
Evaluating Procurement Management Practices During COVID 19 Pandemic at The Ghanaian Public Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the components of Procurement Management Practices (PMPs) that exist at the public hospitals in Ghana. These components include people; processes; and records. Its goal was to investigate the extent to which people, process and record as an aspect of procurement management practices were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. A case study approach was used in this study to better understand PMPs in public hospitals. The Weija-Gbawe Municipal Hospital (WGMH) was used as the case for this study. The study's target population was members of the Ghanaian public hospital personnel. The participants in the study were chosen using a technique known as purposive sampling. An interview guide with open-ended questions was used to collect data as well as field notes. A thematic content analysis approach was used to analyze the collected data. According to the findings, people; processes; and records are the components of PMPs that exist at the Ghanaian public hospitals. This study referred to individuals involved in procurement activities as People in the PMPs, the processes are the actions undertaken at each stage of the procurement activities, while the records are the various documents about the pre-tendering, tendering, and contracts involved in the PMPs. The findings provide contributions to the field of public procurement. The study emphasizes the importance of the components of the PMPs at the Ghanaian public hospital. The issues identified in this study can be used in other contexts to help develop policies to help mitigate the impacts brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in their procurement activities.

Keywords— Coronavirus, COVID-19, Procurement Management Practices, Weija-Gbawe Municipal Hospital

1. Introduction

Many nations have requested emergency support and assistance from the World Bank as the number of coronaviruses (COVID-19) cases continues to rise dramatically. Medical supplies, such as masks, gowns, respirators, hospital beds, ventilators, oxygen cylinders, and ambulances, must be procured quickly. The same can be said for consulting services to promote public awareness and build a laboratory and medical protocols, especially since many hospitals lack the ability and internal organization required to avoid intra-hospital infection [1].

There are many challenges posed by this outbreak. One of these is the state of the supply and workforce markets, both of which are critical for containing and combating the pandemic. Goods and services are in short supply, and prices are rising as demand far outstrips supply around the world. Under normal conditions, the global market self-regulates. Countries all around the world are becoming increasingly concerned about measures to mitigate losses caused by inefficient procurement management practices (PMPs), particularly in the public sector [2]. As a result of their involvement, not just as regulators, but also as customers and significant purchasers with the potential to influence market decisions, governments around the world have more or less become active stakeholders in the market economy [3]. Again, governments in both developed and developing countries may be considered the largest buyer or procurers of goods and or services. According to Jebet (2014), public institutions have always been big purchasers, dealing with huge budgets'. Mutangili (2019), also reiterated that public procurement represents 18.42% of the world GDP.

Procurement management practices mainly entail the strategies followed when making procurement decisions [6]. Procurement practices are described as the process of obtaining goods and services for

a firm, based on set policies governing the selection of products, suppliers and methods aimed at utilizing sound business methods which maximize the value of an organization [2]. An effective procurement procedure guarantees that the proper drug is procured in the recommended quantities at the right time [7]. It should also be perfect for prescribing medications to patients for a variety of conditions at reasonable prices and with recognizable standards. From the identification of the demand to the completion of the product, public procurement should highlight the proper use of public funds to fulfill the public goal [7].

The PMPS refers to firms identifying and implementing certain measures to ensure they can acquire products and services to meet their needs and reach their goals. The PMPs are critical since it has a direct impact on how much revenue a business can save. When businesses evaluate their procurement process regularly, they can be sure that their objectives are being met. When the process isn't working as it should or when business problems arise, changes might be made. The three components that form the PMPs. These include people; processes; and records. People in the PMPs refer to the individuals or persons involved in the process. The number of persons involved in the procurement process is determined by the sale of the product and the number of orders placed. Procurement management personnel are few in a small business. Each stage of the procurement process is overseen by an entire staff in larger organizations. In addition, when the things being ordered are of low value, the number of approvals is lower. However, for high-value or critical procurements, the buy requisition receives a higher degree of approval in the management order [8].

Processes are the activities performed at each stage of the procurement procedures. To function effectively, the PMPs must be well-designed and coordinated. When a procurement department is chaotic, it leads to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the overall process, which can lead to delays and problems with purchases and payments. Transparency in the process ensures that no corruption or manipulation occurs at any point during the process. All documents pertinent to the pre-tendering, tendering, and contracts involved in the PMPs are referred to as records. It is critical to retain records at every stage of the purchase process. Even though practically every step of the process has been digitized, both the buyer and the seller benefit from the efficient capture of all information at each level, as well as the coordination and comparison of all relevant records at each stage [8].

Cost savings have been the main purpose of public procurement which directly has a great impact on the total expenditure of public institutions. Procurement has gained popularity among the stakeholders such as; the media, civil society, donors, researchers, and academicians among others due to its obligations towards the citizenry through the acquisition of goods and services works among others. Therefore, procurement has become a great business, for which the government remains the largest institution undertaking large-scale procurement in most countries. Procurement within the public service ranges from the smallest consumables to multi-million projects that are often geared towards the satisfaction of the basic needs of society. For instance, there has been a growing perception of waste and leakage in government spending through procurement in the public sector, forcing the government to develop a strong interest in closely monitoring the procurement procedures of Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in recent years, such as the Public Procurement Act 663 was passed in August 2003. Also, according to a 2009 assessment by the Public Procurement Authority, the government loses a considerable percentage of its annual budget due to inadequate procurement practices in most government agencies.

In support of this view, some procurement experts were also of the view that even though there is a substantial total value associated with public sector purchases, much research has not been undertaken to assess the public procurement systems, especially in the public health institutions for possible improvement [9]. This calls for an investigation into the extent to which this assertion applies to the current procurement practices in the Ghanaian public hospitals, especially during the period of the COVID 19 pandemic. Proper procurement procedures are required to ensure that investments are kept in good working order, that their lifespan is extended, that their use is safe, and that institutional performance is improved. This study, therefore, seeks to access the components of PMPs that exist at

the Ghanaian public hospitals. These components include people; processes; and records. This study focuses on the identified components of PMPs to provide answers to the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways do people as an aspect of procurement management practices affected by the COVID -19 pandemic at Ghanaian public hospitals?

RQ2: How has process as an aspect of procurement management practices affected by COVID -19 pandemic at Ghanaian public hospitals?

RQ3: To what extent has record as an aspect of procurement management practices affected by COVID -19 pandemic at Ghanaian public hospitals?

The outcome of the study would help to identify the key PMPs that provide policy directions and contribute to health services administration in developing economies such as Ghana by improving upon the inefficiencies in their hospital's procurement management practices. Additionally, this study would bring to the fore clarity on the quality of medicines that these hospitals procure and the extent to which procurement managers are suitably qualified to administer the PMPs. The findings of this study will also help government agencies and public procurement authority in a similar context builds strategies for ongoing PMPs in developing economy's healthcare settings. This study would also serve as a source of reference for researchers in conducting future research in this or similar field.

This study is organized as follows. Section 2 contains a thorough literature review as well as the research framework. The study's method, research strategy, sample design, data collection method, and analysis procedure are all discussed in Section 3. The fourth section elaborated on the findings and discussed them. Section 5, conclusion, summarizes the study's findings, including their implications for theory, policy, and practice, as well as limitations and recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review

A review of literature on the PMPs definition of concepts, benefits, PMPs cycle, components of PMPs as well as people's perception toward PMPs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The section looks at the issues confronting public procurement institutions when it comes to procuring goods and services. Finally, the principal-agent theory, the theory guiding the study is presented in this section.

2.1 Concept of Procurement Management Practices

Most institutions considered procurement to be a clerical, reactive, and expense center in the early 1970s. However, the situation has changed in recent years. According to [10], procurement has evolved into a strategic, proactive, value-adding, solution-providing business activity, which assists the organization with complicated challenges such as profitability, corporate growth, and competitive advantage. Globalization, shifting demographics, shifts in consumer demand, resource scarcity, environmental pressures, technological advancements, governmental regulation, and activism are all affecting markets, industries, and goods right now [11].

[12], defined procurement as the purchase of commodities and/or services at the lowest possible total cost of ownership, in the correct quantity and quality, at the right time and in the right place for the organization's direct or indirect benefit. According to [13], procurement is the process by which sector organizations buy goods and services from other parties. Public procurement covers a wide range of things that help the government do its job, from mundane to complex.

2.2 Benefits of Procurement

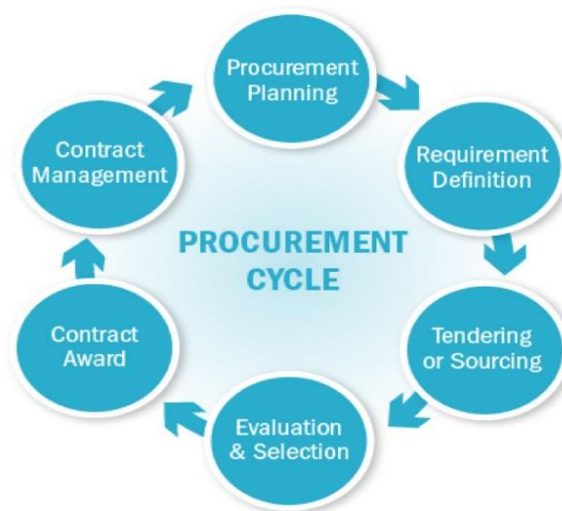
Implementing procurement methods results in lower operational and administrative costs and processing times for both governments and their vendor community, increased spending control and buying power, and improved vendor relations, as asserted by [14]. Because the procurement process entails extensive cost and value analysis [15], good PMPs can help your organization receive the best value for its money. Because suppliers and independent contractors are eager to continue doing business, a competent procurement unit at a firm may be able to negotiate better costs and value with them. PMPs verify that the quality of the goods or services being procured meets the company's criteria. PMPs safeguard businesses from substandard workmanship by contractors and service providers, as well as parts and equipment that break frequently or have limited lifespans [16]. PMPs

helps organization and institutions alleviate the stress of complex logistics involved in procurement activities [17], [18].

2.3 The Cycle of Procurement Management Practices

At every level of the PMPs, the cycle lays out the specific activities that influence the influx and outflow of goods and services, allowing for monitoring and evaluation of the entire process. As shown in figure 2.1, the PMPs cycle includes Planning (which specifies what should be included in the procurement planning process); sourcing (includes activities such as inviting potential suppliers to submit invitations to tender documents, preparing and issuing tender documents, requesting quotations or proposals, evaluating quotations or proposals and selecting the successful tenderer); contracting (characterized by an agreement between both parties and signing of a formal contract which is drawn considering the terms and conditions), contract administration, storing, distribution, disposal, and evaluation are all part of the commodities procurement cycle [19].

Figure 2.1: The Procurement Cycle



Source: [19]

2.4 Components of Procurement Management Practice

This study describes the process of obtaining goods and services for a firm, organization, or institution, based on set policies governing the selection of products, suppliers and methods aimed at utilizing sound business methods which maximize the value of an organization. Because each company has its own set of needs, it will go through a different procurement process than a company with similar requirements. Three components form the PMPs. These include people; processes; and records [8].

2.4.1 People as a Component of Procurement Management Practice

People in the PMPs refer to the individuals or persons involved in the process. The roles of people involved in the PMPs can include procurement analyst, procurement buyer, sourcing manager, purchasing agent, procurement specialist as well as purchasing manager [20]. Depending on the organization or firm, each stage of the PMPs is overseen by an entire staff in the organization or the institution. [8]. In directing procurement processes, procurement managers coordinate the activities of purchasing agents or buyers and ensure that different departments (accounting, receiving, operations, and the production floor) adhere to and are informed of procurement policies and procedures.

2.4.2 Processes as a Component of Procurement Management Practice

Processes are the activities performed at each stage of the procurement procedures. To function effectively, the PMPs must be well-designed and coordinated. When a procurement department is chaotic, it leads to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the overall process, which can lead to delays and problems with purchases and payments. Transparency in the process ensures that no corruption or manipulation occurs at any point during the process [8].

Managing the procurement of products, materials, goods and services effectively consists of establishing and following process steps through the entirety of the procurement lifecycle. Procurement processes can differ by organization, based on organization needs and business goals. The core key steps of procurement processes include (1) Specifying and planning; (2) Identifying and selecting suppliers; (3) Negotiating and contracting; (4) Placing the purchase order; (5) Expediting; (6) Receipt and inspection of purchase; (7) Invoice clearing and payment; (8) Maintaining records and relationships [20].

2.4.3 Records as a Component of Procurement Management Practice

Records in PMPs refer to all documents pertinent to the pre-tendering, tendering, and contracts involved in the PMPs. It is critical to retain records at every stage of the purchase process. In PMPs, for the payment to be made, all documents relating to the purchase order are studied. All the specifics of the original purchase order, receipt of items and the payment request invoice are compared to resolve any mismatches. In the PMPs, both the institution, referred to as the buyer, as well as the seller maintain their records for their auditing and taxation processes. The entire process should be under continual review to improve and settle any disputes that might have arisen. Records in PMPs also help re-evaluate the PMPs. Re-evaluation makes the procurement process more efficient and prevents the recurrence of disputes. Excellent record-keeping not only helps in the auditing of the records but also in the case of reordering the same items [8].

2.5 Empirical Review

Several studies on PMPs and their impact on organizational performance have been undertaken both globally and locally. [21], used the Ugandan economy to examine public procurement reform in developing nations, claiming that weak accountability assessment in public procurement was the main reason why service quality was compromised within the public sector. According to [22], people (suppliers) are motivated to do business with organizations that have effective contract units, where operations are simple, needs and deadlines are met, and costs are properly managed, resulting in improved operational performance. [23], argue that managing people such as suppliers is a crucial aspect of every organization's strategy. Having the correct information about these suppliers and their performance is critical to an organization's operational effectiveness.

According to [24], poor PMPs and planning are one of the biggest setbacks in public procurement, with demands that are not effectively defined and approximated unrealistic budgets, and deficiency of procurement personnel capabilities. [25], conducted a survey of state-owned businesses in Nairobi to show how PMPs affect performance. The study found that PMPs have a critical role in improving the profitability of productive businesses in Nairobi County. Furthermore, the study discovered a strong link between procurement methods and overall organizational performance. [26], investigated Guaranty Trust Bank to illustrate the impact of procurement methods on an organization and indicate the impact of procurement practices on organizational performance in the private sector. [27], investigated the impact of PMPs on global electronics procurement. They discovered that improving procurement methods is critical for smooth and effective procurement.

Records in PMPs are the documents that are collected and preserved for reference and auditing purposes at each stage of the procurement process flow [28]. A record of any kind is a valuable asset to any organization since it stores critical information for proper decision-making. Failure to comply with procurement rules, fragmentation of procurement files, and the preservation of informal records, all of which impede the successful PMPs, are examples of record-keeping flaws [29]. According to [30], record management in the PMPs is founded on the assumption that records must be managed from creation through preservation and disposal to preserve an organization's history and operations. Government can use effective records management to document procurement procedures, improve service delivery, and promote accountability and openness. In essence, solid records management is the bedrock on which any government may deliver services and meet its commitment of accountability to its constituents.

[29], conducted a study on the challenges affecting procurement record management practices in the Kenyan public procuring entities focusing on top management support, training, technology and

records management policy as factors influencing records management. The study also revealed that there was little indication of management support for record management activities. The study again indicated that the involvement of the institution's top management in the public procurement record keeping is vital. As a result, procurement entities lack effective record management when record managers are not given the required authority to enforce adequate record management standards. These are clear indications that people, processes and records are key components of PMPs when organizations intend to improve upon their overall performance levels.

2.6 People Perception on Procurement Management Practices during COVID 19 Pandemic

The Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) has highlighted the importance of PMPs as the lifeblood of our economy and society [31]. Because of the disruptions produced by the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent global lockdown, societies and companies all around the world have faced unprecedented problems. Individuals, for example, have dealt with a variety of life changes, ranging from self-isolation to issues stocking up on necessities. Due to the slowdown in trade, some firms, have failed to survive, while others, such as farms, retailers, third-party logistics, and members of healthcare procurement management, have had to work hard to meet the needs of the population [32]. However, traditional research paradigms fail to keep up with the pace of the current epidemic and economic developments, and thus there is still little empirical evidence on how the coronavirus pandemic impacts PMPs.

The pandemic of COVID-19 has caused considerable changes in the way economies operate, notably in public procurement. To begin with, governments have been rushing to get enormous amounts of products and services, such as hospital equipment, medical ventilators, hand sanitizers, and face masks, to fulfill the health sector's immediate needs. Many countries have implemented PMPs legislation that enables the use of specific procurement methods. Without resorting to long normal procurement procedures, such provisions allow for the necessary commodities to be bought directly from vendors or through a pre-approved list. This could raise the danger of acquiring services and items that don't fulfill quality standards, jeopardizing the integrity of the process. Furthermore, while fraud and corruption concerns are always present in PMPs, they are significantly increased during emergency procurement processes. The COVID-19 pandemic's health crisis necessitates a swift and deliberate response, as well as flexibility, to meet the rising demand for goods and services while certain supply chains are interrupted. Countries are exchanging expertise in the domain of PMPs during the pandemic in an attempt to combine their efforts in the battle against the global threat [33].

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the principal-agent theory. The principal-agent theory examines how the agent's decisions are responsive to the principal's aims, as well as how this responsiveness is mediated by the actions available to each actor and the institutional settings in which they interact [34].

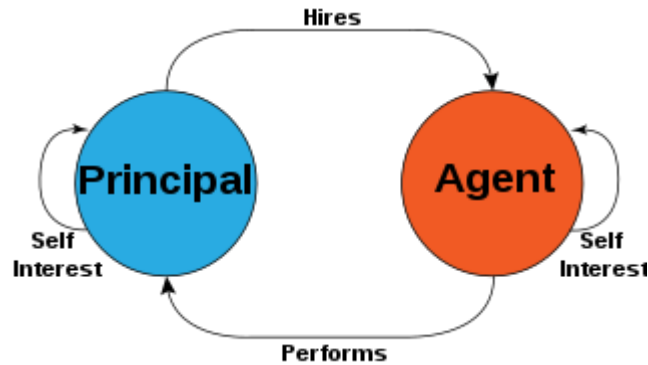
2.7.1 Principal-Agent Theory

Numerous studies have contributed to the literature on principal-agent theory. Some of these include [35]; [34]; [36]; [37]; [38]; [39]; [40]; [41]; [42]; [43]; [44]; and [45]. Several authors based their contribution to the literature primarily on the relationship between the principal and the agent. The principal-agent theory focuses on the interaction between the principal and the agent, who are the key actors. The agent acts and makes decisions on behalf of the principal [39], [43]–[45]. Agents are required by law to act in the best interests of the principal. If you fail to fulfill this obligation, legal action may be taken against you [34].

A principal-agent relationship can exist within the same organization, as in the instance of a tender committee manager and a procurement officer. The principal-agent relationship in this study might also be between two separate firms, such as the relationship between the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and the Ghanaian Public Hospitals. The agent acts as the principal's representative and makes decisions on his or her behalf [39], [43]. Agents have legal obligations to act in the principal's best interests. If this responsibility is not fulfilled, legal action may be taken against you [46]. A principal-agent relationship can exist within the same organization, as in the case of a tender committee manager and a procurement officer. The principal-agent relationship can also be between two

different firms, such as the Ghanaian Ministry of Health (MOH) and the GHS relationship, or the Ghanaian Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ghanaian Public Procurement Authority (PPA) relationship.

Figure 2. 2: The Principal-agent Theory



Source: [35]

Information asymmetry occurs when a principal engages an agent with incomplete information, while the agent, on the other hand, may have information that the principal does not. According to [47] and [48], agents have a predisposition to pursue their interests at the expense of the principal. The problem of information asymmetry arises because the agent has access to private information that is important to a potential transaction but is unknown to the principal, putting the primary at a disadvantage [49]. To apply the principal-agent theory in this study, the GHS is the principal in this study, having delegated decision-making and procurement functions to the Ghanaian public hospitals, as well as the enforcement of the Public Procurement Act to the Public Procurement Authority. The Ghanaian MOH through the GHS has given the Ghanaian public hospitals the authority to offer health services to the people of Ghana and also make decisions affecting the services they offer of which procurement is an aspect. In the context of the principal-agency theory, Ghanaian hospitals act in the best interest of the GHS which is the principal and therefore is accountable to the Ghanaian MOH through GHS.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach to achieve its goals. This study also employs a case study approach to better understand PMPs in Ghanaian public hospitals. [50] argued that a case study is an empirical investigation into a phenomenon in its real-world environment, particularly when the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are indistinct. This design was chosen to gain a supple understanding of the context of components of PMPs from participants' perspectives and life experiences. The case study also aided in gaining a comprehensive description of the Ghanaian public hospitals' PMPs.

A Ghanaian public hospital known as WGMH was used as the case for this study. The study's target population was members of the WGMH personnel. The participants in the study were chosen using a technique known as purposive sampling. The sample size for this study was solely determined by the criteria in terms of procurement procedures. These participants include the clinical director, head of pharmaceutical Services, deputy head for Nursing Services, head of administration and support Services, head of finance and accounts services, internal auditor, medical director, the head of procurement and a representative of the district health directorate. This made it possible for the researchers to attain detailed, in-depth information from the respondents' individual experiences and the circumstances that exist at a specific moment in the investigation. Initially, the plan was to interview the head of the procurement, tender committee and all 11 members of the procurement unit, but only 6 members were interviewed including the head of the procurement unit and the head of the tender committee. The tender committee respondents include the medical director, deputy head of

nursing services, head of pharmaceutical services, head of administration and support services, head of finance and accounts services, and head of procurement.

An interview guide with open-ended questions as well as field notes was used as the data gathering tool to collect data in this study. The interview guide was designed to collect respondents' demographic data, components of PMPs that exist in the WGMH and how those components were affected during the COVID 19 pandemic. Face-to-face one-on-one interviews were conducted, with one participant receiving a telephone interview because he was unable to grant the interview during working hours as a result of his hectic schedule. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings from the field of investigation are presented in this section. The discussions and data analysis in this study was guided by the key issues that corresponded to the study's objectives.

4.1 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Females participated in the study in greater numbers than males. A total of four (4) females made up 57% of the total, while three (3) males made up 43%. The majority of the participants in the study were between the ages of forty-six (46) and sixty (60) years. Four (4) respondents (57%) were between the ages of thirty-one (31) and forty-five (45), with the remaining three respondents (43%) being between the ages of forty-six (46) and sixty (60) years. The research participants' educational level is also significant in describing how they view the issue of procurement. All of the respondents had obtained tertiary education, according to the data. None of the study participants had a certificate lower than a tertiary level. This demonstrates that the hospital has a well-educated workforce, which benefits from their knowledge of work procedures and their ability to provide high-quality service. In terms of length of experience, 71% of respondents had between one to five years of experience, while the remaining two (2) respondents had six to ten years of experience, accounting for 29% of the total. This shows that the majority of the study participants have worked at the hospital for a long time and are familiar with its PMPs.

4.2 Components of Procurement Management Practices in the Ghanaian Public Hospital

The purpose of this study is to access the components of PMPs that exist at Ghanaian public hospitals. According to the findings, people; processes; and records are the components of PMPs that exist at the Ghanaian public hospitals. Again, the findings indicate that the hospital abides by Act 663 (Act, 2003) and Act 914, which govern public procurement (Act, 2016). Based on these requirements, the hospitals have developed procedures for their procurement activities. The procedures include (1) identification of needs, (2) Source for quotation, (3) Evaluation and Selection, and (4) supply of items. *“There are different components of procurement management practices employed by different institutions. The components of procurement management practices in this hospital are people, process and records. Also, because procurement in the hospital is governed by laws and regulations, we cannot use techniques or methods that differ from those provided by the Public Procurement Act of 2003, as amended by Act 914 of 2016. As a result, the procedures we've devised are compliant with the procurement Act's requirements. People in the Procurement Management Practices are the individuals or the staff involved in the procurement activities. The processes are the various activities such as identification of needs, Source for quotation, selection and evaluation among others performed at each stage of the procurement procedures. While the records are the several documents about the pre-tendering, tendering, and contracts involved in the Procurement Management Practices”.* Administrative staff

4.3 People as a Component of Procurement Management Practices

People in PMPs are the individual stakeholders responsible for different stages of the procurement process. The creation of the contract, invoice approval, and other duties are among their responsibilities. Procurement officers, professionals or specialists, purchasers, or supply managers are all terms used to describe people who conduct procurement on behalf of an organization or an institution.

“The members of the procurement management team in the WGMS are the head of procurement management, budget owners, finance teams, legal professionals, senior management, procurement analyst as well as purchasing manager. All these members have obtained tertiary education and their level of experience ranges between 2 to 6 years. Other are stakeholders involved in the PMPs of the hospital are suppliers, vendors and other partners”. Head of the procurement unit

4.3.1 Impact of COVID 19 pandemic on People as a Component of PMPs

The shock of the COVID-19 outbreak has had a significant impact on Ghanaian businesses, compelling many to cut costs by reducing staff hours, lowering wages, and even laying off workers [51]. Due to global procurement disruptions, manufacturers and distributors as well as health service providers have found it difficult to replace or replenish their procurement, equipment, and machinery. Importers and exporters have also found it difficult to deliver or bring goods across most international borders, since seaports, which are the principal route for international trade, have been hampered by regulations and the slowdown of major trading partner's industrial operations. COVID-19 also affected the people involved in the PMPs at the Ghanaian public hospitals.

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors at the Weija-Gbawe Municipal Hospital and other public hospitals had a lot of difficulty at work. I was working in the child health department when the news of the pandemic hit. Everything seemed frightening at the time. We worked with some of the sickest kids in the hospital, managing one of the few pediatric oncology wards at a time when we didn't know much about COVID-19's effects on kids. Fear was the dominant emotion throughout this time. Fearing that the pandemic would spread, colleagues sent their young children to live with their parents and other relatives. Colleagues in the high-risk category went above and above. We had to ration masks, sometimes stretching one out over ten days. To go to work, we had to drive through a series of roadblocks. Then there came the uncertainty. All of the information was new to us, and we had to learn a whole new system. We began to realize the dangers of our job from a whole new perspective”. Medical doctor

“During the pandemic, our nurses were more stressed, had fewer flow experiences, and were less satisfied with their work, life, work performance, and well-being during the pandemic than they were before it. Nurses' workload is increased as a result of the increased number of patients to care for, working hours were extended, and working on duties that we would not typically perform resulted in higher workplace stress. These difficulties encountered during the pandemic contribute to the emotional demands. Again, constant exposure to patients' deaths and suffering led to vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress”. A senior nurse

4.4 Processes as a Component of Procurement Management Practice

The actions carried out at each level of the procurement method are referred to as processes. The PMPs must be well-designed and coordinated to perform effectively [8]. Every company's procurement process is different. A major business, for example, will most certainly have a different procurement procedure than a small business that focuses on a specific product.

“Procurement processes in the WGMH are the various activities carried out by the procurement department and the tender committee unit to procure goods for the hospital. These activities are done in phases. In the first phase, we identify the needs followed by vendor selection and evaluation. We then contract negotiation as well as purchase requisition approval. When the purchase requisition is approved, a purchase order is created and forwarded to the vendor of the goods. Once a vendor receives the purchase order, they send an invoice along with prices and payment details back to the hospital. When received, the vendor will deliver the goods as assured according to the terms established in the contract. Once the goods are received, the procurement unit examines them and

confirms the delivery, a payment voucher is issued then finally we keep records to make it easier for the accounting team to see the full breakdown of spending by the vendor". A member of the procurement unit

4.4.1 Impact of COVID 19 pandemic on Procurement Processes as a Component of PMPs

The impact on procurement processes was and continues to be one of the most visible and direct effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. All the effects of the pandemics had an impact on procurement processes, from restrictions on people's movement and how commodities could be transported to the human influence of the virus, which made it more difficult for organizations, manufacturers as well as hospitals to deliver services. That notwithstanding, the hospital procurement processes were also affected.

"We encountered problems in our procurement processes as a result of COVID-19. The most obvious impact of COVID-19 on our procurement processes was that of supply. There were clear increases in demand for some products such as PPE's, drugs among others due to consumer concern about supply. This worsened real issues that were arising throughout the supply chain which led to actual supply stress. As a result, there was a virtuous cycle that worsened the condition". Head of the procurement unit

"Some issues that contributed to limited supply were related to misperception and a lack of understanding of the virus itself. This means that cross-border goods movements were halted due to the need to understand and apply safety precautions, as well as lockdown restrictions concerning trade before the flow of goods from the source, could continue". A medical doctor

"Additional impact on our procurement processes is that production in some companies was seriously affected and their activities were suspended because of the lockdown measures. This worsens competition among public agencies and incites chaotic market behavior. Many transactions took off-book, and the change in the price of goods was extreme, while some vendors demanded advance payments before the supply of medical items. These contribute to corruption, as buyers corrupt sellers to receive essential goods and services". Internal auditor

"The state of the market for supplies and workforce, which are both critical to the hospital's management, is one of the biggest challenges we faced during the pandemic. Goods and services were scarce, and prices were increasing as demand far exceeded supply across the country. Under normal conditions, the global market regulates itself. However, we are currently in an unprecedented scenario, with neither an automatic market correction nor a worldwide regulatory framework in place to address market failures". Administrative staff

4.5 Records as a Component of Procurement Management Practice

In PMPs, Records refer to all documents related to the pre-tendering, tendering, and contracts involved in the PMPs. At every level of the purchasing process, it is vital to keep records [8]. All these documents about the purchase order are examined to make the payment. The original purchase order, the item receipt, and the payment request invoice are all compared. Any discrepancies are rectified before payment is made. Both companies, the buyer and seller, keep records in the PMPs for their auditing and taxation processes.

"Procurement records in the hospital are the documents that contain information relating to procurement activities. These include a proposal request document, quotation request document, purchase order, and contract also known as purchase agreement document among others. Record keeping is very essential in our procurement management. At every level of the procurement process, we have to keep records of all the activities to help us maintain our records for auditing and taxation

processes and re-evaluate our procurement activities. Record keeping also improves and settles any disputes that may arise in the future”. A member of the procurement unit

4.5.1 Impact of COVID 19 pandemic on Procurement Record as a Component of PMPs

One of the most evident and direct repercussions of the global COVID-19 pandemic was and continues to be the influence on procurement records. COVID-19 restrictions restricting auditors and oversight organizations from checking procurement documents, it has had a direct impact on auditing and reviewing procurement records. Regardless, the hospital procurement records were also impacted.

“The COVID-19 impact on our procurement record was severe such that monitoring these records becomes a challenge. This is because many transactions took off-book, and the change in the price of goods was extreme, while some vendors demanded advance payments before the supply of medical items and other goods used in this hospital. The inability to monitor the hospital procurement records due to the impact brought by the pandemic, some buyers corrupt the sellers to receive essential goods and services contributing to corruption”. Internal auditor

5. Conclusion

The study accesses the components of PMPs that exist at the Ghanaian public hospitals. Unlike previous studies that looked at other aspects of PMPs, this study looked at the various components of PMPs. The study investigated the impacts of COVID-19 on the components of PMPs, thus, people; processes; and records. This study referred to individuals involved in procurement activities as people in the PMPs, this study also referred to processes in the PMPs as the actions undertaken at each stage of the procurement activities, while the records are the various documents about the pre-tendering, tendering, and contracts involved in the PMPs. These findings correspond with the explanation of [8], on the topic “A Complete Guide To Procurement Processes” which explains that people, processes, and records are the components of PMPs. The findings also revealed that the public hospitals in Ghana abide by Act 663 (Act, 2003) and Act 914, which govern public procurement (Act, 2016) of Ghana’s 1992 constitution.

This study also investigated the extent to which people as an aspect of procurement management practices were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic at the Ghanaian public hospitals. According to the findings, the people involved in the PMPs in the hospitals are the head of the procurement management unit, budget owners, finance teams, legal professionals, procurement analysts, and purchasing managers. Suppliers, vendors, and other partners are also involved in the PMPs of the public hospitals as revealed by the findings. The findings indicated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors at these public hospitals faced difficulty with the cost of discharging their duties. That notwithstanding, doctors and other members belonging to the PMPs have to drive through a series of roadblocks before they can go to work. All information regarding the pandemic was new to them, and they have to learn a whole new system. Other members of the hospital such as nurses were more stressed, had fewer flow experiences, and were less satisfied with their work, life, work performance, and well-being during the pandemic than they were before it. Nurses' workload increased as a result of the increased number of patients to care for, working hours were extended, and working on duties that they would not typically perform resulted in higher workplace stress. These difficulties encountered during the pandemic contribute to the emotional demands. Again, constant exposure to patients' deaths and suffering led to vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress for these nurses.

With regards to processes as a component of PMPs, this study evaluates how a process as an aspect of PMPs was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic at Ghanaian public hospitals. The findings revealed that procurement processes in the hospitals are the various activities carried out by the procurement department and the tender committee unit to procure goods for the hospital. The findings further revealed that these procurement activities are performed in phases. In the first phase, the

procurement team identifies the need to procure items for the hospital, followed by vendor selection and evaluation. Then contract negotiation as well as purchase requisition approval. After the approval of the purchase requisition, a purchase order is created and forwarded to the vendor of the goods. Once a vendor receives the purchase order, the vendor sends an invoice together with prices and payment details to the hospital. When received, the vendor delivers the goods as assured according to the terms established in the contract. Once the goods are received, the procurement unit will audit the goods and confirms the delivery, after, a payment voucher is issued then finally records are maintained to know the full breakdown of spending by the vendor. That notwithstanding, the hospitals faced challenges in their PMPs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 had the greatest visible impact on the hospital's procurement operations in terms of suppliers. According to the findings, there was a significant increase in demand for specific products, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), pharmaceuticals, and others, as a result of consumer worry over availability. This exacerbated real challenges that occurred across the supply chain, resulting in actual supply stress. The study further revealed that some vendors that supply the hospitals with goods were severely affected and their operations were suspended due to the lockdown measures. Goods and services were scarce, and prices were increasing as demand far exceeded supply across the country. Under normal conditions, the global market regulates itself. However, the hospitals went into an unprecedented scenario, with neither an automatic market correction nor a worldwide regulatory framework in place to address market failures.

The study again explores the extent to which record as an aspect of PMPs was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Ghanaian public hospitals. Procumbent records in these hospitals, according to the findings, are documents that contain procurement-related information. A proposal request document, a quotation request document, a purchase order, and a contract, also known as a purchase agreement document, are just a few of these procumbent records. The study further indicated that record keeping is very essential for the hospital's procurement management team. At every level of the purchasing process, the procurement unit must keep records of all the procurement activities. This helps the unit maintain records for auditing and taxation processes and also helps re-evaluate its procurement activities. Record keeping by the procurement unit also improves and settles any disputes that may arise in the future. The impact on procurement processes was and continues to be one of the most visible and immediate consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This has a direct impact on auditing and analyzing procurement records due to COVID-19 restrictions prohibiting auditors and oversight bodies from verifying procurement documents. Regardless, the procurement records at the hospitals were affected. The study again indicated that the impact on the procurement record was so severe that keeping track of it became challenging. This is because many transactions went off the books, the price of commodities surged dramatically, and some suppliers requested upfront payments before supplying medical supplies and other items to the hospital. The study revealed that due to the difficulty to monitor hospital procurement records as a result of the pandemic's impact. Some buyers bribe vendors to obtain essential products and services, adding to corruption.

5.1 Recommendation and Suggestions Future Research Direction

This study considered only respondents of the Ghanaian public hospitals; further study can be conducted to involve other key players in other developing economies to explore further updates on the impact of COVID-19 in the health sector. Again, future studies can be conducted to respond to the immediate challenges and risks posed by the COVID-19 on PMPs. Again, the empirical research was limited to a single case, making it difficult to extrapolate the results to other industries. Future studies should involve cross-industry surveys.

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