



## Research Article

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# Motivation and Implications of Conflict of Interest on Public Procurement Sustainability: A Case of Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital in Sekondi, Ghana

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## Abstract

*The focus of the study is to assess the motivation and implications of conflict of interest on public procurement sustainability in Ghana's Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital. From a target population of 123 employees working in the supply chain department, 94 respondents were chosen via Yamane's statistical sample determination technique. The research was carried out utilizing a descriptive research design with a questionnaire serving as the primary data collection tool. The study used a multiple-stage sampling method. In all rounds, Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital was chosen at random from among Ghana's 10 regional hospitals, as well as 94 respondents from the general population, using a straightforward random sampling methodology, specifically the lottery method. The collected data was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The descriptive statistics feature in SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data to produce information that was displayed by employing graphs, tables, percentages, and frequency distribution tables. Based on observations and sample analysis, inferential statistics were also employed to draw conclusions or predictions about the population. The regression model was used to illustrate the relationship between the response variable and the independent variables. For this study, a sample size of 94 respondents was intended, and 82 of them returned with all of their responses. The study determined the impact of conflict of interest on procurement sustainability in the Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital. It can be summed up by saying that one should always put their organization's interests first in all transactions, execute the procurement process skilfully, and adhere to any established policies. According to the study, to protect suppliers and public institutions from improper and unethical practices in procurement operations, such as fraudulent supplier activities, organizations should emphasize sustainability measurement, establish proper checks for all contracts, set supplier selection structures that avoid political interference and increase accountability management practices.*

**Keywords:** Accountability, Conflict of interest, Management, Motivation, Policies, Public-Procurement, Sustainability

## 1. Introduction

According to Obanda (2010), 6.5 trillion euros spent each year on state procurement presents an enormous benefit to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. Governmental procurement is necessary for the delivery of all public services and functions. Public procurement is involved in providing sustainable, global good, be it establishing a hospital to provide healthcare or a school to improve education, or whether for purchasing food, medicines, or services. Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) is the process of incorporating the idea of sustainable development into the government's procurement activities in a way that generates advantages for the organization, society, and economy while limiting environmental harm (Patrick, 2010). Public procurement is essential to an organization since it is in charge of delivering buildings, construction projects, and the resources they require. It is anticipated that the bulk of developing countries' yearly budgets would be consumed by it to the extent of 50 to 70 percent (Mrope, 2018). Additionally, between 10 and 25 percent of the global GDP is contributed by it (World Bank, 2017). Because it's crucial to guarantee an effective social procurement activity that maximizes the value of procured goods and services and lowers the abuse of public funds, governments have implemented several changes (Mrope, 2018).

The government passed the public procurement act after conducting several technical studies for the reasons listed above. Parliament received a draft of the Public Procurement Bill in 2002. The draft procurement bill was drafted over more than two years, and it became law in 2003. Public procurement makes up between 50 and 70 percent of national budgets, 14 percent of GDP, and 24 percent of imports after personal emoluments. Thus, it follows that public procurement has an impact on the social, environmental, and economic situations of the country (World Bank Economic Report on Ghana, 2003). It is a known fact in this technological era that any institution who intends to better achieve and go further in line of duty have to explore the Technological environment (Kwegyiriba, Fynn, Mensah, Aidoo & Enchill, 2021). Technology has a role to play in public procurement activities. Since the advent of the internet, the world has become a global community (Fynn, Kwegyiriba & Mensah, 2021). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become important tools in today's knowledge-based society. As a result, governments and commercial establishments are increasingly relying on Internet-worked information systems to carry out services that are critical to the administrative and business successes. Technology has in many ways changed the way human beings interact with their environment to the extent that it is impossible at the moment to imagine a world without the benefits of technology and digital innovations (Ennin & Mensah, 2022). Technology has certainly become a significant enabler of a knowledge-based economy for many countries in this context. Governments all over the world have recognized the numerous paybacks of information and communication technology (ICT) to people's socioeconomic and

political development. As a result, rather than abolishing schooling, many administrations have begun to spend deeply on ICT to grow their States social and human wealth, enabling them to fulfill the needs of the digital and information era (Douglas, 2015 as cited in Adomako, Quansah & Mensah, 2022). Procurement activities can be devoid of corruption if effective technological models are adopted and implemented in tracking procurement activities.

According to Szeftel (1998), corruption is conduct that goes against the rules, regulations, and duties regulating holding a privileged position or office to further one's interests. It is widely considered that corruption is ubiquitous and prevalent throughout the world and is a major factor in the slow economic growth, the reduction of public service delivery, and the rise in inequality. Because of this, international organizations like the World Bank (2001) recognized corruption as the main obstacle to social and economic development. According to McDonald et al., a person has a conflict of interest when they have a private or personal interest that is large enough to appear to interfere with the objective performance of their official duties (2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that engaging in an act of conflict of interest constitutes corruption, making the perception of corruption a reality. Conflicts of interest among procurement professionals have a substantial impact on how well the procurement operation is doing (Obicci, 2015). Conflict of interest between procurement partners, according to Tutu (2017), is one of the main barriers to the efficient performance of the procurement function in several developing nations.

When public officials' judgments are influenced by their interests, according to Mawenya (2008), a conflict of interest exists. Conflicts of interest can affect procurement sustainability (Pilly, 2017). Although conflict of interest takes varied forms around the world, their implications on organizations are quite similar. Conflict of interest in Ghana is linked to excessive procurement costs, resource waste from pointless purchases, the acquisition of inferior goods, and corruption, all of which prevent the development of the public sector (Osei-Tutu, 2017). Arthur et al., (2010) claim that a review of the Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital's systems, rules, and procedures uncovered openings for unethical practices and advised that the openings and vulnerabilities be closed in operational areas. The study examines the impact of interest conflicts on the sustainability of public procurement in Ghana.

### *1.1 Research Significance*

This research is a particularly urgent topic because it is imbued with so much ethical and political importance (Awudja, Mensah, Kwegyiriba, & Frimpong, 2021). The attention it is expected to attract can be attributed to the concerns it raises about public procurement activities in the public sector and the awareness of the problems associated with public procurement. It is envisaged that this study will serve as an impactful literature to Municipals, Districts and Assemblies (MDAs) to reconsider the

deleterious effects of inappropriate and unprocedural public procurement activities. It is envisaged that this study will provide legislative and judicial decision makers with a sounder social science based for evaluating public opinion about public procurement. This study would finally add to the body of knowledge (Mensah, 2019).

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Theoretical Literature Review*

The philosophical foundation upon which a study is conducted is related by the study's theoretical framework, which serves as a bridge between the study's theoretical and practical components (Raymond & Jeanette, 2008). It is a framework based on an existing theory in a field of inquiry that is related and/or reflects the hypothesis of a study (Mensah, Frimpong, Acquah, Babah & Dontoh, 2020). Game Theory is used to guide this investigation.

#### *2.1.1 Game Theory*

The study's determination of the impact of conflict of interest on the sustainability of public procurement in Ghana is guided by game theory. Many economic choices involving several players (like a customer and a supplier) are said to take the form of a chronological, tactical game in which one player would predict the moves of the opposition player (Mahmood, 2010). The Prisoner's Dilemma and other similar games have been used to show how frequent encounters between two actors enhance the chance of cooperative behaviour. This is because many interactions let them grow to know one another, develop trust, and get around the fact that a single interaction does not provide enough information regarding the probable actions of the other party (Agaba & Shipman, 2009). In a one-off contact when neither side knows the other's intentions, the model predicts that both actors would engage in competitive behaviour in a desire to boost their utility (Armstrong, 2005).

The basic presumptions of the integrated method are based on this theoretical derivation, and they state that while agents are utility maximisers motivated by self-interest, they will collaborate over time in situations where there are more favourable net benefits. Furthermore, actors are sensible yet may have informational issues. The Conflict-of-Interest factor can be connected to the theory. This theory links to the research question: What are the implications of Conflict of Interest on public procurement sustainability in Ghana?

## 2.2 *Empirical Literature Review*

### 2.2.1 *The Public Procurement Act*

According to Segment of the Ghana Public Procurement Act, 2003, public procurement is the process through which public entities purchase goods, works, and services using public funds (Act 663). The Government Procurement Act (PPA) 2003, Act 663 was established to standardize public procurement practices within the public sector, ensure the wise, cost-effective, and efficient use of public resources, and ensure that public procurement is fair, transparent, and devoid of prejudice. The new procurement act covers all procurement activities that are wholly or partially financed by public funds, including contract administration, the government of Ghana may borrow money or take out loans to finance the acquisition of products, works, and services, the sale of public property such shops and equipment, and procurement. This includes money from foreign aid.

### 2.2.2 *Conflict of Interest Motivation*

There is always a chance that public servants will engage in future ventures where their private interests conflict with their official responsibilities. If this is not stopped, it can have an impact on how successfully they carry out their job. A conflict of interest is likely to arise when someone is working on a project, supplying products or services to a project, and is also a member of the consultant's team or the procurement committee (Lisa, 2010). This creates a position of conflict of interest, which may have fraudulent effects.

### 2.2.3 *The Impact of Sustainable Public Procurement System*

An effective public procurement system serves as a conduit between the private sector and public requirements, such as those for the military, hospitals, and roadways (Hunja, 2011). Numerous benefits of a good and effective procurement system fall under the four main categories below: Direct Effects, Economic Effects, and Social Effects.

### 2.2.4 *Indication of a Rise in Conflict of Interest in Public Procurement*

The majority of the regional chairman of the previous ruling NDC were discovered to be road and construction contractors who received contracts improperly during the final election tallies in 2000. By doing this, they made it appear as though the money they are earning is genuine before transferring it to the party's coffers (2006 UN Report).

Richard Anane, the then-minister of transport, is accused of transferring various quantities of money to his mistress in the US in 2005 when she was also allegedly

seeking to sign a deal with the Ghanaian government. This is under the New Patriotic Party administration. Additionally, it was claimed that the Minister misled the legislature regarding this matter. Following inquiries, CHRAJ concluded that the President should fire the aforementioned Minister due to a conflict of interest and abuse of authority, according to the suggestion. The Minister did quit (UN Report, 2006). Institutions must take into consideration customer needs and perceptions before rendering the services as a treasured asset and an operative strategy for competition (Obeng-Ayisi, Quansah, Mensah & Andrews, 2022). Formal financial services in most developing economies serve only a minority, often not more than 20-30 per cent of the population (Frimpong & Mensah, 2020).

According to the Auditor General's Report (2019), for the fiscal years 2018 and 2019, due to breaches, inconsistencies, and mistakes in these MDAs' financial management, a total of GH 2.7 billion could not be accounted for by the governmental Bodies.

The above depicts a rise in the case of conflict of interest in public procurement in Ghana.

### 3. Conceptual Framework

An illustration of the link between the response and treatment variables using a diagram, according to Lisa (2010), is a conceptual framework. The study's conceptual framework will examine the motivational elements for conflicts of interest and their effects on ethical public procurement as shown in Figure 1.0.



Figure 1: Author's construct (2022)

### 4. Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design in which empirical data was elicited from both public officials (Mensah, Asare, Kanda, Narh, Nyamekye, Azomyann, McCarthy, 2022). This study utilized a descriptive research methodology, and the main tool for gathering data was a questionnaire. Descriptive design made room for the concepts and issues to be well assessed by the researcher (Mensah, Boasiako, Acquah, 2017). The use of observation was systematically done to support the write up

(Frimpong, Babah, Mensah, Obeel & Acquah, 2021). From a target demographic of 123 staff engaged in the supply chain department, a sample of 94 responses was selected at the Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital using the Yamane statistical sample size determination formula. The study used a multiple-stage sampling method. In all rounds, Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital was chosen at random from among Ghana's 10 regional hospitals, as well as 94 respondents from the general public, using a straightforward random sampling methodology, specifically the lottery method. The gathered data via questionnaire with open ended questions asking why, when, how to capture the viewpoints of respondents and close ended questions was examined using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The descriptive statistics feature in SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data to produce information that was displayed by employing graphs, tables, percentages, and frequency distribution tables. Based on observations and sample analysis, inferential statistics were also employed to draw conclusions or predictions about the population. The regression model was used to show the effect of the treatment variable on the response variables. For this study, a sample size of 94 respondents was intended, and 82 respondents returned fully completed questionnaires.

## 5. Data Analysis and Results

### 5.1 Introduction

Evaluation of the conflict-of-Interest impact on the sustainability of public procurement was the goal of the study. This chapter presents the empirical findings and results of the variable's application. The data analysis and the interpretation of the results were guided by the study's overarching objective.

#### 5.1.1 Response Rate

According to Table 1.0 below, 94 respondents were the intended sample size for this study, and 82 of them returned fully completed questionnaires. Response rate is described by Orodho (2005) as the degree to which all are included in the final data sets. According to Babbie (2009), who asserts that obtaining an appropriate response rate requires having population knowledge, its components, as well as the type of research purposes, this response rate was deemed adequate.

**Table 1:** Response Rate

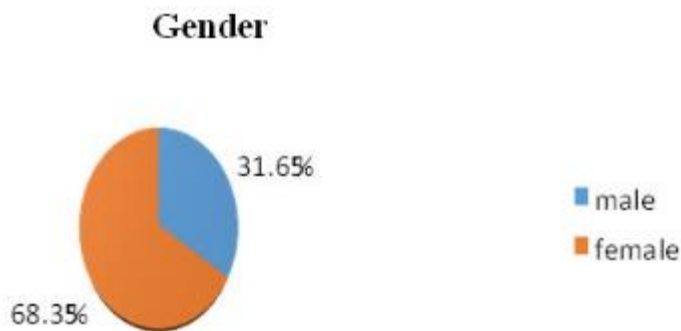
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Rebound questionnaires	82	87.2
Fruitless questionnaires	12	12.8
Total	94	100

### 5.1.2 Demographic

An initial examination of demographic data was conducted to better understand the population structure from which the sample was drawn. In this instance, the researcher was interested in the respondents' gender, age, education level, and job designation at Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital.

#### 5.1.3 Gender

The study asked participants about their gender to better understand the sampled group's specific demographics as well as the overall population. According to figure 2.0, which is shown below, 68.35 percent of the participants were men and 31.65 percent were women. The sampled population's gender distribution was based on how many men and women were employed by the organization.



**Figure 2:** Gender

**Source:** Fieldwork, August, 2022

#### 5.1.4 Educational Level

The majority of participants held university diplomas or bachelor's degrees, as can be shown in Table 2.0 below. The combined percentage for these two groups was 90.3 percent. Those who had a master's degree made up just 9.7% of the participants. This suggested that half of all procurement professionals were college graduates or held a bachelor's degree. In addition to their educational background, they also have the professional skills to properly concentrate on ethical procedures in procurement management.



**Table 2:** Education Level of the respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percent
College	34	41.5
Bachelor's degree	40	48.8
Master's degree	8	9.7
Total	82	100.0

**Source:** Fieldwork, August, 2022

### 5.1.5 Age

According to the findings in Table 3.0 below, 34.1 percent of the respondents were in the age range of 40 to 49 years. Only 25.6% of people were between the ages of 20 and 29 and 11% were over 50. According to the results, the majority of the respondents were of legal age, capable of making reasoned arguments, and able to gain anything from the study of ethical supply chain methods.

**Table 3:** Age

Year	Frequency	Percent
20-29	21	25.6
30-39	24	29.3
40-49	28	34.1
Over 50	9	11
Total	82	100.0

**Source:** Fieldwork, August, 2022

### 5.1.6 Job designation of the respondents

Table 4.0 data show that 36.6 percent of respondents came from purchasing, 48.8 percent from stores & logistics, and 14.6% were from the contract management section. According to Kurt (2014), professional services include giving firms of all sizes and in all industries specialized business help. This support can take the form of management advice, accountancy services, or IT support.

**Table 4:** Job designation of the respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Contract management	12	14.6
Stores & logistics	40	48.8
Purchasing	30	36.6
Total	82	100.0

**Source:** Fieldwork, August, 2022

## 5.2 Regression Analysis Model

Patrick (2010) asserts that Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) minimizes environmental harm while producing advantages for the organization, community, and economy. The regression model demonstrates how personal gain, nepotism, and political influence (independent variables) affect the sustainability of public procurement (dependent variable). Personal gain, nepotism, and outside influence are the three predictors that can account for 85.6% of the change in conflict of interest, according to the model summary table 5.0. Other factors might be able to explain the remaining 14.4% of the variation in procurement performance.

**Table 5:** Regression Analysis model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.925 <sup>a</sup>	.856	.852	.336

### 5.2.1 Beta coefficients

When every negative impact of a dispute of interest activities is equal to zero, the constant 1.720 in table 6.0 predicts the value of procurement sustainability at Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital. This suggested that personal gain, nepotism, and political or outside interference would be held to zero and that procurement sustainability in the study region would be at 1.720.

According to regression results, personal profits have a detrimental impact on the sustainability of public procurement in Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital ( $\beta_1 = -0.234$ ,  $p = 0.0000.05$ ,  $t = -378$ ). It follows that a rise in individual gains causes a 0.234 drop in procurement sustainability. This is consistent with Lisa's (2010) finding that a 1% rise in personal earnings will reduce the sustainability of public procurement by 0.265. According to Lisa (2010), those who work in purchasing and supply management should encourage their coworkers to disclose any significant personal interests that might skew their judgment or impair their objectivity when doing their duties. Corporations should have a clear policy on taking gifts for business purposes and disclosing conflicts of interest. Professionals in purchasing and supply management should encourage their peers to abide by any such policy.

According to regression results, nepotism negatively affects the sustainability of public procurement in the research area ( $\beta_2 = -0.364$ ,  $p = 0.0000.05$ ,  $t = -0.489$ ). The implication is that nepotism causes a 0.364 decline in the sustainability of public procurement. The results back up Hunja's (2011) claim that nepotism has detrimental effects on the sustainability of public procurement after researching the barriers to public procurement reform in developing nations.

According to regression results ( $\beta_3 = -0.035$ ,  $p = 0.0220.05$ ,  $t = -0.241$ ), political or

outside interference has a detrimental impact on the sustainability of procurement in Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital. The implication is that there is a 0.035 reduction in procurement sustainability for every rise in political or outside influence. The results support Wanyama's (2013) assertion that political interference hurts public procurement in Kenya after researching the efficiency of Kenya's procurement regulations.

**Table 6:** Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.720	.171			.000
Personal gains	-0.234	.100	-.378	10.665	.000
Nepotism	-0.364	.139	-.489	2.841	.000
Political or outside influence	-0.035	.141	-.241	2.555	.022

a. **Dependent** Variable: Public Procurement sustainability

b. **Predictors: (Constant)**, Political or outside influence, personal gains, Nepotism

$$Y = 1.7 - 0.234 X_1 - 0.364 X_2 - 0.035 X_3 + e$$

Where:

Y=Public Procurement sustainability  $\beta_0$ =Constant of Regression

X1= Personal Gains

X2= Nepotism

X3=Political/Outside Influence  $\epsilon$  = Error of Regression

## 6. Summary of Results, Conclusion and Recommendation

### 6.1 Summary

The study determined the driving factors and effects of conflict of interest on public procurement in Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital. It can be summed up by saying that one should always put their organization's interests first in all transactions, carry out the procurement process efficiently, and adhere to their organization's established policies. Procurement officers should be open to sound advice from their peers and follow it without compromising their obligation to their respective offices. to purchase without bias to get the most for each cedi spent. Supply chain professionals should work to improve their understanding of manufacturing processes and materials, as well as build workable procedures for carrying out their duties. They should take part in professional development programs to improve their performance and knowledge of purchasing.

## 6.2 Conclusions

According to the study's findings, those who work in purchasing and supply management should encourage their co-workers to disclose any significant personal interests that might impair or appear to impair their judgment or impartiality when doing their duties. Examples include having a large stake in a supplier or having members of one's immediate family work for a major supplier. When accepting business presents, organizations should have a clear policy in place. Professionals in purchasing and supply management should urge co-workers to follow any such rules.

The study's conclusion is based on the findings, which state that procurement professionals should adhere to the Professional Code of Ethics of Purchasing Management established by procurement agencies and encourage others to do the same. Additionally, they should offer advice and support to other buyers as they carry out their obligations. Professionals in procurement should collaborate with all groups and people involved in initiatives that advance the advancement and stature of purchasing and the acquisition of commodities.

## 6.3 Recommendations

The study recommends legal action to protect public institutions from unsuitable corrupt behaviour in procurement activities, including fraudulent supplier activities. Organizations should also emphasize performance measurement and establish proper checks for all contracts, set up supplier selection structures that avoid political interference, and improve account management practices to ensure that suppliers and public institutions, which have a direct relationship, are protected.

The research suggests Transparency is a smart way to maximize monetary value by lowering the likelihood of corrupt behaviour, claims the study. Transparency refers to how clearly and concisely the rules governing public procurement procedures are established, making it simple to check how they are being followed by procurement agents. The research recommends that ethical training and seminars be provided in addition to training in more specific issues such as procurement processes, record management, archiving, accountability, and administrative law. Regular reviews or inspections of the procurement procedures and performance reviews may be carried out to ensure that probity is considered and accomplished.

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