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Article

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Intensifying service delivery: are procurement framework agreements relevant?

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ABSTRACT

Around the globe, public management research covers little enquiry on advancing service delivery in service delivery organisations like local authorities. Yet, the call for timely service delivery within local authorities is on the increase, there is need for flexible procurement methods which facilitate quick deliveries to advance expected service delivery by residents. Against this backdrop, this research undertook a survey to answer if procurement framework agreements advance service delivery moving forward. Drawing on a unique sample of 55 local authorities' procurement practitioners in Zimbabwe, the research findings point to the likely hood of advancing service delivery greater through use of procurement framework agreements. Since lack of practical know-how is the main reason for slow use of this method, public procurement authorities should focus on procurement cadre development, capacity building and engaging market suppliers. Thus, this research uncovers fresh insights on how procurement practitioners can leverage on procurement framework agreements to enhance expected service delivery in local authorities and put forward the call for the urgent integration of the procurement method going forward.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The importance of good service delivery by city councils, municipalities, town councils and local boards in any country cannot be over emphasized. In this research, how procurement practitioners can turn public procurement into a useful tool through the use of procurement framework agreements to achieve expected service delivery was outlined. A fresh insight on how procurement framework agreements are a vehicle for service delivery in city councils, municipalities, town councils and local boards was proffered by this researcher. The results of this current study will go a long way in helping public procurers, local authorities, councillors and the central governments in understanding the urgent need to integrate procurement framework agreements in order to achieve expected service delivery moving forward. This implies the need for a shift towards procurement of common use goods, services and works that facilitate effective service delivery to procurement framework agreements in local authorities moving on. For the first time, findings of this research are valuable to procurers of local authorities engaged in managing supplies that facilitate service delivery to residents and the general populace.

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1. Introduction

World over, local authorities today are characterized by below par service delivery as seen by uncollected garbage, sewer flowing all over, impassable roads and less than 50% supply of water. There is conflict between the providers of service (city councils) and the unsatisfied rate payers of service resulting in vandalism and non-payment for services. Workers are insecure and frustrated because of the poor services they unwillingly continue to provide leading to theft, corruption, moonlighting and perennial conflict (Hodge et al., 2019).

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In Africa, local authorities (city councils) are unique organizations where the shareholders are the customers of their services. This creates a serious intra role conflict which needs to be addressed. The conflict has led to non-payment for services, vandalism, thefts, non-participation and focus on politics and not service delivery. This is one of the major explanations for the poor service delivery in local authorities in African countries like Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe being the most affected country (Mohmand & Loureiro, 2017).

In Zimbabwe, there have been extensive grievances over local authorities' poor service delivery. Numerous participants (rate payers' associations, the non-governmental organizations society, the Minister of Local Government and Public Works, the Minister of National Housing and Social Amenities) have also affirmed that there has been an overall drop in local authorities' service delivery. In worse circumstances like Harare, Chitungwiza, Gweru, Kariba, Mutoko, Mberengwa and Redcliff among others, the minister has been forced at times to sack the entire management.

The calls which this research responds to are twofold. This current research firstly is responding to recent calls for more research for flexible procurement methods which facilitate quick deliveries to advance expected service delivery (Grandia & Warsen, 2023; Munyimi & Chari, 2018; Lawther, 2007). Precisely, the current study focus on the central but overlooked procurement method of procurement framework agreements which come into existence for the first time in procurement regulations of 2018 (Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act Chapter 22:23, section 21(2) and section 30). Though there is an extant public management literature on procurement and service delivery (Chikwere et al., 2023; Munyimi, 2022), procurement framework agreements usefulness has so far gone unseen.

Secondly, the current research responds to a call to action no compromise to service delivery blue print by the central government of Zimbabwe (Herald, 2023). There is an increasing call for public procurement and sustainable goals in local authorities for the benefit of residents. Therefore, it is vital to uncover how public procurement methods intensify service delivery to make an informed procurement decision on why it looks to be minimal service delivery realization to residents, particularly in developing countries such as Zimbabwe.

Since the available literature on procurement framework agreements is handful from their coming into public procurement regulations, they have been generating mixed reactions and no attention has been devoted to their effects. This has given basis to the need to establish their effect in addressing the topical service delivery issue at its incubation stage. Uncovering how this unique procurement method have impacted local authorities in their endeavour to cost-effectively procure goods, works and services for service delivery was the heart of the current research. It is against this background that this research was conceptualized.

Based on the above discussion, the over-arching objectives of this research were: to establish circumstances for use of procurement frameworks, the forces that are blocking integration efforts by procurers and the development of a conceptual model meant to establish procurement framework agreements effect in service delivery going forward.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Literature underpinning; methodology followed by the research; findings and discussion and implications of the research.

2. Literature underpinning, hypotheses and conceptual model development

The research aimed to craft detailed scrutiny for research gaps' exploration hence followed a systematic review approach. The literature was widely investigated and critically evaluated.

2.1. Conceptualising service delivery

The actual producing of a service such as collecting garbage and disposing it or lighting the streets is referred to as service delivery. This definition is concurred by Chikazhe and Nyakunuwa (2021) who note service delivery as executing services that relate to the resident's needs. As taken by Haddad (2019) services must be afforded regardless of class. In the local government context, service delivery is viewed as the utmost function of any local authority. It is a common phase used to refer to the spreading of basic resources residents rely on. These basic services range from delivery of engineering services, health services, protection services and

recreational services. They include water supply, sanitation infrastructure, roads, and garbage collections among others. In context of this research, it is provision of these services at a local level.

2.2. Unpacking delivery of engineering services

Service delivery in the form of delivery of engineering services includes delivery of safe water to residents, attending to sewer bursts rapidly, maintaining functional street lights and maintaining roads within the towns. It is a phrase used to describe the distribution of resources citizens depend on, such as water, sanitation, municipal roads, street lightning and transport related infrastructure. According to Musenze and Mayende (2019) delivery of engineering services includes delivery of public works and services that residents need such as repair and maintenance of roads, bridges, culverts, water and sewer systems and public buildings.

2.3. Unpacking delivery of health services

It is a hallmark of health system performance (Dick-Sagoe et al., 2021). Delivery of health services focus on pollution control, good sanitation and environmental services. The provision of health services is one of the primary functions entrusted upon the local authorities and is profoundly encouraged by both the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works. It also checks on issues of waste management in towns, health care and public safety by ensuring and maintaining a clean environment in towns. By delivery of health care services, the concept is on making sure that the environment is clean always for the general populace or residents in towns.

2.4. Unpacking delivery of protection services

The local authorities are assigned to deliver protective actions and services in times of need to residents. This is delivery of services such as fire combating services, disease combating and pest control services to the populace. Whenever there are fire outbreaks in the central business districts in towns and cities, the local authorities should deliver the service of combating the devastating effects through use of fire vehicles (Mdee & Mushi, 2020). The delivery of protection services means that local authorities should have their own fire brigade vehicles, resources or protective tools ready at any time for fire control or pest control to residents.

2.5. Unpacking delivery of recreational services

Delivery of this public service is done by the housing department in local authorities. This is delivery of housing-related infrastructure and low-cost housing as well as allocating land to residents in their areas of jurisdiction. This means also delivering services such as locating where houses, shops, garages, industries and offices should be sited on appropriate sites. This also includes the delivery of public toilets and beer halls to rate payers by the housing department in any local authority. According to Furunes and Mkono (2019) delivery of recreational services includes the construction of schools for primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training centres, recreation and sporting facilities, housing as well as cottages for Orphans and Vulnerable Children.

2.6. Conceptualising procurement framework agreements

Procurement framework agreements are a concept which is still at its incubation stage within the procurement fraternity. It is an agreement done with a supplier or variety of suppliers that enables a procurer to place purchase orders without running lengthy full tendering processes (Lysons & Farrington, 2016). They provide the terms of procurement for a definite period of time as well as specifications as noted by Munyimi (2019a). They will allow a procurer more flexibility around the supplies contracted for under the procurement framework. As proposed by Hugo and Badenhorst-Weiss (2017) it can either

be single-supplier framework or multi-supplier procurement framework in which single-supplier is with one supplier whereas multi-supplier is between a procurer and a number of suppliers. It can also be open procurement framework agreement or closed procurement framework agreement. An open procurement framework agreement is where the procuring entity can or an interested new firm (s) can conclude framework agreement (s) during the term of the framework agreement whereas a closed procurement framework agreement is where the procuring entity cannot or a new firm (s) cannot conclude framework agreement (s) during the term of the framework agreement.

In a research by Helfen (2017) on the implementation of global framework agreements in transnational value-creation, implementation of framework agreements was necessitated by need to get critical supplies. Nevertheless, this research seeks to go beyond by looking at a procuring entity perspective, the circumstances for the use of a procurement framework. Similarly, Arney et al. (2015) researched strategic contracting practices to improve procurement of health commodities. Procurement frameworks were identified suitable when procuring frequently reordered health commodities. However, it was done in a developed country which might show different results in developing countries. A study was conducted by Laryea and Watermeyer (2016) on early contractor involvement in framework contracts and recommends that condition adoption of framework contracts are where repetitive technical assistance is needed. This research goes beyond in establishing the conditions for procurement framework agreements successful implementation in developing countries. In another study on implementation of global framework agreements by Sydow et al. (2015), off-the-shelf products are the best products to be supplied in global frameworks. Their research focused on implementation of multi organizations framework not circumstances for procurement framework agreements use. Paric et al. (2020) on a guide to using the framework suggested the need for capacity train for framework agreements implementation by procurers. This research goes beyond by establishing the factors that block integration of procurement framework agreements despite the existence of supporting procurement law. Fourie and Malan (2020) researched public procurement in addressing the systemic issues. The lack of standard documents for frameworks was found to be a challenge for use of framework agreements. This research goes further in unearthing the factors blocking integration efforts despite the existence of enabling procurement regulation. Aduamah (2015) assessed the effects of public procurement framework agreement on procurement practices. The leading challenge was their suitability for standard products only. Nevertheless, this research goes beyond by establishing whether the same challenge hold in developing countries. In Ireland, Paul (2017) investigated the savings from the 2016-2020 framework agreement on the supply and pricing of medicines. Among other benefits however, setting guidance as to when a new medicine supplied will be priced was difficult. This researcher attempts to close the gap in whether the same hold in developing countries. A study on highway maintenance by Lam and Gale (2015) investigated the impact of framework agreements upon project financial performance. The authors recommend framework agreements to be used to deliver cost savings on highway maintenance. Their study used a single case study which might show dissimilar effect with this cross sectional survey. In the United Kingdom, the National Audit Office (2020) investigated into government procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that framework agreements improve public services by allowing direct awards to suppliers under framework. However, the study was carried out in a developed country not in a developing nation. A comparative analysis of public procurement frameworks and practices in universities in Portugal was done by Estermann and Kupriyanova (2018). The study found that many universities adopted procurement framework agreements to achieve better procurement results. This research goes beyond by establishing their effect in service delivery precisely in the local government sector. At a global level, Colenbrander (2016) analyze framework agreement as an instrument for improving working standards in global business operations. The paper suggests that framework agreement is a compelling tool to pursue global business aims. The research demonstrates that not at all is framework agreements good for companies operating worldwide and some frameworks appear to achieve no direct practical impact at all. Hence, this research seeks to expand the findings of existing studies.

Guided by conceptualisation of this current research variables, the previous empirical findings and prior research on procurement framework agreements and service delivery, the formulated hypothesis was as follows;

Hypothesis: Procurement framework agreements significantly and positively intensify service delivery.

2.7. Conceptual model development

Drawing from the conceptualisation of this current research variables, the previous empirical findings, the following conceptual model was developed indicated in [Figure 1](#) below.

3. Research methodology

This researcher chose not to be confined to one philosophy. Hence, this researcher adopted both research philosophies that are positivism and interpretivism so that the different approaches can be complementary. The research was grounded on the mixed method approach to allow for most insightful and understanding of the problem. The design used was descriptive survey. It was ideal since it enable the researcher to work with the available data as taken by (Russell et al., 2020; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012 as cited by Munyimi, 2020).

Practicing procurers in all local authorities registered under the Urban Council Association of Zimbabwe was the target population. The total number of procurers working in local authorities was determined through use of Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe information which it received from public entities which applied to conduct procurement in 2021. The total number of procurement practitioners throughout Zimbabwean local authorities was 64. The sample was calculated using formula developed by Yamane (1967).

The sample size was 55 for questionnaires for all practicing procurers in Zimbabwean urban local authorities whilst of that 55, all 32 procurement managers were interviewed using Zoom. The 32 procurement managers taken for interviews are the heads of procurement management units of the 32 urban councils in Zimbabwe that include city councils, municipalities, town councils and local boards (Herald, 2023). Qualitative data was gathered from the 32 procurement managers until saturation of data. The qualitative data saturation reached was used as ground truthing instrument.

Stratified random sampling was employed by putting local authorities into strata of cities, municipalities, town councils and local boards. Thereafter, simple random sampling technique was utilized to derive the 55 procurers from the strata's. Data was solicited first, quantitative data was gathered using closed ended questionnaire which was developed by the researcher attached as [appendix 1](#) at the end of this paper. Secondly, open ended interview guide was used to solicit qualitative data attached as [appendix 2](#) at the end of this paper. Quantitative data was presented in tables whilst analysis done using Software for Statistics and Data Science (STATA, version 13). Qualitative data analysis was presented as quotations of verbal responses of procurement managers. Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to measure the reliability of the questionnaire at a benchmark of 70% whilst quotable quote was also done to strengthen interview guide reliability as suggested by (Apuke, 2017; Gujarati, 2017 as cited by Munyimi, 2019b). Pilot study for the questionnaire was done for face validity and use of simple language for interview guide. Breuch-Pagan Godfery test was used to test the presence of heteroskedasticity as taken by

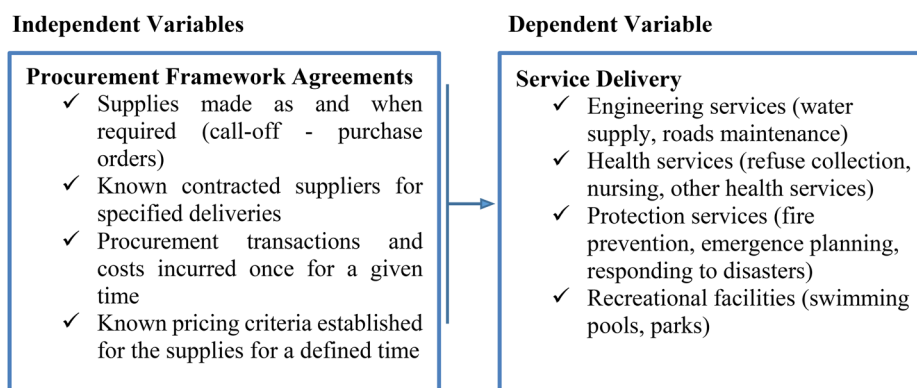


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Source: Researcher Own Construction (2024).

Queiros et al. (2017). Furthermore, Ramsey RESET test was utilized in testing for omitted variables for the four dependent variables whilst multicollinearity test was done using Mean VIF (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

After explaining the research purpose, urban local authorities procurement practitioners who participated in this research did so voluntarily, their right to privacy was maintained and the research was impartial. The researcher sought for approval to conduct the study from the Town Clerks of urban local authorities in Zimbabwe. Informed consent was obtained from all local authority procurers who participated in the study. Ethical go-ahead was sought from Chinhoyi University of Technology to solicit data since the current study was in partial fulfilment of the Master of Science Degree in Supply Chain Management, Procurement.

4. Results and discussion

This section highlights both quantitative and qualitative results that were obtained through questionnaires and interview guide respectively. A total of 55 responses from questionnaires were received, constituting 100% response rate. Qualitative techniques to analyze zoom interviews data from the 32 procurement manager's yield response rate of 100%. The demographics of the local government sector procurement practitioners are illustrated in Table 1 below:

The majority of procurers in urban local authorities are matured enough in practice as they range from 31 years to 40 years as shown by the highest frequency of 60% as can be seen in Table 1 above. The current research is reliable since experience of procurers is skewed towards those who have been practicing between 6 up to 10 years as shown by 70.91%. The levels of procurement education varied in the local authorities from a certificate in procurement being the minimum and masters being the maximum. The majority of procurers were procurement diploma holders shown by 29.09. The fact why there is still possession of minimum qualifications is because the profession has only been professionalized by the public procurement act of 2018.

4.1. Reliability coefficients

The reliability results are shown in Table 2 below:

The range of the figures for the reliability coefficients for all the variables in the instrument ranged from 0.748 to 0.912. The research instrument surpassed the accepted lower limit of Cronbach's alpha test of 0.7 as proposed by Apuke (2017). None of the questions were dropped from the instrument. The instrument showed high reliability and was used for testing the relationship between the variables.

4.2. Heteroscedasticity test

The Breuch-Pagan Godfery test of heteroscedasticity in the data is shown in Table 3 below:

Table 1. Demographic profile of the local government sector procurers.

Characteristic	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages %
Age group:	Below 30 years	13	23.64
	31–40 years	33	60.00
	41–50 years	6	10.91
	Above 50 years	3	5.45
Procurement hands on experience:	0 ≤ Experience ≤ 5	11	20.00
	6 ≤ Experience ≤ 10	39	70.91
	11 ≤ Experience ≤ 15	4	7.27
	Experience ≥ 15	1	1.82
Level of procurement education:	Masters in Procurement	5	9.09
	Degree in Procurement	8	14.55
	Higher National Diploma in Procurement	14	25.45
	Diploma in Procurement	16	29.09
	Certificate in Procurement	10	18.18
	CIPS	2	3.64

Source: Primary Data (2024).

Table 2. Reliability results.

Instrument section	Reliability coefficient
A	0.770321
B	0.900247
C	0.892631

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

Table 3. Breuch-Pagan Godfery heteroscedasticity test.

Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroscedasticity

H0: Constant variance

Variables: Procurement Framework Index, Education, Procurement Experience, Age

$\chi^2(4) = 37.91$

Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

Table 4. Ramsey RESET test for omitted variables.

Ramsey RESET test using powers of the fitted values of Engineering Service Delivery H0: model has no omitted variables	Ramsey RESET test using powers of the fitted values of Health Service Delivery H0: model has no omitted variables	Ramsey RESET test using powers of the fitted values of Recreational Facilities Delivery H0: model has no omitted variables	Ramsey RESET test using powers of the fitted values of Protection Service Delivery H0: model has no omitted variables
$F(3, 47) = 3.22$ Prob > F = 0.1308	$F(3, 47) = 31.56$ Prob > F = 0.3713	$F(3, 47) = 13.80$ Prob > F = 0.2503	$F(3, 47) = 13.88$ Prob > F = 0.2317

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

Table 5. Multicollinearity test.

Variable	VIF	1/VIF
Level of Education	6.31	0.158451
Procurement Framework Agreements Index	4.42	0.226452
Age Group	4.12	0.242523
Procurement Experience	3.53	0.283616
Mean VIF	4.59	

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

As can be seen in Table 3 above, the value is less than 0.05; we conclude that heteroscedasticity is present in the data. However, robust standard errors were used to avoid effects of undertaking regression when there is heteroscedasticity of rather the presence of non-constant variances.

4.3. Testing for omitted variables for the four dependent variables

The tests for omitted variables for the four dependent variables are shown in Table 4 below:

As can be seen in Table 4 above, using a significance p-value of 0.05 the RESET test is not significant, indicating that there were no omitted variables in the four models.

4.4. Multicollinearity test

The multicollinearity test result is shown in Table 5 below:

Here the mean vif is 4.59, implying that correlation is very high. As a rule of thumb, a vif value less than 10 indicates no multicollinearity between the variables.

4.5. The circumstances for procurement framework agreements use

Table 6 presents the findings on the circumstances under which use of procurement frameworks is appropriate.

Table 6. The circumstances for procurement framework agreements use.

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Circumstances for Procurement Framework Agreements Use	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
On procurement of repetitive technical services	55	4.1235	1.23440	1.001	.194	1.263	.131
On procurement of critical supplies	55	4.1993	1.16320	1.165	.194	1.420	.131
On procurement of off-the-shelf products	55	4.2005	1.93120	1.251	.194	1.565	.131
On procurement of supplies frequently reordered	55	4.1970	1.64598	1.545	.194	1.290	.131

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

Results in [Table 6](#) demonstrate that procurement framework agreements are appropriate for use on procurement of repetitive technical services with a mean response of 4.1235. The use of procurement framework agreements distribution is right skewed as shown by 1.001 as well as have short tails as depicted by the kurtosis of 1.263, the responses are widespread around the mean. Zoom interview responses corroborate the findings as procurement managers said:

...Repetitive technical service like repairs and service to heavy duty printers for water statements printing should be under procurement frameworks since these require urgent attention to improve financial performance where salvation of councils lies....., He said.

To hammer the point, a municipality procurement manager says:

.These repetitive technical services are required in urgency. Like the previous example that of a printer service. They are critical for revenue collection, so indeed under such circumstances procurement framework agreements are good. He said.

This result was also confirmed by a study in South Africa by Laryea and Watermeyer (2016). The condition for successful adoption of framework contracts was where repetitive technical assistance was needed for the project.

It is evident that on procurement of critical supplies, it is appropriate to use procurement framework agreements as shown by mean of 4.1993. The mean response is greater than the median as confirmed by the positively skewed value of 1.165. The responses are widespread around the mean since kurtosis 1.420 is less than 3. The procurement managers echoed the positive sentiments in zoom interviews as follows:

.You do not have to question fellow practitioners. It is self-justified. No one can ask you why you have gone for a procurement framework agreement for critical supplies. Policy makers would rather understand when you procure any item when it is needed other than stocking.... She said.

Another procurement manager in a city council chipped in saying:

...In addition, you will then be simply placing quickly if not call off purchase orders when there will be an emergency for such critical supplies. For example fuel; the prices are even regulated by ZERA. I think it is even advantageous to be in procurement framework agreement with fuel suppliers..., He said.

The result is supported by Helfen (2017) who states that implementation of framework agreements is necessitated by the need to get critical supplies urgently.

As can be seen in [Table 6](#), the mean value of 4.2005 signifies the respondents' agreement that procurement framework agreements are appropriate for use on procurement of off-the-shelf products. The distribution of the responses is positively skewed as the value 1.251 is greater than zero whereas kurtosis was 1.565 signifying responses widespread around the mean. This was supported by procurement managers in zoom interviews as:

...For sure, there are supplies that do not need to be made to suit a particular purpose, I support that use of a procurement framework agreement is indeed good for these....., He said.

This finding confirms Sydow et al. (2015) who suggests off-the-shelf products as best products to be supplied in global frameworks.

Findings reveal that procurement framework agreements can be used on procurement of supplies frequently reordered as shown by the mean response value of 4.1970. The responses had a positively skewed distribution 1.545 as well as a distribution flatter than normal as depicted by the positive kurtosis 1.290. The claims of procurement managers in zoom interviews say:

...I am agreeing that for frequently procured needs, procurement framework agreements are good. Because what is the need of going back to tender for frequently required needs?....., She said.

Moreover, a city council procurement manager weighed in:

...To illustrate with examples, the frequently re-orders in the context of our sector include fuel, water treatment chemicals such as Alluminium Sulphate Granular, Chlorine Gas, San - Tab Chips, HTH to name the main ones. Procurement framework agreements simplify procurer's work, they will only need to run min-competitions with suppliers under the procurement framework agreement only..., She said.

This result was also established by Arney et al. (2015) who identified framework agreements as suitable for procuring frequently reordered health commodities. Prior study by Andrecka (2015) has noted the same findings.

4.6. Factors that block integration of procurement framework agreements

The findings in Table 7 below indicate the factors that block integration of procurement framework agreements that procurers are exposed to.

The mean of 4.2000 confirmed unavailability of standard framework agreements bidding document as an impediment by procurers to use the procurement method. The impediment had a positive skewness of 1.517 meaning response was greater than median and were widespread around the mean as confirmed by kurtosis 1.920. All the procurement managers interviewed concurred that this hinders the use of the procurement method by procurement practitioners:

...True fellow practitioners. How can you use procurement framework agreements, yet there is no standard bidding document to guide all public procurers. I am totally in agreement with this blocking factor..., She said.

Further to the arguments, another procurement manager from a town council said:

...Yes, our regulations are supporting use of procurement framework agreements, but something needs to be done as a template for easy integration like all other methods..., He said.

The finding is in consistent with Aduamah (2015) who stated the leading challenge for framework agreement method as unclear guidelines.

Lack of practical knowhow in conducting procurement framework agreements recorded a mean of 4.8391 denoting agreement to the force and a positive skewness of 1.328 denoting better representation of extremes of the responses. The responses have lighter tails than a normal distribution as indicated by the less than 3 kurtosis of 1.903. The zoom interviews supported the result:

...We just read of procurement framework agreements in our regulations since 2018 but in actual fact practically we do not know the process. More is needed as sensitisations..., He said.

Table 7. Factors that block integration of procurement framework agreements.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Factors blocking procurement framework use	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Unavailability of standard framework agreements bidding document	55	4.2000	1.85910	1.517	1.920
Lack of Practical Knowhow	55	4.8391	1.98320	1.328	1.903
Difficult in pricing in an inflationary environment	55	4.9652	1.16491	1.968	1.875
Works well for standard products only	55	4.8275	1.72983	1.222	1.680

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

He was supported by a fellow from a local board who said:

...100% correct colleagues, theoretically everyone in here knows procurement framework agreements. Come to practical implementation, we are all not conversant, I suppose..., He said.

The result is supported by Paric et al. (2020) who remarks the need for capacity training on practical aspects for framework agreements.

The difficulty in establishing a pricing criterion for a defined period was raised as impediment with mean of 4.9652 signifying respondent's agreement. The mean is greater than median since the responses are positively skewed as indicated by skewness 1.968. Responses are widespread around the mean shown by kurtosis 1.875. It was declared a force blocking integration efforts in zoom interviews:

...Pricing is difficult in a procurement framework agreement. This has been exacerbated by the current economic situation. It is making it difficult for us to think of using the procurement method..., He said.

Another procurement manager from a town council added:

...Prices in a procurement framework agreement are not expected to vary on any grounds unless those that is beyond the control of the procurer and supplier. Given the day-to-day price increases, pricing is difficult in a procurement framework agreement....., She said.

The result is in agreement with Paul (2017). The research noted that setting out guidance as to when a new medicine supplied will be priced was difficult.

Respondents agreed that procurement frameworks work well for standard products only. Those in agreement were of 4.8275 mean. The distribution is skewed to the right with skewness of 1.222 whilst responses concentrated around the mean by kurtosis 1.680. The quantitative finding was supported in zoom interviews:

...Yes, it is not like you woke up saying we need a procurement framework agreement. It works for standard products sometimes they will even have known range of prices, I suggest., She said.

Another procurement manager from a city council supported:

.....Yes, it works well for procurement mainly on standard products. The slow use of procurement framework agreements is as a result of this fact....., He said.

This finding agrees Hills (2020) who states that frameworks were suitable for the provision of repetitive nightly paid accommodation. Fourie and Malan (2020) also noted the same challenges for use of framework agreements.

Table 8. OLS Estimates of Effect of Age Groups, Procurement Experience, Level of Education and Procurement Framework Agreements.

Variables	(1) Engineering Services Delivery	(2) Health Services Delivery	(3) Protection Services Delivery	(4) Recreational Services Delivery
Age group	0.111 (0.0697)	0.496 (0.170)	0.207 (0.122)	-0.0357 (0.191)
Procurement experience	0.0373 (0.122)	0.0958 (0.259)	0.0729 (0.236)	0.0817 (0.185)
Level of education	0.104* (0.0597)	0.257** (0.124)	0.338*** (0.110)	-0.104 (0.120)
Procurement Framework Agreements Index	0.768*** (0.110)	0.377** (0.147)	0.548*** (0.153)	0.524*** (0.167)
Constant	0.226 (0.177)	0.0889 (0.190)	-0.139 (0.158)	1.455*** (0.494)
Observations	55	55	55	55
R - Squared	0.965	0.888	0.920	0.700

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Source: (STATA, 13) Software for Statistics and Data Science.

4.7. The effect of procurement framework agreements in service delivery

The results are presented in Table 8 below.

Based on the results obtained in Table 8 control variables of procurement experience and age groups had no genuine effect on service delivery. Only control variable, level of education effect delivery of other services except delivery of recreational services to residents. This infers that the employment of qualified procurers increase service delivery to rate payers. The R-Squared for all four models are above 70% which shows that the models are well specified. That is, more than 70% of the models are explained by the association amid the variables.

Explaining the estimate of a beta coefficient for the procurement framework agreement index variable (0.768***) in Table 8, indicates that their use leads to upsurge of engineering services delivery. The beta value is significant at 1%. The interviewees had the following to say:

...I think entering into procurement framework agreements to cover requirements covered by a list of commonly used items improves service delivery for engineering services. We are looking at delivery of regular water supply, roads maintenance, urgent response to sewer bursts. They improve service delivery., He said.

Another procurement manager from a municipality went on to say:

...We are talking of goods like water treatment chemicals such as Alluminium Sulphate Granular, Chlorine Gas, San - Tab Chips, HTH for example. They are commonly used. So, placing them under procurement framework agreement improves engineering service delivery to residents...., She said.

This result support Lam and Gale (2015) were framework agreements delivered cost savings on maintenance of highways.

Moreover, column 2 shows procurement framework agreements index with a beta score of (0.377**) denoting that at 5%, as their use increase, more health services will be delivered to residents. This is confirmed by procurement managers as they say:

...Imagine going back to tender always for soliciting services to service and repair BP machines. Health service delivery improved when put on procurement framework agreement...., He said.

One from a city council also said:

...We have put fuel under a procurement framework agreement. There is timely collection of garbage now in our city. Having our refuse collection trucks and compactors parked due to lack of fuel is now a thing of the past. Complains for uncollected refuse declined, even policy makers are happy...., He said.

The results agree with the National Audit Office (2020) which found that framework agreements improve public services.

Procurement framework agreements significantly affect delivery of protection services at 1% with beta (0.548***). This entails that integration of procurement framework agreements increased local authorities' success to deliver protection services. The procurement managers had the following:

.Yes, as for us, since we begin procuring commonly used items like fuel, repair of fire tender vehicles under procurement framework agreement, we have improved in responding to disasters and combating their devastating effects., He said.

A lady heading procurement at a local board supported:

... Our fire vehicles are always looked at with suppliers that provide the motor vehicle services under procurement framework agreement. As a result, we have improved in emergence responding to our residents....., She said.

A study by Estermann and Kupriyanova (2018) confirmed this were better procurement results was achieved through procurement frameworks.

The results show that procurement framework agreements have significant effect on recreational services delivery as shown by (0.524***). This result is significant at 1%. This means the more the use of procurement framework agreements, the more the improvement of recreational service delivery to the

general populace. This was confirmed in zoom interviews as one procurement manager had the following to say:

....We do not have much on commonly used items for recreational services. But off course their use on the few commonly used items improves recreational service delivery to rate payers in our city...., He said.

The result confirms Colenbrander (2016) who stated that framework agreement is a compelling tool for businesses to achieve business aims.

The overall positive significant effect of procurement framework agreements on service delivery concur with the past researchers, Morozov et al. (2021); Andrecka (2015) who both confirmed positive effect of procurement framework agreements in different countries. Nevertheless, Fazekas and Blum (2021) suggest that frameworks have a negative impact on public procurement.

4.8. Implications to theory

This research also added to prior procurement theory by (Lysons & Farrington, 2016; Bailey et al., 2017; Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2017; Van Weele, 2016) on the circumstances, causes for low levels of adoption and effect of procurement framework agreements. This calls for the need to repurpose the present procurement theory to accommodate this fresh theory. Furthermore, theoretical bidding documents and templates have a vital effect in up surging levels of procurement framework agreements implementation in the public sector. Hence, the existing procurement theory by (Lysons & Farrington, 2016; Bailey et al., 2017; Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2017, Van Weele, 2016) should be prolonged to accommodate this novel theoretical finding going forward.

4.9. Implications to practice

Procurers should use procurement framework agreements on procurement of repetitive technical services as an option to be flexible in quickly procuring technical services to achieve timely service delivery to residents. This can be achieved by identifying and consolidating commonly used technical services such as networking maintenance, PROMUN maintenance and put them under a procurement framework agreement. Procurement of critical supplies using procurement framework agreements is also very important in modern business. This is done by examining user's critical needs over the past such as stationery, computer consumables, fuel for service delivery and put them under procurement framework agreements. It is recommended to procure off-the-shelf products using procurement framework agreements. This could be achieved through consulting with users and suppliers for their recommendations for products they see as not tailor made to procurers and put under procurement framework agreement. There is need to shift in procurement towards procurement of supplies frequently reordered like water treatment chemicals such as aluminium sulphate granular, chlorine gas, san - tab chips, HTH under the procurement framework agreement method. This will release procurers from being overwhelmed by going back to tender for same supplies and is achieved through use of procurement records on past procurement. Standard bidding documents and templates for procurement framework agreements must be rolled out by the relevant authorities in different countries (Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe in the case of Zimbabwe) to complement existing procurement regulations. This can be done by bringing to the attention of procurement authorities that this is a reason for the slow use of the procurement method by procurers. The procurement authorities are recommended to do more in terms of impacting practical aspects of procurement framework agreements to improve their integration in industry. They must consider placing emphasis more on the practical aspects and more commitment to support the impacting of practical knowhow to practicing procurers. Procurement practitioners need suitable knowledge and training so that they can be hands on conversant with the procurement regulatory framework. Procurers must consider giving suppliers' options to price their bids in the local currency or foreign currency whichever option best to the supplier to address the difficulty in pricing a procurement framework agreement. This is achieved by crafting the invitation to tender document (ITT) with flexible options for pricing and price maximums might be

effective as well. Procurement of standard products is very important under procurement framework agreement. Standardisation will give a good estimation on standard commodities where usage is closely tied to the entire organization for instance computers and other IT equipment, mobile phones, office supplies can be procured under a procurement framework agreement. Practicing procurers are recommended to put all commonly used items by all user departments and central stores such as fuel under procurement framework agreements to improve on timely service delivery. This is achieved by first conducting demand aggregation and consolidation based on the internal stakeholders' inputs. After the consolidation of commonly used items, neutralize the items as different user departments might require different products, brands or even names for the same items which serve the same use. Conduct a supply market analysis to access availability of commonly used items on the market. Then compile the results from the consolidation of historical procurements, the input of the user requests and the market analysis, to end up with the list of commonly used items across the entire organization to be covered under procurement framework agreement. This will boost timely service delivery to residents as expected going forward.

4.10. Implications to future researches

Having proffered the recommendation, this research does not unearth whether procurement framework agreements are not prone to abuse by procurers to discriminate suppliers in industry or not. From both procurer perspective and supplier perspective, a further research to interrogate this is vital to craft mechanisms to guide against abuse by procurers if a room for their abuse exists. Deeper separate insights for the effect of open procurement framework agreements in intensifying service delivery as well as those of closed procurement framework agreements in intensifying service delivery needs to be pointed out in future. Replication of this current research using other instruments of data soliciting such as Focus Group Discussions, Observations to see what transpiring in using the procurement method for service delivery is called for. Also called for is the replication of this current research in rural local authorities since the present research only focused on urban local authorities. Researches disintegrating into others public sectors are needed to estimate the regressions so as to establish whether the same estimation results will still hold or not and provide basis for comparison purposes. Insights from other sectors and countries are vital for generalization purpose. Finally, since the present research established the effect of procurement framework agreements on service delivery, another research to establish procurement framework agreements effect in intensifying residents' value delivery and electronic service delivery is also called for in future.

4.11. Contributions of the research

Main contribution of the current research is the development of the conceptual model which was meant to establish the effect of procurement framework agreements in intensifying service delivery in local authorities (city councils). More so, the model developed in this current research brings fresh insights to procurement practitioners in the local government sector. The current findings will raise further debate among procurement academicians, procurement policy-makers, procurement law designers or planners and developers, etc. on the relative advantages of integrating procurement framework agreements as a public procurement strategy and aid as a reference material for forthcoming debates going forward. It further equips procurement practitioners with better appreciation of the procurement method moving forward.

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Data availability statement

Data is available upon reasonable request

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

1. Circumstances appropriate for use of procurement framework agreements (Tick all that apply)

1 – Very Small Extend; 2 – Small Extend; 3 – Moderate Extend; 4 – Great Extend; 5 – Very Great Extend

No	Question	Very Small Extend	Small Extend	Moderate Extend	Great Extend	Very Great Extend
1. Under what circumstances are procurement framework agreements appropriate for use?						
1.1	On procurement of repetitive technical services	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	On procurement of critical supplies	1	2	3	4	5
1.3	On procurement of off-the-shelf products	1	2	3	4	5
1.4	On procurement of supplies frequently reordered	1	2	3	4	5
2. What are the forces against procurement framework agreements integration efforts within your entity?						
2.1	Unavailability of a standard framework agreement bidding document	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	Lack of practical knowhow	1	2	3	4	5
2.3	Pricing	1	2	3	4	5
2.4	Works well for standard products only	1	2	3	4	5
3. Rate the level at which your entity is delivering service to residents						
3.1	Engineering services (regular water supply, roads maintenance)	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Health services (regular refuse collection, nursing)	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	Protection services (fire preventions, responding to disasters)	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	Recreational facilities (swimming pools, parks)	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 2: Interview guide for heads of procurement function

Place of interview:	Zoom Meeting / Online
Date of interview:	22 October 2021

Introduction

Interview Questions

1. Under what circumstances are procurement framework agreements appropriate for use?

Probe

- Is it appropriate on procurement of repetitive technical services?
- Are they appropriate on procurement of critical supplies for the entity?
- What about on procurement of off-the-shelf products?
- Is it also appropriate for needs frequently reordered?

2. What are the forces against procurement framework agreements integration efforts?

Probe

- Is unavailability of a standard framework agreements bidding document inhibiting efforts for their usage?
- Is there a lack of practical knowhow for the implementation of procurement framework agreements amongst procurement practitioners?
- Is pricing difficult in a procurement framework agreement and how is it forcing you not to use procurement framework agreements?
- Are you not using procurement framework agreements due to the fact that they work well only for standard products?

3. What is the effect of procurement framework agreements in service delivery?

Probe

- Does use of procurement framework agreements lead to engineering services delivery to residents in the form of water supply, roads rehabilitation among others?
- Do use procurement framework agreements result in quickly delivery of health services to rate payers in the form of quick refuse collection in suburbs, and other health services required by citizens?
- Does procurement through procurement framework agreements lead to effective delivery of protection services in the form of rapid reaction to disasters and fire prevention among others?
- Have recreational facilities offered by local authorities improved as a result of using procurement framework agreements?