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**LEVERAGING ON SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PRACTICES FOR  
GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS: A CASE STUDY OF THE ZIMBABWE  
ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION COMPANY  
(ZETDC)**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study explored how leveraging on sustainable procurement practices leads global competitiveness in public procurement leading to realization of value for money all stakeholders in society using ZETDC as a case study. Sustainable procurement practices result in the development of policies that are environmentally friend thereby contributing to competitiveness of entities across the globe as well as an inclination toward the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8- Decent work and Economic growth, SDG16- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Out of a target population of 136 employees, a sample size of 91 was randomly sampled. 91 questionnaires were distributed and 78 were returned giving a response rate of 88.12%. The study found out that violations of existing sourcing and procurement policies by the entity due to political interferences by bigwigs affected the entity's reputation and financial growth. The study recommends migration into e-procurement platforms to reduce excessive human contact or interference in the procurement of goods and services.

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E-procurement

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets, Chapter 22:23 of 2017, Zimbabwe, clearly stated that it aims to provide for the control and regulation of public procurement and the disposal of public assets so as to ensure that such procurement and disposal is effected in a manner that is transparent, fair, honest, cost-effective and competitive. Thus the purpose of this study was to explore the factors that affected the attainment of the above goal that hindered sustainable procurement practices in parastatals with particular reference to ZETDC. Public procurement is central to the delivery of public services, results, and performance. It is used as a strategic tool to enhance government performance through provision of goods and services in the public sector. The study looks at the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, research methodology, discussions and findings and recommendations.

### **Background to the Study**

The Rio de Janeiro Summit of June 1992 in Brazil under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) saw 105 countries signing the Rio de Janeiro declaration committing themselves to integrating sustainable public procurement practices into national procurement development plans in order to align corporate plans with international procurement best practices so as to obtain value for money, protect the environment, procure quality goods and services thereby reducing dumping of any unwanted purchase materials and to ensure timely execution of projects and quality assurance. According to the OECD (2019) there is a global concerted effort to ensure that internal and external controls and audits are coordinated, sufficiently resourced and integrated to ensure effective monitoring of the performance of the public procurement system, reliable reporting and compliance with laws and regulations as well as clear channels for reporting credible suspicions of breaches of those laws and regulations to the competent authorities, without fear of reprisals, consistent application of procurement laws, regulations and policies, reduction of duplication and adequate oversight in accordance with national choices

and an independent ex-post assessment and, where appropriate, reporting to relevant oversight bodies. It is in this vein that the International Procurement Best Practices require professionalism in the public procurement processes as being practiced by the developed economies such as United States of America, Germany and The United Kingdom (OECD, 2015). In these countries, proper government policies have been synchronized with public procurement systems to form the much desired ethical and sustainable procurement systems for economic development (OECD, 2019). In Africa, countries such as Rwanda (World Bank Group, 2017), and South Africa (Quinot and Arrowsmith, 2013), have made huge strides toward the much desired standards of procurement which is the reason why their economies are rising. Globally, public procurement occupies a key role in service delivery and performance of government departments and public entities (The World Bank, 2019, Chigudu, 2014, and Musanzikwa, 2013). Public procurement represents approximately 15% of GDP in OECD countries and up to 25-30% in developing countries. This a scrutiny of public procurement essential for gaining competitive advantage. Public procurement is a government function that directly affects the performance of local authorities, government departments and state-owned-enterprises.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In contrast to International best practices in Sustainable Procurement Practices, Zimbabwe seem to be trailing behind in its public procurement systems. There seem to be rampant corruption cases in the public procurement in the Zimbabwean arena which reveal a lack of sustainable public procurement ethics as evidenced by challenges revealed in the media such as: ZETDC paid supplier a total of USD350 000, 00 in 2012 and 2014 for electrical transformers and other goods and the supplier failed to deliver the goods- [businessstimes.co.zw](http://businessstimes.co.zw); ZETDC made payment without performance guarantee for electrical transformers and exposed the State to a loss of USD 35 000 000.00- [businessstimes.co.zw](http://businessstimes.co.zw); Gwanda Solar Project Collapses (Zimbabwe Independent, 16 March 2018)- Zimbabwe Power Company payment to Intertrake of USD7m without performance guarantee insurance as a result the Parastatal lose the money with cost. The reality is that if there is no effective monitoring of all procurement systems to ensure maximum value from the investment made, no value

creation is realized. If this problem of service delivery is not addressed, by the electricity provider, sustainability of the national economy remains compromised. It was upon this backdrop that the researcher embarked on carrying out this study in order to explore insights into ways of gaining value for money and fairness in public procurement.

### **Research Objectives**

- a. To explore factors that affect the effectiveness of public procurement systems in Zimbabwe.
- b. To establish the drivers behind sustainable public procurement processes.

### **Research Questions**

- a. What factors affect effectiveness of sustainable public procurement systems in Zimbabwe?
- b. What are the drivers behind sustainable public procurement processes?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Sustainable Development Theory**

This theory was a product of the Brundtland Commission (1987) aimed at maintaining economic advancement and progress while protecting the long-term value of the environment and provides a framework for the integration of environment policies (WCED,1987). Its essence it treats public procurement as a policy model or tool for striking a balance between profitability and environmental protection and views public procurement as constituting important part on any economy as a driving force for economic and social development of a country. The theory argues that it is in the best of contracting authorities to achieve the best value for money and generate benefits through supply chain management the procuring entity, society, economy and environment. According to Thai (2016), the major criticism of this theory is that it mainly relies on the lowest price bidder without considering quality without considering environmental protection. Lack of quality attribute in the public procurement has led to the buying of inferior products by parastatals in Zimbabwe which are then dumped and thrown away leading the taxpayer being taxed more to further finance acquisition of other materials or equipment. This case there would be wasteful expenditure which is not good for the growth of national economy.

## **1.2. Public Procurement**

Public Procurement, in general, is an act of obtaining or buying goods and services that includes preparation and processing of a demand as well as the end receipt and approval of payment (OECD, 2015). Procurement is a purchasing process used to secure services, goods and work from external sources, where external refers organization, company, institution, charity or own person (Kalubanga, 2012). In another study, Senzu, et al (2017), viewed procurement as a process by which public bodies purchase works, goods or services from suppliers which they have selected for this purpose. It ranges from the purchase of routine goods or services to large scale contracts for infrastructural projects and involves a wide and diverse range of contracting authorities. As public procurement accounts for a substantial portion of the taxpayers' money, governments are expected to carry it out efficiently and with high standards of conduct in order to ensure high quality of service delivery and safeguard the public interest. Procurement transactions and decisions must in all respects be fair, equitable and ensure value for money. Contracting authorities must be able to justify decisions made and actions taken. The goal of public procurement is to award timely and cost-effective contracts to qualified contractors, suppliers and service providers for the provision of goods, work and services to support government and public services operations, in accordance with principles and procedures established in the public procurement rules (Adhikari, 2015). Procurement practitioners are the principal actors in the public procurement process. They are responsible for ensuring the goal of public procurement is achieved. They must gain stakeholder's trust and ensure they fully understand the procurement process and principles. Procurement practitioners are directly and indirectly engaged in the procurement process, from need assessment to contract close-out. Although, they are more directly involved in the public procurement process, they also provide advice and support during contract execution, (Adhikari, 2015).

### **1.2.0. Types of public Procurement/ Contracts**

The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Chapter 22:23, Zimbabwe qualify types of public procurement or contracts as follows:

### **1.2.1. Works contracts**

Public contracts having as their objective either the execution, or both the design and execution, of works, for example building or civil engineering works such as a road or sewage plant. According to The USLegal.com (retrieved 15/11/2019), a works contract is an agreement which is a mixture of service or labour and transfer of goods. Under a works contract the contractor agrees to do certain job in execution whereof, certain goods are transferred to the contractee. This is one contract that is effectively used across the globe but its success depends on the commitment of stakeholders involved.

### **1.2.2. Supply Contracts**

Public contracts having as their object the purchase, lease, rental or hire purchase with or without option to buy, of products such as stationery, vehicles or computers. Waigwa and Njeru (2016) point out that this is a common contract which requires special ethics for it to succeed.

### **1.2.3. Service Contracts**

Public contracts other than public works or supply contracts having as their object the provision of services such as consultancy, training or cleaning services. Consulting are usually intellectual in nature and are considered technical services the output of which is not equipment intensive. Advisory and project related services are typical consulting services; which includes: feasibility studies, project management, engineering services, finance and accounting services, training and development, to mention a few. Non-consulting services usually equipment maintenance and repair, operation and maintenance services, utility management, installation and maintenance services, surveys and field investigations, and similar. Across all these three categories, there is need for some form of ethics that bind the various procurement practices for efficient service delivery. According to Senzu, et al, (2017), the above three types of contracts are affected by a number of determinants for them to be effectively managed such as “defining processes and formulating a clear contract management plan, designing appropriate methods of capturing key data and lessons from contract management process, human resource management factors that related to job descriptions, accurate definition of roles and diverse contract management knowledge”. The further argued for procurement staff to offer technical advice to the accounting officers on the appropriate contract management framework and the kind of people that

ought to be in charge. Waigwa and Njeru (2016) advocate for an all stakeholders' involvement as they have a critical role to play in the entire procurement process and this has to be integrated into annual plans of each entity. Procurement stakeholders should work together to improve contract management through capacity building and taking procurement skills assessment and training staff through refresher courses, workshops, seminars and conferences where staff meet and share experiences.

### **1.3 Procurement Performance**

Procurement performance is dependent on a number of factors. According to Hamza, Gerbi and Ali, (2016), there are seven predominant factors that influence or affect procurement, namely: a clear procurement strategy which is central to the attainment of the procurement entity's vision; effective management information and control systems; development of expertise; a role in corporate management; an entrepreneurial and proactive approach; coordination and focused efforts. All these factors if adhered with a strong communication culture, are likely to lead the organization to attain its overall objectives. Generally, all procurement organizations must have good governance and ethics that steer the overall managerial team toward an open and transparent system.

#### **1.3.1. Professional Procurement Ethics**

Dzuke and Naude (2017) maintain that professional procurement ethics lead to the development of a code of ethics an organization can follow that lead to quality purchase and less time of the procurement process and less costly procurement process. Aketch and Karanja (2013) further argued the more ethical the company is, the more it is able to build a strong procurement culture indicating that sustainable procurement can only be attained once an entity has good ethics in record keeping and management, accountability and adherence to administrative law, regular reviews of procedures, auditing performance, honesty, integrity, and above all, morally upright employees who respect their organization, suppliers and customers.

#### **1.3.2. Drivers of sustainable procurement practices**

Drivers of sustainable procurement are forces which create positive pressure to develop and implement sustainable procurement strategies by creating opportunities or threats which must be addressed by procurement function in any organization (Kari-



uki and Kwasira, 2014). These seeks to build into the Sustainable Development theory which highlights the need to strike a balance in the economic growth of the company, environmental protection and social aspects of society so that there is progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (WECD,1987). It follows that organizations can only be declared sustainable if and only if these three aspects of sustainability are rightly balanced and integrated in the organizational systems together with procurement processes. Major drivers of sustainable procurement are: organizational culture, cost, government policy, the rise in awareness of resource scarcity and increased stakeholder pressure for greater corporate responsibility and accountability (Kariuki and Kwasira,2014), rethinking the production processes taking into account the possible damages done to the environment, there is a special interest placed in addressing social issues such as unemployment, child welfare and human rights by creating local job opportunities and contract opportunities for local small to medium enterprises. Procurement processes are designed to select suppliers that uphold universal human rights towards their employees and their communities, which include the protection of labour rights and avoidance of child labour and indecent working conditions (Aketch and Karanja (2013). Some drivers include desire for to meet consumer expectations in the digital era thereby protecting brand name of the organization and environment, desire to seek new opportunities as well minimizing business risks of all kinds. Environmental drivers ensure the design process must result in minimization of energy used, less noise pollution and more efficient systems. Corporate and social responsibility is also seen as a key driver to sustainable public procurement as it ensures that the organization develops the community through its social policies and that evidently will lead to national economic development (Crocker, et al, 2012).The arguments in favor of sustainable public procurement include minimization of business risks, cost savings, upholding the principle of value for money, reduction of waste reputation and keeping a good brand name. Sustainable Public procurement always ensures best value for money to ensure cost-efficiency through competition and acting fairly to ensure a level playing field for market participants by applying procedures that safeguard non-discrimination, equal treatment, transparency and proportionality (Crocker, et al, 2012). The OECD (2016, p.1) maintains



that “best value for money does not mean necessarily mean going for the cheapest offer, but to get best deal within the parameters set.”

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was a case study of ZETDC. Since this study used research questions, no hypothesis was formulated and the generalizations were based on the findings from the research. (Saunders, et al, 2007). A case study-survey strategy is used to focus on public procurement practices at ZETDC and how this affected national economic growth. Case study research is the assessment of a single unit in order to establish its key features and draw generalizations, (Bryman, 2012). Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used for triangulation purposes. In this study the target population was 136 ZETDC employees. Raosoft Sample Size Calculator was used to determine the sample size. Out of this population a sample size of 101 was selected based on confidence level of 95%, confidence interval of 5% and a population of 136 for representativeness. All ten purposively conducted interviews were successful. From the survey, out of 91 questionnaires randomly distributed, 78 were retrieved. This gave a total response rate of 88.12% showing that the study was a success. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS and for qualitative data, thematic approach was used. All research ethics considerations were considered.

## DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

### 2.1. Response Rate and Reliability Test

The total number of study participants was 101 which comprised 91 questionnaire respondents and 10 interviewees. The response rates are outlined in Table 4.1 below:

**Table 4.1 Response Rate**

**n = 78**

Aspect	Total Number	Unaccounted for	Number of Respondents	Response Rate in Percentage
Interviews	10	Nil	10	100
Questionnaires	91	12	78	85,71
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>88.12</b>

### Table 4.1 Questionnaire and interviews response rate

There is a general agreement in the literature that response rate above 60% is generally good and the research findings are regarded credible. In fact, Stake (2005) suggests that at least 75% response rate is a true representative and acceptable response rate for any research while earlier, Babbie (1990) asserts that 60% is good and above 70% is very good. As seen in Table 4.1 above, the response rates range from 85.71% to 100% and this clearly indicates that this is very good to provide acceptance and credibility of both quantitative and qualitative findings in this study.

## 2.2. Demographic Information of Study participants

n = 78

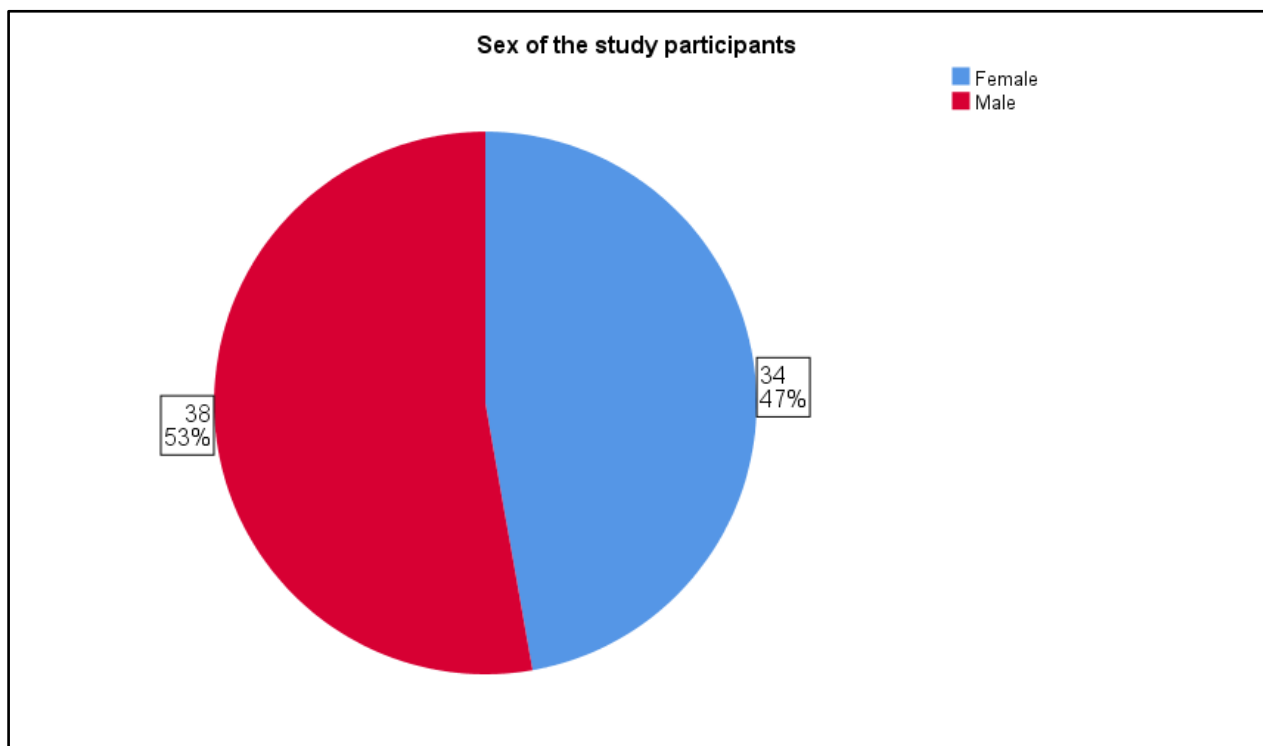
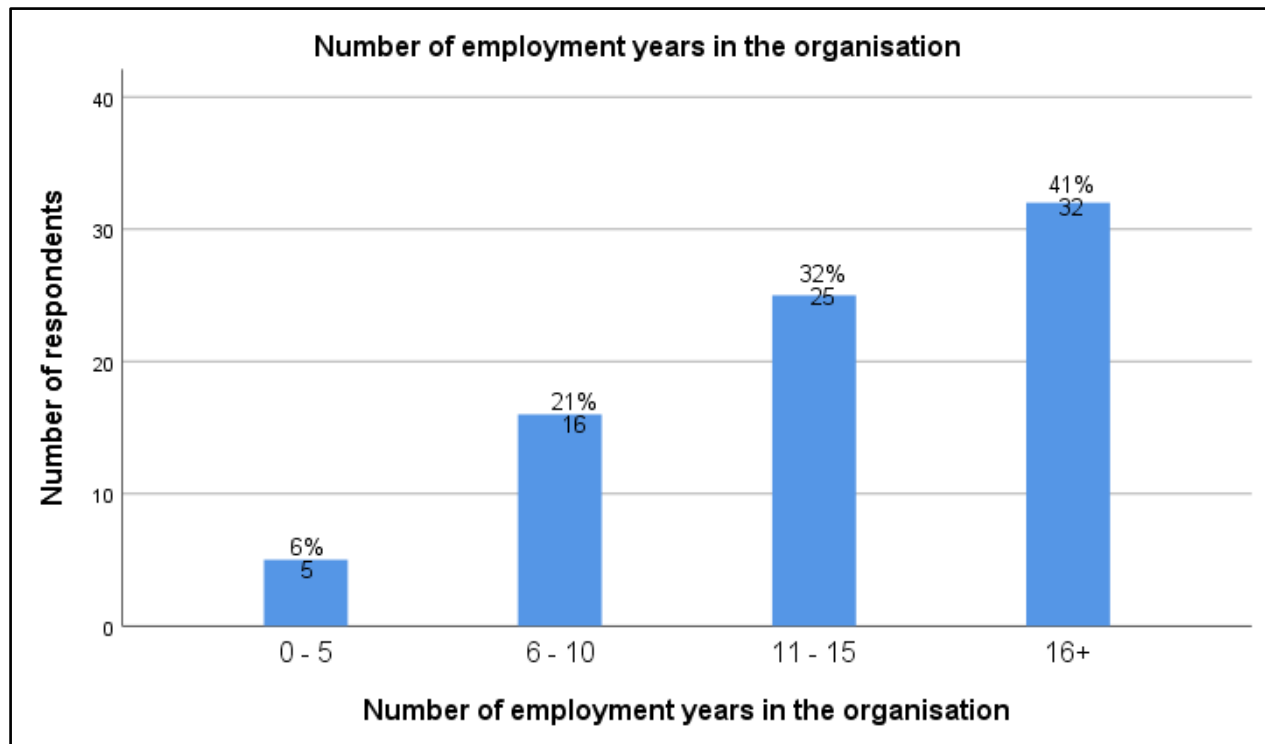


Figure 4. 1: Sex of the participants

The above Figure 4.1 shows that there were 34 (47%) and 38 (53%) female and male research participants respectively who took part in the study. Generally, this shows a balanced viewpoints between men and women on the procurement practices in the Zimbabwe parastatals. The response rate on the respondent's sex was 72 out of 78 thus 92%. n = 78

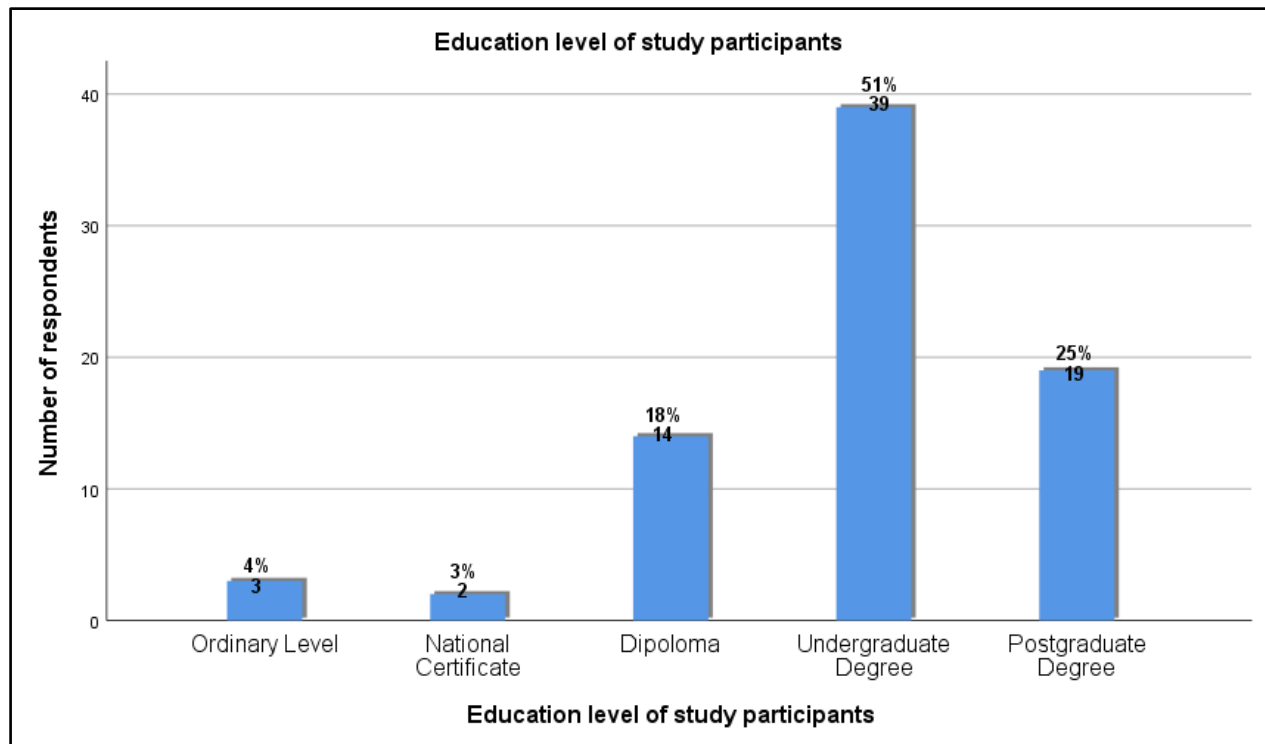


*Figure 4. 2: Number of employment years in the organization*

Figure 4.2 above reveals that 73 (94%) of the employees had stayed in the organization for more than 5 years which may suggest that they have relatively more experience on how procurement systems work in the public sector. Of the 78 respondents, 5 (6%) had stayed with the organization for a period of 5 years and below. In terms of the aim of the study, even those who had been in the organization for a short period of time, had sufficient insights to share on procurement dynamics, challenges and suggestions for improvement.

## Educational Level

The following Figure 4.3 shows the level of education of the respondents



*Figure 4. 3 : Education Level of respondents*

Of the people sampled to participate in this research, about 25% of the respondents have certificate level of education whilst 75% obtained a degree as showed in Figure 4.3

Overall, it can be concluded that the levels of education indicated in Figure 4.3 were adequate for the requirements of the study for one to able to share experience and provide a critical view of the procurement practices.

### 2.3. Drivers of effective procurement practice

The analysis, presentation and discussion of the study findings are categorized into two main formats which are the descriptive statistics and factor analysis.

#### a) Economic policy as a driver of effective procurement practice

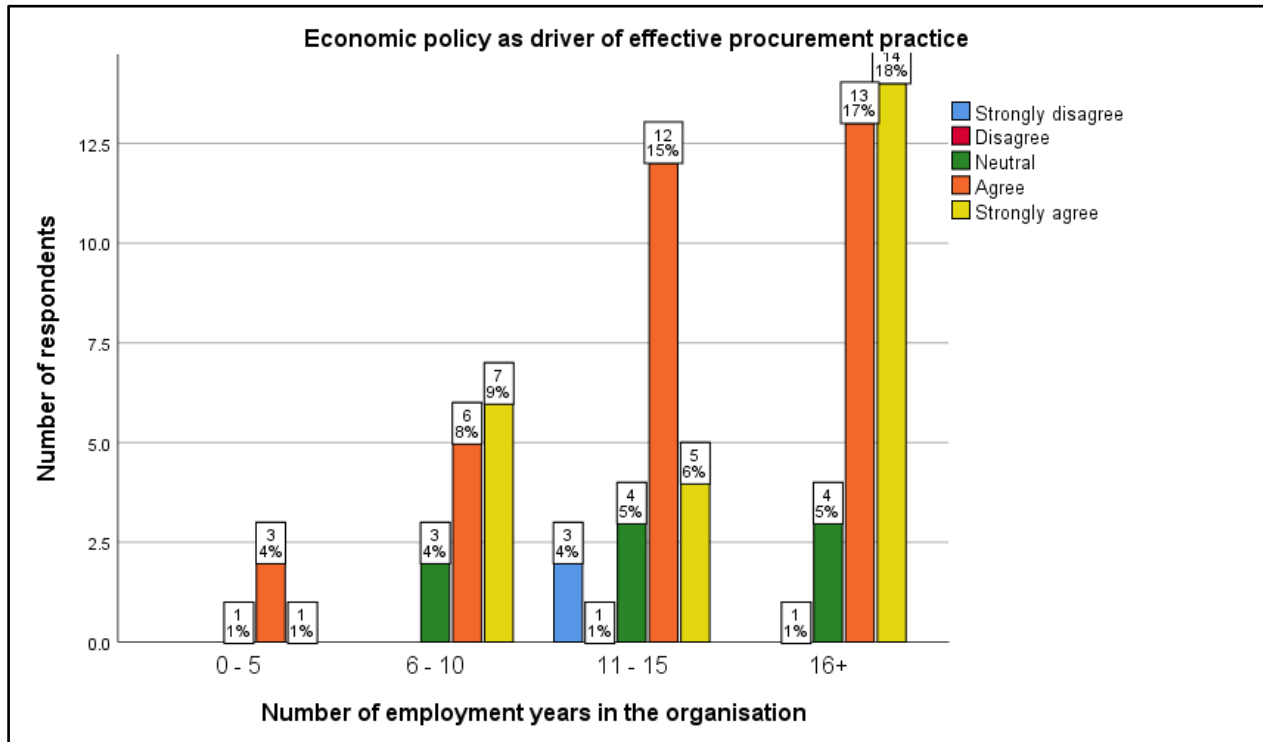


Figure 4. 4 : Economic Policy as a driver of effective procurement practice

Figure 4.4 above shows a clear illustration that most of the respondents (56%) who have been with the organisation for eleven years and above felt that economic policy is indeed a key driver for effective procurement practice. Only 15% were not sure if economic policy would contribute to effective and sustainable procurement practice in the Zimbabwe context.

b) *Upholding of business ethics as a driver of effective procurement practice*

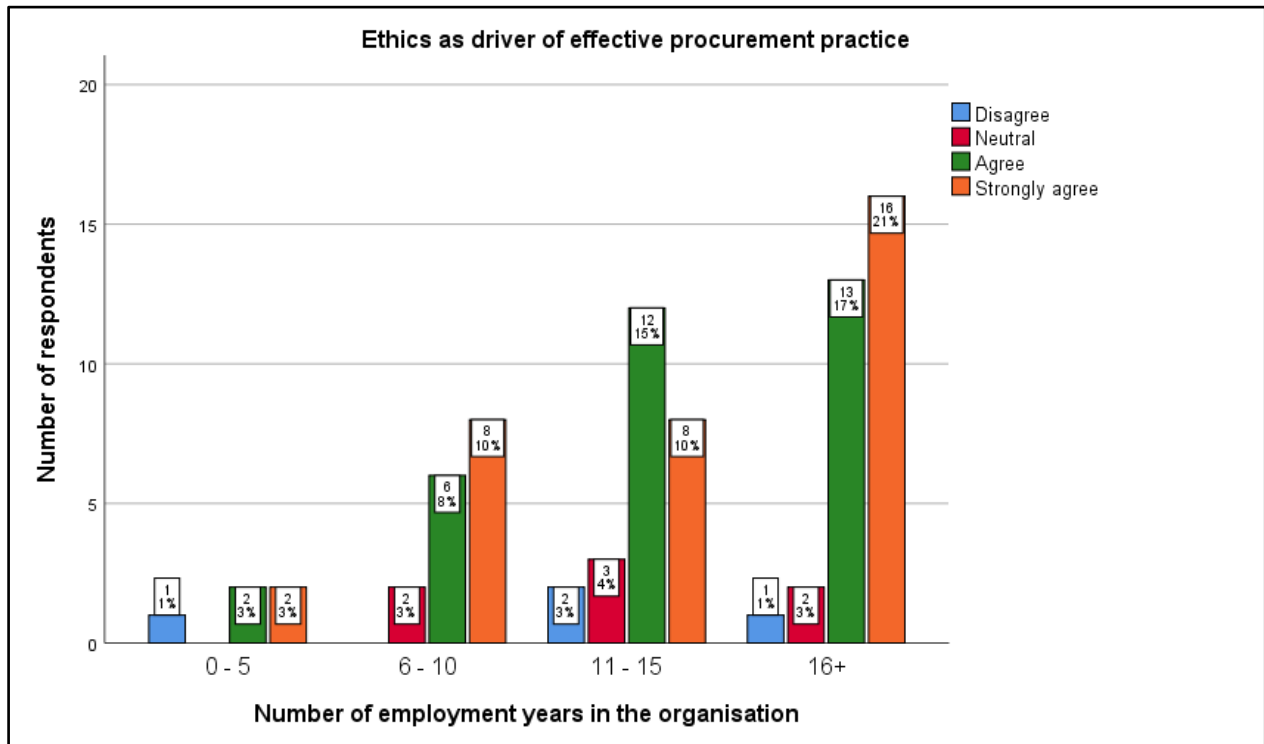


Figure 4.5: *Ethics as a driver of procurement practice*

The findings shown in Figure 4.5 above reveal that the majority of the respondents (67 = 85%) were in concurrence that ethics is a crucial driver for effective procurement practice. Most of the respondents who believed that ethics is an important driver for effective procurement practice had been in the organization for more than 10 years. Of the 78 respondents, 25% of them disagreed with the notion that ethics is a driver for effective procurement practice and they had worked for less than 10 years in their organizations.

c) *Sustainable sourcing as a driver of effective procurement practice*

Overall, the results shown in Figure 4.5 below reveal that the respondents who have been employed for more than 11 years (54%) believed that sustainability sourcing is an important driver towards effectiveness of procurement practice in the public sector of Zimbabwe. For those who have been with the organisation for less than 11 years, 27% of the respondents also expressed that sustainable sourcing is fundamental for effective procurement practice which means that 81% are in the affirmative. It is also noted that only 11% of them within the same employment duration (11 – 15 years) were either strongly disagree, disagree or indifferent on the notion that sustainable sourcing is a vital factor for effective procurement practice.

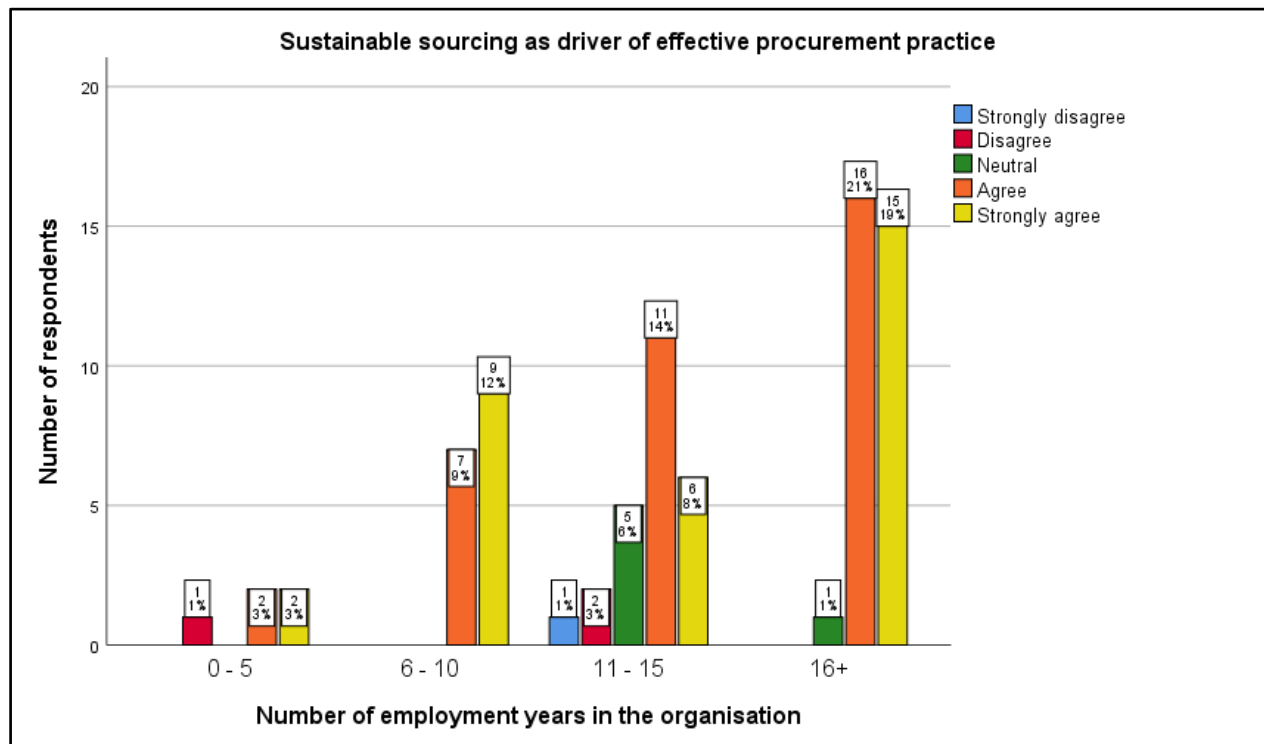


Figure 4. 5: Sustainable Sourcing as a driver of effective procurement practice.

### Factor analysis on drivers of effective procurement practice

Factor analysis was applied to establish the level of contribution of each factor for a given research objective. In this study, two objectives guided the study and each one of them had a number of factors investigated.

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.718
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	6
	Sig.	.000

Table 4.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

The KMO and Bartlett's Test of 0.718 shown in Table 4.3 above indicate that there are enough items/factors designed in the research for predication of the drivers of effective procurement practice research objective. This is because any score above



greater than 0.70 is considered adequate. Furthermore, the significance score indicated here of 0.000 means that the factors investigated which are tabulated below are highly correlated to provide a reasonable basis to understand respondents' views expressed on this objective.

## **Factors that affect the effectiveness of Public procurement systems in Zimbabwe**

### ***Factor Analysis***

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.799
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	161.508
	Df	21
	Sig.	.000

The KMO and Bartlett's Test of 0.782 shown above indicates that there are enough items predicated by each factor in this research objective. This is because any score above greater than 0.70 is considered adequate. Furthermore, the significance score indicated here of 0.000 means that the variables tabulated below are correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis for this research objective.

<b>Objective : Factors that affect the effectiveness of public procurement systems in Zimbabwe</b>	
	Component 1
Top management commitment leads to sustainable procurement practice	<b>.776</b>
Training and development leads to sustainable procurement practice	<b>.905</b>
Identification of competent leaders contributes to sustainable procurement practices	<b>.581</b>

Stiffer penalties for offenders leads to sustainable procurement practice	<b>.940</b>
Change of employees' mindset promotes sustainable procurement practice	<b>.854</b>
Better remuneration packages leads to sustainable procurement practice	<b>.852</b>
Restricted political interference leads to sustainable procurement practice	<b>.670</b>
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.	
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.	

As shown above, seven factors were considered for this research objective and most of the factors had the highest number of respondents who expressed strongly agree or agree viewpoint with a factor analysis score of above 0.7, with the highest loading(0.940) established on factor (Stiffer penalties for offenders leads to sustainable procurement practices in ZETDC).Furthermore the other factors with the loading  $>0.70$  were, *Top management commitment leads to sustainable procurement practice(0.776)*, *Training and development leads to sustainable procurement practice (0.905)*, *Change of employees' mindset promotes sustainable procurement practice (0.854)* and *Better remuneration packages leads to sustainable procurement practice (0.852)*.

As the findings show, there are two factors which respondents did not think they do not promote sustainable procurement practices in ZETDC because their factor scores were 0.581 and 0.670. The factors concerned are Identification of competent leaders contributes to sustainable procurement practices and restricted political interference leads to sustainable procurement practice respectively. The finding also suggests that respondents have a strong view that, stiffer penalties for offenders and training and development. The rest of the factors are viewed with moderate influence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends a holistic approach to sustainable public procurement through integrating all procurement systems by means of technologies that help improve communication, transparency and sourcing strategies. The study recommends intensive training programs for ZETDC employees for all of them to be in the know of the regulations governing public procurement to reduce lead-times and improve cost-effectiveness of the procurement function.

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