

Corruption And Public Procurement Practices In Nigeria

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Abstract

Corruption within public procurement has persistently posed a major obstacle to good governance and socio-economic development in Nigeria. As a critical mechanism for delivering goods, services, and infrastructure to the populace, public procurement is intended to ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability; however, corrupt practices undermine these objectives. This study explored the nature and effects of corruption on public procurement in Nigeria, examining how such practices compromise service delivery and weaken institutional credibility. A historical research design was employed, utilizing secondary sources such as government reports, policy documents, scholarly articles, and textbooks to trace patterns of procurement-related corruption and identify systemic weaknesses over time. The study was guided by Public Accountability Theory, which asserts that public officials and institutions are obliged to be answerable for their decisions, actions, and management of public resources. This framework offers insight into how accountability mechanisms can curb or mitigate corrupt practices in procurement processes. Findings indicated that corruption in Nigeria's public procurement is driven by weak institutional oversight, political interference, inadequate transparency, and limited enforcement of regulations. These conditions result in inflated contracts, misappropriation of funds, incomplete projects, and diminished public trust. Global experiences underscore the importance of strong monitoring systems, performance-based accountability, and active citizen participation in promoting transparency and improving procurement outcomes. The study concluded that tackling corruption in public procurement requires a combination of legal reforms, institutional strengthening, digital innovations, and active citizen engagement. The study recommended, among others, that the Nigerian government should strengthen oversight institutions by fully constituting the Procurement Councils at the federal and state levels and empowering them to monitor procurement activities, detect irregularities, and sanction offenders consistently.

Keywords: Corruption, Public Procurement, Accountability, Governance, Public Accountability Theory

Introduction

Public procurement is a vital aspect of governance since it dictates how public resources are distributed and applied to drive development. In Nigeria, procurement activities account for a significant portion of government spending, covering infrastructure projects as well as the

delivery of essential goods and services. Ideally, the system should uphold transparency, accountability, efficiency, and value for money. Unfortunately, corruption continues to infiltrate procurement processes, weakening service delivery and eroding citizens' confidence in state institutions (Okoh & Omokhudu, 2021). Widespread practices such as contract inflation, bribery, favoritism, and bid manipulation remain entrenched, creating obstacles to effective governance and sustainable socio-economic growth.

Corruption within procurement systems has consistently been identified as a major barrier to Nigeria's development. Transparency International (2023) notes that Nigeria performs poorly on the Corruption Perceptions Index, with procurement scandals frequently making headlines. The manipulation of tendering processes and diversion of public funds not only compromise fair competition but also discourage competent contractors from participating. The effects are severe, including substandard infrastructure, abandoned projects, waste of public resources, and declining public confidence in government institutions (Eze, 2020). In addition, corruption in procurement funds meant for critical social services such as education, healthcare, and housing, thereby worsening poverty and widening inequality (Afolabi & Oladapo, 2022).

Although several reforms have been introduced, such as the Public Procurement Act of 2007 and the establishment of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), challenges in implementation persist. Weak institutions, ineffective enforcement, political interference, and poor accountability continue to undermine the reforms (Umar & Ibrahim, 2019). Contracts are often awarded on the basis of political loyalty rather than merit, while monitoring bodies lack the independence and resources to enforce compliance. These shortcomings reflect a broader governance crisis in which vested interests exploit systemic loopholes for personal advantage (Osei-Tutu, Badu, & Owusu-Manu, 2021).

Research also shows that procurement corruption has wider implications for national development. It inflates the cost of contracts, sometimes by as much as 30%, discourages foreign investment, and reduces Nigeria's economic competitiveness (Ogbonna & Ukpere, 2022). Furthermore, corruption in defense and security procurement undermines national safety, as funds are siphoned off instead of being used to equip security agencies (Adetula, 2023). Tackling procurement-related corruption is therefore essential, not only for good governance but also for achieving Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The relevance of this study lies in its focus on how corruption weakens procurement systems and its broader consequences for governance and development in Nigeria. By analyzing both institutional weaknesses and systemic enablers of corruption, the study provides evidence-based insights that can inform reforms and strengthen accountability. In the context of growing global calls for transparency and anti-corruption measures, Nigeria's procurement challenges also offer lessons for other developing countries facing similar governance problems. Consequently, this study critically examined the forms, causes, and impacts of corruption in Nigeria's public procurement practices.

Conceptual Clarification

Corruption

Corruption remains one of the most debated concepts in governance and development studies. Although it manifests differently across societies, it is commonly defined as the misuse of entrusted authority for personal advantage (Transparency International, 2023). Within public administration, corruption arises when officials exploit their offices for private gain at the expense of collective welfare. Such behavior takes various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, and favoritism. Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2019) argue that corruption not only erodes institutional trust but also distorts policy formulation, diverts resources, and undermines developmental goals.

In Nigeria, corruption is often regarded as systemic, cutting across political, economic, and social spheres. The World Bank (2022) highlights that procurement-related corruption is particularly widespread because of the large financial transactions and numerous stakeholders involved. To fully grasp the Nigerian experience, corruption must be analyzed in light of institutional weaknesses such as poor enforcement capacity, political patronage, and cultural practices that sometimes normalize or excuse corrupt acts (Olasupo & Fayomi, 2021).

Public Procurement

Public procurement is the process through which governments obtain goods, works, and services essential for executing programs and advancing development. As defined by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL, 2020), procurement encompasses planning, tendering, contract award, and contract administration. Ideally, procurement should reflect transparency, competitiveness, fairness, accountability, and value for money (Thai, 2021). These principles ensure efficient allocation of resources and quality delivery of public services.

Nevertheless, procurement is often highly susceptible to corruption due to its complex procedures and significant financial stakes. In Nigeria, procurement accounts for nearly 60–70% of public expenditure, making it a central avenue for corrupt practices (Afolabi & Oladapo, 2022). Issues such as inflated contracts, bid manipulation, favoritism, and illegal “kickbacks” compromise both efficiency and service quality. Although the Public Procurement Act of 2007 and the creation of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) were designed to address these problems, challenges such as weak enforcement, political interference, and inadequate institutional capacity continue to hinder progress (Umar & Ibrahim, 2019).

Governance

Governance refers to the frameworks, processes, and systems through which authority is exercised and public affairs are managed. It encompasses accountability, participation, the rule of law, and effective decision-making (World Bank, 2021). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2020), good governance is characterized by transparency, responsiveness, equity, and effectiveness. In Nigeria, however, governance challenges are often tied to corruption, institutional weakness, and political influence, all of which constrain the state’s ability to provide essential services.

The link between governance and procurement is particularly significant. Strong governance fosters transparent, competitive, and development-oriented procurement processes, while weak

governance creates opportunities for rent-seeking, corruption, and waste of public resources. Ogbonna and Ukpere (2022) note that governance failures in Nigeria's procurement system have contributed to inflated contracts, project abandonment, and substandard infrastructure. Consequently, improving governance structures is not only a strategy for curbing corruption but also a pathway toward sustainable national development.

Thus, corruption, procurement, and governance are interdependent concepts that must be examined together to understand Nigeria's development challenges. Procurement serves as a vehicle for implementing government programs and providing services, while governance provides the framework for ensuring accountability and fairness in procurement processes. When corruption permeates governance systems, procurement becomes a major channel for mismanagement and resource diversion, thereby undermining development objectives. This study, therefore, views corruption in procurement as both a governance problem and a developmental obstacle.

Forms and Patterns of Corruption in Procurement Practices in Nigeria

Procurement-related corruption in Nigeria manifests in multiple ways that weaken accountability, transparency, and value for public funds. These practices occur throughout the procurement cycle, ranging from project planning and tendering to contract awards and execution, leaving the system highly susceptible to abuse. A clear understanding of these forms is vital for identifying structural gaps and developing effective anti-corruption strategies.

Contract Overpricing and Inflation

One of the most widespread practices is the deliberate inflation of contract costs, where project estimates are manipulated far above actual market rates. This enables officials and contractors to divert surplus funds for private use. According to Afolabi and Oladapo (2022), inflated contracts remain a major reason for abandoned or poorly delivered projects, as resources are often misappropriated instead of being invested in quality execution. For instance, the World Bank (2022) has noted that road construction in Nigeria costs disproportionately more than in neighboring countries without corresponding improvements in output.

Bid Manipulation and Collusion

Another recurrent pattern is bid rigging, where officials distort tendering processes to favor specific bidders. In such cases, winners are predetermined, often in return for bribes. Collusion among contractors also occurs, with companies coordinating to submit inflated bids or rotate contract awards among themselves. These practices, as observed by Okoh and Omokhudu (2021), erode fair competition, shut out competent firms, reduce efficiency, and inflate project costs.

Kickbacks and Bribery

Bribery is one of the most entrenched forms of procurement corruption. Contractors routinely offer kickbacks to gain contracts, bypass eligibility requirements, or secure favorable bid evaluations. Transparency International (2023) highlights that informal payments distort

procurement outcomes in Nigeria, inflating project budgets while discouraging firms that refuse to participate in such corrupt exchanges. This also entrenches patron-client networks, where personal connections determine contract allocation rather than merit or competence.

Nepotism and Favoritism

Favoritism and nepotism are also deeply embedded in the system. Government officials often award contracts to political allies, associates, or relatives, regardless of their technical expertise. This undermines professionalism and contributes to inefficiency and poor-quality service delivery. As Olasupo and Fayomi (2021) explain, such practices reinforce a system of political patronage, where loyalty and connections outweigh skill and competence, resulting in waste and recurring project failures.

Ghost Projects and Abandonment

Another dimension is the existence of “ghost contracts,” where funds are allocated to projects that exist only on paper. In rural and constituency projects, where oversight is weak, these are particularly common (Eze, 2020). Even when contracts are genuine, many projects are abandoned halfway. Contractors may collect mobilization fees but fail to complete the work, leaving behind incomplete or non-functional infrastructure.

Political Patronage and Interference

Political influence in procurement processes is another critical factor shaping corruption patterns. Politicians frequently intervene in contract awards to reward supporters or consolidate electoral backing. Ogbonna and Ukpere (2022) note that such political interference undermines oversight and escalates costs, while politically connected contractors often escape sanctions despite poor performance.

Fraudulent Documentation

The use of falsified documents is also widespread in procurement. Contractors sometimes present fake tax clearance certificates, forged registration details, or exaggerated experience claims to qualify for bids. At the same time, procurement officials manipulate documents to justify awarding contracts to pre-selected firms (Umar & Ibrahim, 2019). This practice erodes trust in the system and diminishes institutional credibility.

Patterns and Implications

These forms of corruption cut across all levels of government and involve both public officials and private contractors. They thrive in environments where monitoring, enforcement, and accountability are weak. Adetula (2023) argues that procurement corruption not only imposes heavy financial burdens, sometimes raising costs by up to 30%, but also weakens long-term development by producing poor infrastructure, discouraging investment, and worsening poverty. Therefore, corruption in procurement practices in Nigeria reflects systemic and institutional weaknesses rather than isolated misconduct. Tackling these issues demands more than individual

sanctions; it requires reforms that enforce transparency, strengthen oversight, and promote fair competition in the procurement process.

Factors Contributing to Procurement Corruption in Nigeria

Procurement-related corruption in Nigeria extends beyond isolated misconduct by individuals; it is embedded within broader structural and systemic deficiencies. Ideally, procurement processes should ensure transparency, accountability, and value for money. However, the system has become highly vulnerable to abuse due to institutional weaknesses, political interference, economic incentives, and socio-cultural dynamics. Identifying these drivers is crucial for tackling not only the visible manifestations of corruption but also its root causes.

Institutional Weaknesses and Poor Enforcement

A central factor enabling procurement corruption is the fragility of regulatory institutions. The Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), created under the Public Procurement Act of 2007, was established to standardize and oversee procurement activities. Yet, the body faces challenges such as limited independence, inadequate resources, and weak enforcement capacity. According to Umar and Ibrahim (2019), even when irregularities are detected, sanctions are rarely imposed, creating an enabling environment for corruption to thrive. These weaknesses are compounded by bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of skilled personnel, and poor coordination among oversight agencies.

Political Patronage and Interference

The pervasive role of politics also drives corruption in procurement. Politicians frequently manipulate contract awards to reward loyalists, consolidate influence, or prepare for elections. This entrenches a patronage system in which contracts are awarded based on political affiliation rather than merit (Ogbonna & Ukpere, 2022). Political interference undermines institutional independence and fuels a culture of impunity, since politically connected contractors are seldom held accountable for malpractice.

Deficits in Transparency and Accountability

Limited transparency further worsens procurement practices, particularly during the planning and bidding phases. Restricted access to procurement data creates opportunities for collusion between officials and contractors. Okoh and Omokhudu (2021) observe that opaque procedures discourage public scrutiny, while accountability measures, such as audits and procurement reviews, are often weak or compromised by vested interests. The absence of robust digital tools and open contracting systems also limits civil society and citizen involvement, reinforcing secrecy in procurement operations.

Economic Incentives and Rent-Seeking Behavior

The scale of public spending in procurement makes it an attractive target for rent-seeking. Estimates suggest that procurement accounts for between 60–70% of Nigeria's government

expenditure (Afolabi & Oladapo, 2022), providing ample opportunities for exploitation. Contractors and officials frequently inflate project costs or divert resources for personal gain. Low salaries and poor working conditions for public officials further encourage corrupt practices, normalizing rent-seeking as part of the governance culture.

Cultural Expectations and Social Norms

Socio-cultural values also contribute to procurement corruption. In many cases, public officials face pressure to channel opportunities toward relatives, friends, or ethnic groups. Olasupo and Fayomi (2021) describe this as “socially legitimized corruption,” where favoritism and nepotism are justified as fulfilling communal or family obligations. Such practices weaken meritocracy, entrench mediocrity, and lead to poor-quality outcomes in public projects.

Weak Oversight and Monitoring

Another major driver of corruption is insufficient oversight during contract execution. Projects, especially at subnational levels, are often poorly supervised, enabling contractors to abandon work after receiving mobilization fees or to deliver substandard outcomes. Eze (2020) notes that rural and constituency projects are especially vulnerable due to weak community monitoring and limited institutional follow-up. These gaps create opportunities for “ghost projects” that exist only on paper.

Broader Governance Failures

Procurement corruption also reflects Nigeria’s wider governance challenges. Pervasive corruption in revenue management, budgeting, and law enforcement creates a permissive environment for malpractice in procurement. Transparency International (2023) continues to rank Nigeria poorly on the Corruption Perceptions Index, pointing to systemic governance failures. In such an environment, procurement processes are unlikely to be shielded from widespread corruption.

Thus, the persistence of corruption in procurement is the product of multiple overlapping factors, including fragile institutions, political manipulation, lack of transparency, economic incentives, cultural pressures, weak monitoring, and broader governance failures. Combating these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that strengthens institutional capacity, shields procurement from political influence, promotes transparency, and reshapes cultural attitudes toward accountability. Without addressing these structural issues, procurement reforms are unlikely to achieve lasting impact.

Effects of Procurement Corruption on Service Delivery, Governance, and Development in Nigeria

Corruption in public procurement carries wide-ranging implications for Nigeria, disrupting effective service delivery, weakening governance institutions, and slowing overall socio-economic progress. Since procurement is a major avenue through which the government

translates policy into infrastructure, goods, and services, its corruption extends beyond financial loss to eroded public trust, substandard infrastructure, and long-term underdevelopment.

Impact on Service Delivery

The most direct outcome of procurement corruption is the decline in quality and accessibility of public services. Contract inflation, abandoned projects, and awards to incompetent contractors often result in poor infrastructure and unreliable services. As highlighted by Afolabi and Oladapo (2022), many projects in sectors like health, education, and transportation are either poorly executed or left incomplete due to diversion of funds. For instance, road construction in Nigeria is often more expensive compared to neighboring countries, yet the roads deteriorate quickly because of inferior workmanship (World Bank, 2022). This misuse of public resources denies citizens essential services and undermines the government's ability to meet basic social needs.

Furthermore, corruption undermines fairness in service distribution. Contracts influenced by favoritism, bribery, or political loyalty often marginalize deserving communities in favor of politically strategic ones. Okoh and Omokhudu (2021) observe that such practices deepen regional inequality and foster public frustration, as citizens perceive government spending as serving private or partisan interests rather than the common good.

Impact on Governance

Procurement corruption also erodes governance by weakening institutions and diminishing citizens' trust in the state. When public resources are persistently diverted through corrupt practices, confidence in the integrity of government institutions declines. Transparency International (2023) notes that corruption remains a major impediment to achieving accountable and inclusive governance in Nigeria.

Additionally, corruption distorts policy priorities. Instead of directing resources toward the most urgent developmental needs, decision-makers may favor projects that offer personal or political benefits. Ogbonna and Ukpere (2022) argue that this misalignment weakens government responsiveness and disconnects policies from the needs of citizens, leading to disillusionment and democratic fragility. The problem is compounded by weak accountability and entrenched impunity. Politically connected contractors and officials often escape punishment, emboldening others to perpetuate malpractice. Umar and Ibrahim (2019) emphasize that the inability to effectively enforce procurement laws exposes broader governance weaknesses, where legislation exists but is rarely implemented.

Impact on Development

The developmental costs of procurement corruption are severe. By inflating project costs, sometimes by up to 30%, corruption diverts critical funds away from education, healthcare, security, and other social sectors (Adetula, 2023). This redirection of resources perpetuates infrastructure gaps and intensifies poverty and inequality. Procurement malpractice also discourages investment. Investors are reluctant to operate in environments where contracts are awarded based on favoritism or bribery rather than merit (Eze, 2020). This undermines Nigeria's

economic competitiveness and frustrates diversification efforts. Fraud in defense procurement has similarly contributed to insecurity, as resources meant for security equipment and training are siphoned off, leaving security agencies ill-equipped (Ogbonna & Ukpere, 2022).

At a broader level, corruption in procurement impedes Nigeria's ability to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ineffective service delivery in education, health, and infrastructure directly compromises global targets on poverty alleviation, quality education, and sustainable urban development (UNDP, 2020). Thus, procurement corruption sustains a cycle of underdevelopment and social inequality. Therefore, the consequences of procurement corruption in Nigeria are multifaceted. It undermines service delivery by producing abandoned or low-quality projects, weakens governance through impunity and distorted policy priorities, and stifles development by diverting resources and discouraging investment. Over time, these effects erode trust in the state and obstruct progress toward national and international development goals. Addressing procurement corruption is therefore essential not only for effective governance but also for sustainable socio-economic advancement.

Assessment of Existing Reforms: Public Procurement Act 2007 and Bureau of Public Procurement

For decades, Nigeria's public procurement processes have been associated with inefficiency, corruption, and weak oversight. In response, the government introduced reforms to improve transparency, ensure better value for money, and strengthen accountability structures. At the heart of these efforts is the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007, which created the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) as the key regulatory authority. These reforms were designed to align Nigeria's procurement system with international best practices, particularly the guidelines of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). Evaluating these reforms is essential for understanding their achievements and the challenges that continue to undermine their impact.

The Public Procurement Act (PPA) 2007

The passage of the Public Procurement Act in 2007 marked a turning point in Nigeria's governance reforms. The law was enacted following recommendations from the World Bank and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which identified procurement as one of the most vulnerable areas to corruption within public financial management (World Bank, 2022). The Act sought to harmonize procurement rules across federal ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). Its key features include competitive bidding, transparent advertisement of tenders, publication of contract awards, and mandatory procurement planning (Okoh & Omokhudu, 2021).

The law also introduced mechanisms to enhance transparency, requiring MDAs to disclose procurement details publicly and submit procurement plans for approval. Penalties for non-compliance were included to encourage adherence. According to Afolabi and Oladapo (2022), these provisions have helped limit arbitrary decision-making in contract awards and brought more consistency to procurement processes. The Act also allows for administrative reviews, enabling bidders to contest unfair practices.

Despite these improvements, the PPA has encountered serious implementation problems. Weak enforcement, inadequate monitoring, and political interference have reduced its effectiveness. Umar and Ibrahim (2019) argue that many MDAs still circumvent competitive bidding, resorting to selective or direct procurement. Another limitation is that the Act primarily applies at the federal level, leaving procurement at state and local government levels largely unreformed, even though significant corruption occurs there. This shortcoming has constrained the overall effectiveness of the reform.

The Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP)

The Bureau of Public Procurement, established under the Act, is responsible for regulating and overseeing federal-level procurement. Acting as a watchdog, the BPP ensures that MDAs comply with procurement guidelines and promotes efficiency and transparency. Among its core responsibilities are issuing “No Objection” certificates for contract awards, maintaining a database of contractors, and providing training to procurement officials (Eze, 2020).

The BPP has achieved some notable successes. Its “No Objection” process has reduced inflated contracts and enforced greater due diligence in decision-making. Transparency International (2023) reports that the Bureau has saved Nigeria billions of naira by blocking overvalued projects and preventing fraudulent practices. It has also improved professionalism by developing standardized bidding documents, manuals, and guidelines, thereby creating more uniform practices across MDAs.

Nonetheless, the Bureau continues to face obstacles that hinder its effectiveness. Its independence is limited because it operates under the presidency, making it vulnerable to political influence (Ogbonna & Ukpere, 2022). In addition, the Bureau struggles with underfunding and inadequate staffing, which reduces its ability to monitor the large volume of contracts awarded annually. Collusion between officials and contractors, particularly in politically sensitive cases, further undermines its oversight role. Scholars such as Adetula (2023) argue that although the BPP has made meaningful contributions, its impact is constrained by weak governance structures and insufficient political will to enforce procurement laws strictly.

Thus, the Public Procurement Act of 2007 and the establishment of the Bureau of Public Procurement represent significant progress in reforming Nigeria’s procurement framework. These measures have provided a legal and institutional foundation for greater accountability, efficiency, and alignment with international standards. They have also generated cost savings and curbed some of the most blatant forms of procurement abuse.

However, their overall effectiveness remains mixed. Persistent weaknesses in enforcement, limited reach at the state and local levels, and political interference continue to undermine progress. As Afolabi and Oladapo (2022) suggest, procurement reforms cannot succeed in isolation; they must be supported by broader governance improvements, stronger anti-corruption institutions, and active citizen participation. Without addressing these structural weaknesses, procurement reforms will continue to fall short of achieving their intended impact.

Comparative Insights: Global Approaches to Tackling Procurement Corruption

Public procurement is a sector particularly vulnerable to corruption, which can erode public confidence and slow socio-economic development. Countries around the world have adopted various strategies to address procurement-related corruption, each shaped by their specific political, economic, and institutional circumstances. The following discussion examines several nations' approaches, highlighting notable successes and ongoing challenges.

United Kingdom: Strengthening Legal and Regulatory Measures

In the United Kingdom, efforts to combat procurement corruption have focused on improving legal and regulatory frameworks. The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act (ECCTA) of 2025 seeks to hold senior corporate managers accountable for misconduct, including bribery and fraud. This law complements existing anti-corruption legislation, such as the Bribery Act 2010, by extending responsibility to leaders within organizations. The UK's strategy emphasizes deterrence through strict penalties and the cultivation of a compliance-oriented culture in both public and private sectors (Reuters, 2025).

United States: Global Enforcement and Corporate Responsibility

The United States employs an extraterritorial approach in tackling procurement corruption, mainly through the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). This legislation prohibits U.S. companies, as well as their foreign subsidiaries, from bribing foreign officials. The Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission actively pursue violations, often imposing substantial fines and penalties. This strategy demonstrates the importance of holding corporations accountable while highlighting the international reach of anti-corruption efforts (Reuters, 2025).

Ukraine: Digital Platforms to Enhance Transparency

Ukraine has made significant strides in public procurement transparency through the ProZorro electronic platform, launched in 2016. By moving all procurement activities online, ProZorro allows the public to access procurement information, reducing opportunities for illicit dealings. The system has been credited with fostering competition, lowering procurement costs, and increasing public trust. Despite its successes, continuous oversight and strong political commitment remain essential for sustaining the system's integrity (Transparency International, 2025).

Malaysia: Legislative Standardization of Procurement Processes

In August 2025, Malaysia enacted the Government Procurement Bill to unify procurement procedures across federal and local government agencies. The legislation aims to curtail rent-seeking and subcontracting abuses by establishing standardized procedures and reducing ambiguous interpretations. While the bill has the potential to significantly limit corruption, concerns exist regarding excessive ministerial discretion, which could undermine its effectiveness if not carefully monitored (Reuters, 2025).

Rwanda and Georgia: Transparency as a Corruption Deterrent

Rwanda and Georgia have leveraged transparency to fight procurement corruption. Both countries have implemented policies making procurement processes more open and accessible, thereby reducing corruption risks. Rwanda's use of online procurement platforms and publication of data has strengthened accountability, while Georgia's reforms have led to measurable declines in corruption, demonstrating the positive impact of transparency on governance (World Bank, 2025).

Chile: Pioneering Government-Wide E-Procurement

Chile was among the first countries to implement a nationwide electronic procurement system through ChileCompra. The initiative standardized bidding processes, published tender opportunities, and maintained publicly accessible transaction records. These reforms reduced opportunities for covert deals, increased competition, and provided clearer audit trails. Chile's experience illustrates how an early, comprehensive e-procurement rollout can foster a culture of transparency and establish a strong foundation for subsequent anti-corruption measures (World Bank, 2025).

South Korea: Unified E-Procurement System and Capacity Development

South Korea's KONEPS (Korea Online E-Procurement System) serves as a centralized digital platform covering most government procurement activities. The system does more than just post tenders; it streamlines bid submission, publishes results, manages contracts, and integrates payment processes, thereby minimizing points of discretionary decision-making. In addition to the technology, the Korean approach includes ongoing training for both procurement officials and suppliers, ensuring effective usage and trust in the system. Evidence from Korea shows that combining a robust, interoperable digital infrastructure with professional development significantly enhances the anti-corruption impact of e-procurement (Public Procurement Service, Republic of Korea, 2023).

Thus, addressing procurement corruption requires a multifaceted strategy that considers each country's unique context. While digital platforms and legal reforms have proven effective, their success depends on political will, institutional capacity, and active public participation. As nations refine their approaches, sharing best practices and lessons learned will be critical to developing a more transparent and accountable global procurement system.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Public Accountability Theory, which is primarily attributed to Mark Bovens. He significantly developed and systematized the concept within the field of public administration and governance. In his seminal 2007 work, Bovens described accountability as a relationship between an actor and a forum, where the actor is required to provide explanations and justify actions, while the forum has the authority to ask questions and evaluate the actor's conduct (Bovens, 2007).

Public Accountability Theory focuses on the duty of public officials and institutions to explain and justify their actions to relevant oversight bodies, stakeholders, and the public. Central to the theory is the idea of relational accountability, where an actor, such as a government agency, civil servant, or elected representative, is required to provide clear and transparent information about decisions and conduct. This accountability relationship involves a forum, which may include legislative committees, regulatory bodies, the media, or citizens, that has the authority to question, evaluate, and judge the actor's performance.

The theory emphasizes that accountability goes beyond mere compliance with regulations; it also encompasses responsiveness, openness, and the ethical justification of decisions. Effective accountability mechanisms are seen as enhancing public trust, reducing corruption risks, and improving governance outcomes. The theory further acknowledges the importance of institutional and procedural arrangements, such as reporting frameworks, audits, and performance evaluations, in strengthening accountability. It also highlights that accountability is an ongoing process that requires continuous oversight, feedback, and adjustment to ensure that public actors act in the best interest of society. By presenting accountability as a reciprocal relationship, the theory offers a framework for understanding how public organizations can be held responsible and how oversight entities or citizens can actively influence governance practices. This conceptual approach is widely applied in research on transparency, anti-corruption efforts, and public sector effectiveness in various political and administrative contexts (Bovens, 2007; Mulgan, 2000; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

Applying Public Accountability Theory to corruption in Nigeria's public procurement sector offers a valuable framework for examining how the presence or absence of accountability mechanisms influences procurement practices. The theory asserts that public officials and agencies have a responsibility to explain and justify their actions to oversight bodies, stakeholders, and the wider public. In Nigeria, procurement processes are frequently affected by irregularities such as bribery, favoritism, bid manipulation, and inflated contract awards, often stemming from weak enforcement of accountability, limited transparency, and insufficient oversight by regulatory institutions.

Based on the principles of the theory, enhancing transparency, strengthening reporting systems, and reinforcing institutional oversight can help reduce opportunities for corrupt behavior. For instance, requiring procurement officials to publicly disclose tender processes, provide justifications for contract awards, and be subject to scrutiny by independent regulatory bodies can mitigate corruption risks. The theory also emphasizes the critical role of forums, including anti-corruption agencies, legislative committees, auditors, civil society organizations, and the media, in questioning and assessing the actions of procurement actors. Empowering these oversight bodies strengthens the checks and balances necessary to ensure proper use of public resources.

Moreover, the theory highlights that accountability is an ongoing process that necessitates continuous monitoring, feedback, and adjustment. In the Nigerian context, implementing digital procurement systems, enforcing rigorous reporting requirements, and conducting regular audits can operationalize this dynamic form of accountability, reducing the likelihood of undetected corrupt practices. By framing procurement corruption as a breakdown of accountability, the

theory underscores that effective reform requires both capacity-building within institutions and active involvement of external oversight actors, including citizens. In this way, Public Accountability Theory provides a conceptual tool for analyzing and addressing corruption in Nigerian public procurement, connecting governance, transparency, and ethical responsibility in a practical and actionable manner.

Empirical Review

Corruption has persistently undermined public procurement in Nigeria, reducing efficiency and compromising the integrity of public expenditures. Although the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007 was designed to standardize procurement procedures and promote accountability, numerous challenges remain. Research shows that fraudulent activities, including contract inflation, embezzlement, and collusion between officials and contractors, are still widespread. A notable example is the arms procurement scandal, in which over \$2 billion intended for military equipment was misappropriated, revealing significant structural weaknesses in the procurement system (Ifejika, 2024).

At the subnational level, innovations such as e-tendering in Kaduna and Ekiti states have demonstrated potential in improving transparency. Nevertheless, inconsistent application and political interference limit the effectiveness of these reforms. Additionally, the failure to establish a fully operational Procurement Council, as stipulated in the PPA, continues to constrain oversight and accountability mechanisms (World Bank, 2020).

Empirical studies further highlight the persistence of corrupt practices in Nigeria's procurement system. Despite existing legal frameworks, fraudulent practices remain pervasive, indicating that current reforms have not fully addressed the underlying causes of corruption (Ifejika, 2018). Procurement-related corruption is a global concern, particularly in developing economies. Studies estimate that approximately 8% of procurement contract values, equivalent to around \$880 billion annually, are lost to corrupt practices, demonstrating the scale and impact of the problem worldwide (World Bank, 2020).

To address these challenges, several countries have implemented targeted measures. Ukraine's ProZorro system, a digital public procurement platform, has been recognized for enhancing transparency and minimizing opportunities for corruption. Its success is largely attributed to open data policies and competitive bidding mechanisms, which have generated cost savings and increased public confidence (WIRED, 2018). Similarly, the United Kingdom has faced scrutiny over procurement links to offshore tax havens. Research indicates that between 2014 and 2019, approximately one in six public procurement contracts were connected to companies registered in tax havens, raising serious concerns regarding transparency and accountability (The Guardian, 2022).

These international experiences emphasize the importance of transparency, digitalization, and robust oversight in curbing procurement corruption. While Nigeria has made some progress through legislative reforms, the persistence of corrupt practices underscores the need for more consistent and effective implementation of anti-corruption measures.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is well-suited for investigating the characteristics, causes, and dynamics of corruption in Nigeria's public procurement system. The qualitative approach facilitates a detailed exploration of complex social issues by analyzing existing literature, reports, and documented experiences, rather than relying solely on quantitative data. This design is particularly effective for examining corrupt practices, policy frameworks, and reform measures within procurement systems, as it provides rich, contextual insights from both local and international perspectives.

The study utilized secondary data sources exclusively. These comprised scholarly articles, government publications, policy reports, institutional records, and credible online resources. The use of secondary data enabled the researchers to access a wide spectrum of information, including historical trends, case studies, and prior empirical findings on procurement corruption in Nigeria and other countries. This approach also supported comparative analysis, allowing the study to draw lessons from global anti-corruption initiatives.

Data were analyzed using content analysis, a method that systematically examines textual and documentary information to identify recurring themes, patterns, and trends related to procurement corruption. Through this technique, the study classified information on types of corrupt practices, institutional vulnerabilities, reform strategies, and the effectiveness of policy interventions. Thematic interpretation was then applied to synthesize the findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of how corruption impacts public procurement and the extent to which reforms have been successful. By integrating qualitative design, secondary data, and content analysis, this methodology offered a thorough and nuanced investigation of procurement corruption, yielding both descriptive and analytical insights that are valuable for policy formulation and practical applications.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored corruption in Nigeria's public procurement system, focusing on its characteristics, underlying causes, patterns, and the effectiveness of reform efforts. Analysis of secondary sources revealed that, despite the enactment of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007 and other reform measures, corruption remains deeply entrenched in the procurement process. The study found that practices such as contract inflation, embezzlement, bid rigging, and collusion between officials and contractors continue to compromise transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency. Notable cases, such as the arms procurement scandal, illustrated how substantial funds allocated for public projects can be diverted, exposing systemic weaknesses and oversight deficiencies.

At the state level, initiatives like e-tendering in Kaduna and Ekiti states have shown some potential in promoting transparency. However, the effectiveness of these reforms has been limited by uneven implementation, political interference, and the absence of fully functional procurement councils. Globally, procurement corruption remains a significant concern, especially in developing countries. Comparative studies indicate that countries successfully mitigating procurement corruption typically integrate digital platforms, strong regulatory

oversight, strict legal enforcement, and open data policies. For example, Ukraine's ProZorro digital procurement system has improved transparency and fostered competitive bidding, whereas experiences in the United Kingdom underscore the risks associated with procurement linked to offshore tax havens.

The findings underscore a clear connection between procurement processes and corruption. Weak regulations, inadequate monitoring, and institutional inefficiencies create opportunities for corrupt practices, undermining public trust and reducing the value of government expenditures. Strengthening procurement procedures, enhancing transparency, and promoting accountability are therefore essential to minimizing corruption and improving public service delivery. Corruption in procurement is not merely the result of individual wrongdoing but reflects broader systemic weaknesses that demand comprehensive, multi-dimensional interventions.

In conclusion, effectively addressing procurement corruption in Nigeria requires a combination of legal reforms, institutional strengthening, digital innovations, and active citizen engagement. By adopting these measures and encouraging continued research, policymakers and practitioners can improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public procurement, thereby supporting good governance and fostering sustainable development. Based on the study's findings, the following policy recommendations are proposed to improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency in Nigeria's public procurement system:

- i. The Nigerian government should strengthen oversight institutions by fully constituting the Procurement Councils at the federal and state levels and empowering them to monitor procurement activities, detect irregularities, and sanction offenders consistently.
- ii. The Nigerian government should implement digital procurement platforms nationwide to provide open access to procurement data, facilitate competitive bidding, and minimize opportunities for corruption by reducing human discretion in contract awards.
- iii. The Nigerian government should enhance transparency and accountability by publicly disclosing procurement plans, contract awards, and performance reports, while institutionalizing regular independent audits and citizen engagement initiatives to build public confidence.
- iv. Future studies should adopt mixed-method approaches to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data on procurement corruption in Nigeria. Researchers should evaluate the impact of specific e-procurement platforms, examine the role of political influence in contract allocation, and assess the effectiveness of citizen monitoring initiatives. Comparative studies with other developing and developed economies should be conducted to provide valuable insights for enhancing procurement governance.
- v. Additionally, future research should investigate the social and economic consequences of procurement corruption on public service delivery. Such studies should generate a more comprehensive understanding of how corruption affects governance, service efficiency, and public trust, thereby offering evidence-based recommendations for policy and institutional reforms.

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