable procurement practices is appropriate and maintained, responsible for promoting sustainable procurement awareness, and monitor the performance of the practice.

From the results of the respondents' responses, the procurement practitioners agreed on the fact that the biggest difficulty for their organizations to change is to look for the culture and how to change culture to support sustainable procurement practices, for example, sometimes there exist some rumours in the organization that procurement methods will be changed in the coming days, or rumours that some of the procurement activities as known will be phased out, this will affect the employees attention and behaviour looking for what is happening to them after that. All 75 procurement practitioners assured that their employees express their behaviour dissatisfaction by delaying or neglecting in doing something, or in other words discussing things that are usually out of work scope and waste a lot of time and money. Another barrier is that the hierarchical management in public sector organizations in Uganda is centralized, which is very difficult if not impossible for employees participation in relation to share and be part of solving problems and share ideas. This is in consonant with the findings of Adjarko, Osei-Poku and Anyarkwa (2014) in their study on challenges of incorporating environmentally sustainable issues into construction procurement at the local government level in Ghana.

The procurement practitioners stated that clique-relationship with the government and the influence of political leaders in the procurement processes affects the decisions made by top management. From the results of the responses, it is concluded that managers directly responsible for initiation and conduct of procurement processes has been at the forefront of making decisions that would affect exploitation of sustainable procurement practices. They are responsible for dictating what to do, and they are very confused and afraid of consequences of any decision made that seem not to favor their individual interests. This means that they set unreasonable objectives and lack of understand of the perspective upon which sustainable procurement can thrive.

The respondents, after presentation of their opinions and explanations, had understood and convinced that successful sustainable procurement practice implementation program depends on supervision being given the tools, skills and responsibility to manage the process and that sustainable procurement requires manpower resources and top management commitment by training all employees and educate them about sustainable procurement concepts and principles. Abbasi and Nilsson, F. (2012) urge the identical

actions in ensuring supply chains are environmentally sustainable.

#### E. Factors at work

Question: *In your opinion, what are the factors that may help you ensure there is concrete sustainable procurement practice in your organization?*

All the respondents agreed and believed that integrated job functions as a team work by strategic vision of the organization is the best way to continue success. This was highly recommended by Ageron, Gunasekaran and Spalanzani (2011) in their empirical study of sustainable supply management. One fourth of the respondents cited that some tasks need a greater level of skilled and knowledgeable employees, and all 75 procurement practitioners who responded stated that lack of employees training inhibited empowerment of employees. There was a strong tendency for some of these members to be on their guard against their colleagues. Also, 62 out of 75 respondents revealed that the coordination between user departments within their organizations was carried out through formal letters in which they complained it takes time and power to achieve small tasks.

The different procurement practitioners who responded expressed their feeling that the lack of financial support from the government has delayed the start of implementation of the sustainable procurement as the organizations belong to the public sector. Also 54 of the 75 respondents pointed out that the existing policies like buying from local sources should be reviewed or change to more flexible act. Effective implementation of SP requires enough resources as recommended by Gold, Seuring and Beske (2010) in their study of sustainable supply chain management and inter-organizational resources without which there would be no successful SP in any country. Likewise, the respondents in all organizations agreed that open communications about financial presentation in the organizations with motivation are factors to help conducting satisfactory work.

#### F. Influential constants to sustainable procurement

Question: *Are there any influential constants inside or outside the organization related to sustainable procurement?*

During analysis of the responses from the procurement practitioners, the respondents indicated that there is no one to give them continuous advices to set goals and targets. The other implications is that while sustainable procurement organizations should take into account the practice level features as a part of their approach, as far as this approach guarantees employee commitment towards sustainable procurement goals., it can be expected that the influence of sustainable procurement on organizational results will be greater when its implementation is supported

by a high-commitment strategy. As advocated by Kipkorir and Wanyokie (2015) in the case of the implementation of green procurement in the multinational tea companies in Kenya, improvement possibilities can be implemented by the organization in the future by adopting a step-by-step approach. Responses of the respondents seem to further show that for the organizations to compete effectively and survive in confused global environment, it is very important to implement some sustainable procurement practices in the future, adopting a step-by-step approach, which can contribute to the organization's long-term objectives. This is in consonant with the suggestions of Meehan and Bryde (2011) on best sustainable procurement practice.

#### G. Effects of Ugandan public sector organization culture on sustainable procurement implementation

Question: *Would you describe and summarize the effects of the culture of public sector organizations in Uganda on the implementation of sustainable procurement practices?*

From the results of the findings all the 75 respondents agreed that cultural barriers being very important in the implementation of a successful sustainable procurement practices. This agreement confirms the findings by Maignan (2012) who studied managing socially responsible buying. The study revealed no changes in the management system, high level of bureaucracy, high level of centralization in decision making, lack of managerial efficiency, lack of management and financial supports, and corruption from different directions and levels of management were the main causes of the delay encountered in the public sector organizations of Uganda in the implementation of sustainable procurement practices.

All procurement practitioners reported that the use of acceptable strategies and techniques such as strategic planning and the development of a workable scheme of plan to secure satisfactory performance of sustainable procurement are very limited just as proposed by Marron (2013) in the study of greener public purchasing as an environment policy instrument. The need for changes has driven initiatives in the public sector as the pressure to improve performance has increased. Also, the government can provide a strong support for the promotion of sustainable procurement principles by lending moral support and legitimizing quality training programs and licensing of instruction. This means that there is a shortage of employees and technical implementers with a real understanding of the fundamentals of sustainable procurement. Procurement practitioners agree and insist that sustainable procurement strategies are an essential element in the survival of their organizations.

#### H. Management responsibilities and authorities

Question: *Do accounting officers and heads of departments in your organization know the responsibilities and authorities*

*regarding decision making about sustainable procurement aspects?*

The respondents pointed out that accounting officers and heads of department in public sector organizations in Uganda are unlikely to find it easy to delegate authority, to be flexible in executing decisions or to respond well to criticisms. All of them insisted that accounting officers and heads of department are not willing to involve the employees in taking decisions in their job as a fear from legal accountability from their appointing authorities. For example, the accounting officer, who is responsible for any problems, is not accountable to the lower cadres. Hence, they indicated that this makes it difficult for the accounting officer to empower the employees in decision making. Procurement practitioners had indicated that the authorities of public sector organizations in Uganda think that the number of user department can control and avoid any kind of fraud such as financial and managerial cheating. Through a strong and serious analogy of the responses of the respondents, it can be concluded that the multiplicity of user departments in the country will affect the sustainable procurement practice through lack of employee involvement and empowerment. Another critical issue the respondents had raised is that the political structure (patronage) of the country and other imposed policies and procedures resulted to half-baked staff (patronage bleeding) in the organizations of an unskilled workforce as pointed out by Stephen and Helen (2011) in their international comparative study of sustainable procurement in the public sector.

The PDPAA which controls the operations of public sector organizations in the realm of procurement and disposal of assets imposed some policies and procedures which are incompatible to implement sustainable procurement. Also public service commission both at the center and local governments that have controls over recruitment of employees do appoint to hire or recruit employees not on merit, but either nepotism or corrupt practices, to be employed in those organizations. This research has highlighted that in most cases these employees are not under pressure from anyone more especially the citizens to implement sustainable procurement something which was earlier on found out by Tukuta and Saruchera (2015) during a study of challenges facing procurement professionals in developing countries. In terms of employee empowerment, employees are not well aware of their responsibilities and obligations, including aspects of sustainable procurement practices. Procurement practitioners reported that employees think that there is an obsession for accounting officers and head of departments to get visits and hospitality, there is no mutual trust between user departments, and that is one of the ways in which organizations cultivates the sustainable procurement culture among its people. The procurement practitioners' responses added that a proof is shown through the user department's routine manual, and

accounting officer as well as head of departments needs to be involved in the management review process to understand what goes on within the organization and understanding the current and future needs. Procurement practitioners also gave another reason when they responded that according to the Ugandan legislations, the accounting officers and head of department have to follow the organizational structure and the job description to deal with employees, and the accounting officers/head of departments must provide the necessary resources to fulfill the organization's sustainable procurement objectives. Unfortunately, in most cases this is left wanting as indicated by Xia and Tang (2011) while suggesting best ways to improve sustainability supply management for auto industry.

The study has useful implications for the Ugandan authorities to encourage their organizations to adopt sustainable procurement practices and to support the Ugandan economy.

#### I. Authorities of public sector organizations influence on their organization's sustainable procurement exploitation

Question: *Whether any authority of public sector organizations in Uganda has an influence or force the organization to implement any sustainable procurement practices?*

A question was asked to the procurement practitioners in the open-ended questionnaire whether any authority in the public sector organizations in Uganda has an influence or force the organization to implement any sustainable procurement practices. All the answers came yes; they all indicated that each user department in the organizations do have the mandate to force their employees to comply and conform to the requirement of sustainable procurement when generating and planning for their procurement needs. All the respondents had claimed that procurement and disposal units of these organizations were very supportive in ensuring employees from the user departments pursue this course.

Another question had been asked if any support or influence from authority of the public sector organizations in Uganda regarding the implementation of other procurement practices such as sustainable procurement. All the answers from the respondents were no, indicating that government and organization authorities do not intervene and have no desire to intervene or direct the organizations towards any sustainable procurement policies rather than what they have. This is very unhealthy for the success of SP as reported by Preuss (2013) in his study of sustainable initiatives in local governments.

The researcher asked the respondents if their organizations will get any financial support from the government to support any proposed sustainable procurement

scheme, where their answer indicated that, due to the fact that their organizations belong to the public sector, it is very hard to get any financial support from the government to start any sustainable procurement scheme. This is a prominent case in China as well as evidenced by the findings in a study conducted by Qiao & Wang (2011). The respondents have made it clear that due to the effect of lack of public sector organization authorities' support on implementing sustainable procurement in the organizations, it is difficult for the organization and the accounting officers/heads of departments, if not impossible to seek or even think in implementing any sustainable procurement practices.

Procurement practitioners have complained and blamed that there are no journal articles available to read to get knowledge about sustainable procurement practices and management. They also mentioned that there are no site-visit exchanges with similar procurement organizations worldwide, and if any exist, it is confined and benefitted from people from either inside and/or outside their organizations whom chosen for financial and social benefits rather than gaining knowledge.

#### J. Sustainable procurement implementation

Question: *What do you think about sustainable procurement implementation in your organization?*

All the procurement practitioners surveyed, after analyzing their responses it can be concluded that they all concur that given what SP is all about, SP would be very helpful because everything will be done correctly right from the start with the SP principles. Procurement practitioners stated that employees will participate in decision making and will be managed better and improve their opportunities for involvement. Furthermore, employee's knowledge, experience and ideas may improve the business strategy and may secure a good practical implementation. Employees at all levels need to know that their leaders want them to participate, they need to know that their leaders are willing to listen to them, support them, and remove any barriers facing them from expressing and displaying their ideas. All 75 respondents had agreed the accounting officers/heads of departments of the organization should make sure that everybody within the organization from top to bottom has a clear picture about the long-term goals. This will affect management style, quality of communication, quality of procurement and disposal and indeed everything that is done within an organization.

All the 75 respondents argued that employee's involvement and empowerment in decision making was not demonstrated in the shop floor, and that needs a lot of work and efforts to make it possible. Employees should be rewarded to encourage them to participate in responsibility and in decision making, and give them the power and authority to make decision, which means low scores on the power distance dimensions and low centralization of power. The employees

can take their decision to stop the procurement process if anything unusual happened and then call his supervisor to discuss with him what should be done.

All the respondents have highlighted three main reasons for not having enough SP practices in public sector organizations in Uganda. They mentioned them as follows:-

- i. No sustainable procurement awareness programs have been introduced inside the organizations.
- ii. No opportunities were given to them from accounting officers/head of departments to attend training courses and workshops in the field outside the organization.
- iii. The chances to attend any training programs related to sustainable procurement are given usually to top level managers only.

Relating to the accounting officers/head of departments' experience in this field, a question was asked about barriers and difficulties facing the public sector organizations from implementing SP practices. The perspective of the accounting officers/head of departments as revealed by the findings from the respondents were as:

- i. Lack of awareness programs of SP at most public sector organizations in Uganda (all 75 respondents).
- ii. Lack of understanding of SP program and systems.
- iii. Lack of specialist local consultancy bureaus to help in implementing SP practice.
- iv. There are no experts in implementation of SP in the organizations.
- v. Lack of knowledge about SP culture.
- vi. Lack of financial support from the government.
- vii. There are not enough training programs to the employees relating to SP.
- viii. Lack of knowledge about SP and culture.

#### K. Overcoming the barriers of sustainable procurement implementation

Question: *How do you think the best ways to overcoming the barriers of implementing sustainable procurement practices in your organization?*

A question was asked to the surveyed procurement practitioners how their organizations can overcome the barriers to the implementation of SP practices. The answers mentioned in the respondents' responses are as below:-

- i. Continuous and intensive awareness programs to all staff.
- ii. The respondents cited that internal auditing is one methods used to overcome any barriers with the help of a consultant.
- iii. The concentration of employee's awareness programs regarding the importance of the practices.
- iv. Hire of foreign consultant that has a good experience in sustainable procurement and sustainable procurement management issues.

- v. By taking corrective actions and implementing them.
- vi. Distribution of sustainable procurement policy and objectives in every clear place everywhere in the organization to give the employees opportunity to know and read them.
- vii. The accounting officers/head of departments' commitment towards implementation of sustainable procurement practices.
- viii. More training programs relevant to sustainable procurement practices and management.
- ix. Through intensive internal audits and through the help of consultants.

Essentially, through the analyses of the responses received from the respondents, the researcher summarizes the main findings as in the following points:-

- i. Employees in public sector organizations in Uganda have very low knowledge about sustainable procurement practices.
- ii. Sustainable procurement practices never been well implemented in public sector organizations in Uganda.
- iii. Sustainable procurement practices and management is absent in Ugandan educational system.
- iv. No national sustainable procurement awards program in Uganda.
- v. Lack of working in teams, and absence of active and experienced leadership within public sector organizations in Uganda.
- vi. Coordination between user departments within the same organization is carried out through formal letters.
- vii. Lack of top management commitment and leadership.
- viii. Lack of employees training, involvement and empowerment.
- ix. Lack of dealing with external agencies for training and consultation.
- x. Lack of training and poor education of the employees.
- xi. Accounting officers are responsible to guide the organization during all processes for sustainable procurement practices.
- xii. Employees are impossible to participate in solving process and sustainable procurement problems.
- xiii. Rumors affect the employee attention.
- xiv. Lack of financial support delays the start of sustainable procurement implementation.
- xv. Lack of financial motivations and low salaries.
- xvi. Lack of culture change towards more flexible management style.
- xvii. High level of management centralization in decision making and corruption from different management levels.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to identify the barriers of SP practices in public sector organizations in Uganda as a developing nation. The study explores a few theoretical views that explains these barriers: institutional theory perspectives. These perspectives acknowledge the barriers as ... The study explained the SP practice as it is of now. The methodology adopts an exploratory qualitative research design which uses an open-ended questionnaire of 75 procurement practitioners from public sector organizations purposively selected. The study reveals the factors acting as barriers to implementation of SP in public sector organizations in Uganda as culture of the organization, inadequate knowledge of SP among employees, management failures, unfavourable work environment, lack of influential constants, improper implementation process and lack of clear guidelines. These factors have limited the successes intended when SP practices are made real in the country. Hence, the findings are useful to policy makers and stakeholders in the SP field. It provides contextual understanding of the impact of these factors. A limitation of the study is that it employees a qualitative research design which is inadequate in predicting characteristics in entire population and not sufficient in making generalization. However, the study has provided unique insight into the dynamics of the SP environment in public sector organizations in Uganda as indicative of a number of developing countries. Further research can use the findings of this study to study larger population by using more samples in a quantitative research and proceeding to identify possible directions for mitigating these barriers. It suffices to say that the need to increase the capacity to implement SP in developing nations cannot be overemphasized; creating a beneficial environment for SP practices is a sure means of meeting this target.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I thank my all my friends who always believe in me. I also so much grateful to my children Ajok Esther Fiona, Kittim Peter Obicci, Obama Emmanuel Obicci and Opira Francis Obicci plus of course their mother Atto Mary Joyce Obicci who give me reason to research and publish.

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