GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT PRACTICES AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE NIGERIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Public procurement is a critical driver of global economic activity and national development, yet in Nigeria, it remains plagued by systemic inefficiencies and financial leakages. This study evaluated the relationship between government procurement practices and financial accountability in the Nigerian public sector, focusing on Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in Lagos State. The study population consisted of 1200 staff drawn from procurement, finance, and internal audit departments. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 300 respondents was determined, out of which 291 valid responses were obtained and used for analysis. Adopting a descriptive survey research design, data were collected through a structured questionnaire. *The findings revealed that while there is high procedural compliance with the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007, a "compliance gap" persists with political interference often subverts the spirit of the law. Descriptive and inferential analyses demonstrated that electronic procurement (e-procurement) is an effective tool for structural transparency, significantly reducing physical contact and "ghost" contractor involvement. Hypothesis testing via simple linear regression at 0.05 level of significance confirmed that institutional oversight by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) is the most influential factor in preventing contract inflation and project abandonment ($r = 0.810$, $p < 0.05$). However, a significant "protection gap" exists, as competent professionals struggle to resist pressure to inflate project estimates. The study concludes that achieving total financial accountability requires a clear separation between political patronage and technical procurement processes, alongside stronger institutional independence for oversight bodies.*

Keywords: *Contract Inflation, E-procurement, Financial Accountability, Public Procurement, Value for Money.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public procurement practices are widely recognized as essential instruments for promoting transparency, efficiency, financial discipline, and accountability in governance systems. At a general level, public procurement provides the framework through which governments acquire goods, services, and public works needed for the delivery of development projects and public services. Because procurement accounts for a substantial share of public expenditure across many countries, its administration has become central to fiscal governance and public sector accountability. International development institutions and governance scholars have consistently linked effective procurement systems with reduced corruption, improved value for money, and stronger public trust in state institutions. In this regard, procurement frameworks are not merely administrative tools, but also critical mechanisms for ensuring that public resources are used responsibly and in accordance with established laws and procedures.

Narrowing the focus to Nigeria, public procurement remains one of the most sensitive and corruption-prone areas of public administration, as it has frequently been associated with inflated contracts, political favoritism, weak oversight, procurement fraud, project abandonment, and financial leakages. Despite the enactment of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) 2007 and the establishment of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) to regulate procurement processes, irregularities in contract awards and implementation continue to undermine financial accountability in the Nigerian public sector. These persistent weaknesses have serious developmental implications, as resources that should be directed toward critical sectors such as infrastructure, health, education, transportation, and public welfare are often lost through inefficiency, manipulation, and abuse of due process. The consequences are evident in delayed projects, poor quality service delivery, abandoned contracts, and declining public confidence in government institutions.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between public procurement practices and financial accountability in the Nigerian public sector. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the extent to which adherence to the Public Procurement Act (2007) influences transparency in contract awards, assess the impact of e-procurement adoption on the reduction of financial leakages and contract inflation in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), and identify the structural and political barriers that hinder the effectiveness of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) in enforcing financial discipline within the Nigerian public sector.

To guide the study, the following research questions are formulated:

i. To what degree does compliance with the competitive bidding requirements of the Public Procurement Act enhance financial accountability in Nigerian MDAs?
ii. How has the implementation of electronic procurement (e-procurement) affected the incidence of misappropriation and bribery in the public sector?
iii. What is the relationship between the level of professional competence of procurement officers and the accuracy of project cost estimations?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 The Legal and Regulatory Framework of Public Procurement

The Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007 represents a significant milestone in Nigeria's effort to institutionalize transparency, accountability, and due process in public financial management. The Act was designed to replace a largely discretionary procurement system with a rule based framework anchored on the principles of economy, efficiency, fairness, and transparency (Okonjo & Okeke, 2023). While this legislative framework appears robust on paper, its effectiveness is largely dependent on enforcement and institutional independence. Evidence suggests that many Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) comply with the formal requirements of the law but undermine its intent through practices such as contract splitting and selective tendering (Olatunji et al., 2021). Lack of autonomy of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) weakens the enforcement of the Act, as political interference often overrides technical decisions. This creates a situation where compliance becomes procedural rather than substantive. Thus, although the legal framework provides a strong foundation for financial accountability, its practical impact is constrained by weak enforcement mechanisms and the politicization of procurement processes.

2.1.2 The Concept of Competitive Bidding and Value for Money

Competitive bidding is widely regarded as the cornerstone of public procurement, particularly in achieving value for money (VfM). The concept goes beyond selecting the lowest bidder and emphasizes the optimal balance between cost, quality, and sustainability. In Nigeria, the issuance of the Certificate of No Objection by the BPP serves as a critical control mechanism to ensure that contracts are awarded based on merit (Umar & Sani, 2022).

However, the effectiveness of competitive bidding in practice remains questionable. While the process is formally adhered to in many cases, the integrity of bid evaluation is often compromised by inadequate technical expertise and external influence. Studies have shown that bypassing competitive bidding through direct labor or emergency procurement significantly increases the risk of financial leakages (Umar & Sani, 2022). Furthermore, the prevalence of "gold plating" in project proposals reflects a systemic weakness in cost evaluation, where procurement officers lack the capacity to detect inflated estimates (Eze & Nwankwo, 2024).

From a critical perspective, this suggests that competitive bidding alone cannot guarantee financial accountability. Without strong technical capacity, transparency, and enforcement, the process can be manipulated to serve vested interests. Therefore, strengthening institutional capacity and ensuring independent evaluation processes are essential for achieving true value for money in public procurement.

2.1.3 Electronic Procurement (e-GP) and Digital Accountability

The introduction of electronic procurement systems represents a major reform aimed at improving transparency and reducing corruption in Nigeria's procurement system. Platforms such as the

Nigeria Open Contracting Portal (NOCOPO) are designed to enhance visibility across the procurement lifecycle and reduce human interaction, which is often associated with bribery and kickbacks (Adebisi & Gbadamosi, 2023).

Despite these advantages, the implementation of e procurement faces significant challenges. Infrastructural constraints such as poor internet connectivity and unstable power supply limit the effectiveness of digital systems. In addition, resistance from civil servants accustomed to manual processes further slows adoption (Bello, 2021). This resistance is often driven by the desire to maintain opaque systems that allow for discretionary manipulation. While e-procurement improves transparency at the bidding stage, its impact on later stages such as contract execution remains limited. This creates a “transparency gap,” where digital systems address procedural issues but fail to eliminate deeper systemic corruption. Therefore, while e procurement is a necessary reform, it is not sufficient on its own to ensure comprehensive financial accountability.

2.1.4 Financial Accountability and the Role of GIFMIS

The Global Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) is a key tool for enhancing financial accountability in Nigeria’s public sector. By integrating budgeting, expenditure, and reporting processes, GIFMIS provides a digital trail for all government transactions, making it difficult to engage in unauthorized spending (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

However, a critical limitation of GIFMIS is its focus on financial tracking rather than outcome verification. While the system ensures that funds are spent according to budgetary provisions, it does not guarantee that projects are completed or meet required standards. This creates a disconnect between financial completion and physical delivery, as highlighted by Olawale and Adeniran (2025). This limitation reduces the effectiveness of GIFMIS as a comprehensive accountability tool. Financial accountability should encompass both the proper use of funds and the achievement of intended outcomes. Therefore, integrating GIFMIS with project monitoring systems is necessary to bridge this gap and ensure holistic accountability.

2.1.5 The Menace of Contract Inflation and Project Abandonment

Contract inflation and project abandonment are among the most visible manifestations of weak procurement systems in Nigeria. Infrastructure projects are often significantly overpriced, with costs far exceeding regional benchmarks (Jidere & Mohammed, 2023). This inflation is largely driven by a culture of kickbacks, where contractors factor bribes into their bids, thereby increasing project costs.

The consequence of inflated contracts is often project abandonment, as government resources become insufficient to complete projects. Daramola (2022) reports that thousands of projects across Nigeria remain incomplete, representing a significant waste of public funds.

These issues highlight systemic failures in procurement planning, monitoring, and enforcement. Existing frameworks have not effectively addressed the root causes of these problems, particularly corruption and weak oversight. Addressing contract inflation and project abandonment therefore requires not only stronger enforcement but also improved planning, transparency, and accountability mechanisms.

2.1.6 Internal Audit Mechanisms and Oversight Functions

Internal audit units are designed to serve as the first line of defense against financial irregularities in public procurement. Through pre-payment audits, auditors are expected to ensure compliance with procurement procedures before funds are disbursed. However, the effectiveness of internal audit in Nigeria is significantly limited by lack of independence and institutional support (Yahaya & Abubakar, 2024).

In many cases, auditors are unable to challenge irregularities due to hierarchical pressures and fear of retaliation. This undermines their ability to function as effective accountability agents. The role of the Office of the Auditor General is also constrained by limited enforcement powers, as it can only report irregularities without ensuring corrective action (Sanusi, 2021). Strengthening the independence and authority of audit institutions is essential for improving financial accountability. Without such reforms, internal audit mechanisms will continue to be ineffective in preventing procurement fraud.

2.1.7 The Professionalization of Procurement Officers

The professionalization of procurement personnel is a key reform aimed at improving procurement efficiency and accountability. Certification and training programs introduced by the BPP are intended to equip officers with the technical skills required for effective procurement management (Nnamdi & Chijoke, 2023). While these initiatives have improved technical competence, their impact is limited by the continued appointment of unqualified personnel to procurement roles. The use of “proxy officers” who lack the necessary expertise undermines the benefits of professionalization (Audu et al., 2025).

2.1.8 Transparency, Open Contracting, and Civil Society Oversight

The adoption of open contracting and increased involvement of civil society organizations represent significant steps toward enhancing transparency in public procurement. Platforms that provide access to procurement data enable citizens to monitor government spending and hold officials accountable (Akinsola, 2024).

However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is influenced by factors such as public awareness and access to information. In contexts where citizens lack the capacity to interpret procurement data, the impact of transparency initiatives may be limited. Transparency alone is insufficient to ensure accountability. It must be complemented by active civic engagement and institutional responsiveness. Without these, open contracting may not achieve its intended objectives.

2.1.9 The Impact of Political Interference on Procurement Integrity

Political interference remains the most significant challenge to procurement integrity in Nigeria. Procurement processes are often influenced by political considerations, leading to the selection of contractors based on patronage rather than competence (Kazeem & Yusuf, 2022).

This phenomenon, described as political capture, undermines competition and discourages qualified firms from participating in the bidding process. It also weakens the authority of regulatory institutions such as the BPP. Ogar (2023) argues that without institutional autonomy, procurement reforms will continue to be undermined by political interference. Addressing this challenge requires a clear separation between political and technical functions in procurement. Without such separation, efforts to improve financial accountability will remain limited.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Agency Theory

Agency Theory, propounded by Jensen and Meckling in (1976), provides a fundamental framework for understanding the relationship between government officials and citizens in the of public resource management. The theory explains the dynamics between principals, who are the citizens or the state, and agents, who are public officials entrusted with the responsibility of managing public resources, including procurement processes. The central concern of the theory is that agents may pursue personal interests that conflict with the objectives of the principals, thereby creating agency problems and increasing agency costs.

In relation to government procurement practices and financial accountability in the Nigerian public sector, Agency Theory is highly relevant because procurement officers and public officials often possess more information about contracts, bidding processes, and project execution than the general public. This information asymmetry creates opportunities for corrupt practices such as contract inflation, bid rigging, and diversion of funds. As a result, mechanisms such as the Public Procurement Act (2007), due process compliance, and digital systems like GIFMIS are designed to reduce these agency problems by enhancing transparency, monitoring, and accountability.

Furthermore, the theory underscores the importance of institutional controls, regulatory oversight, and auditing systems in ensuring that procurement agents act in the best interest of the public. In Nigeria weak enforcement of procurement regulations and limited transparency exacerbate agency conflicts, leading to poor financial accountability. Therefore, Agency Theory provides a strong explanatory basis for understanding how procurement irregularities arise and why strengthening monitoring mechanisms is essential for improving accountability in the public sector.

2.2.2 Stewardship Theory

Stewardship Theory, developed by Lex and Davis (1991), offers a contrasting perspective to Agency Theory by emphasizing trust, professionalism, and intrinsic motivation. The theory assumes that individuals, when properly guided and empowered, act as stewards whose goals are aligned with those of the organization or society. Rather than being driven by self interest, stewards are motivated by a sense of duty, ethical responsibility, and commitment to organizational success.

In government procurement practices and financial accountability in Nigeria, Stewardship Theory highlights the importance of professional ethics and competence among procurement officers. The theory suggests that financial accountability can be enhanced not only through strict monitoring but also through the development of a professional procurement workforce that values integrity, transparency, and value for money. This is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where the Bureau of Public Procurement emphasizes training, certification, and capacity building of procurement personnel.

The application of this theory implies that when procurement officers are adequately trained, fairly remunerated, and provided with a supportive institutional environment, they are more likely to act in the public interest. This reduces the likelihood of corrupt practices and enhances financial accountability. Therefore, Stewardship Theory complements Agency Theory by suggesting that strengthening ethical standards and professional identity within the procurement system is equally important as enforcing regulatory controls.

2.2.3 Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy Theory, advanced by Mark Suchman building on earlier contributions by Dowling and Pfeffer, focuses on the relationship between institutions and society. The theory posits that organizations, including governments, must operate within the bounds of societal norms, values, and expectations in order to maintain legitimacy. When there is a mismatch between public expectations and actual practices, a legitimacy gap emerges, which can lead to loss of trust and credibility.

This theory is particularly relevant to government procurement practices and financial accountability in the Nigerian public sector because procurement activities are highly visible indicators of how public funds are managed. When procurement processes are perceived as corrupt, opaque, or inefficient, public trust in government institutions declines. This undermines the legitimacy of the government and may result in reduced citizen cooperation, increased scrutiny, and diminished international credibility.

In response, the Nigerian government has introduced reforms such as e procurement systems and open contracting platforms to improve transparency and restore public confidence. These initiatives can be understood through the lens of Legitimacy Theory as efforts to demonstrate accountability, align with global best practices, and rebuild trust among citizens and international stakeholders. Thus, procurement practices serve not only administrative functions but also play a critical role in sustaining the legitimacy of the state.

2.3 Empirical Review

Adebisi and Gbadamosi (2023) conducted a study titled “Digitalization of the Public Sector: A Path to Transparency in Nigeria.” The study adopted a survey research design and utilized primary data collected through structured questionnaires. The study population comprised procurement officers in Federal Ministries in Abuja, while a sample size of 150 officers was selected for the study. The objective was to examine whether the transition from manual bidding to e tendering reduces procurement related fraud. Data were analyzed using correlation analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between the adoption of e procurement platforms and reduction in human interface bribery. However, the study also found that while e procurement enhanced transparency at the bidding stage, it had limited impact on the contract execution phase where diversion of funds still occurred. The study recommended strengthening monitoring mechanisms beyond the bidding stage to ensure full financial accountability.

Bamidele, Adedokun, and Oladapo (2020) examined the "Implementation of the Public Procurement Act in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions." The study employed a multi case study design and used interviews and document analysis as instruments of data collection. The study population consisted of federal tertiary institutions in Nigeria, while five federal universities were purposively selected as the sample. The objective was to assess the level of compliance with the PPA 2007 guidelines. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings indicated that while administrative compliance such as the establishment of Tenders Boards was high, value for money was low due to political interference in contract awards. The study concluded that procurement laws alone are insufficient for ensuring financial accountability without institutional independence and recommended strengthening the autonomy of internal auditors and procurement units.

Ibrahim, Mohammed, and Yusuf (2020) investigated the "Impact of the Global Integrated Financial Management Information System on Financial Accountability in Nigerian MDAs." The study adopted an ex post facto research design and relied on secondary data obtained from the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation covering the period 2015 to 2019. The study population comprised all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies in Nigeria that operate under the federal financial management system, while the sample was based on available financial records from selected MDAs within the study period. The objective was to determine the effect of GIFMIS on financial discipline.

Data were analyzed using regression analysis. The findings showed that the implementation of GIFMIS significantly reduced extra budgetary spending by enforcing budgetary controls. The study concluded that digital financial systems enhance accountability but warned that liabilities incurred outside the system still pose challenges. It recommended stricter enforcement and full integration of all financial activities into the system.

Nnamdi and Chijoke (2023) conducted a study titled "The Professionalization of Procurement and Its Impact on Project Cost Estimation in Nigeria." The study adopted a survey design and collected primary data through questionnaires. The study population comprised procurement personnel across the 36 states of the federation, while a sample size of 200 certified and non-certified procurement staff was selected.

The objective was to examine the effect of professional competence on procurement outcomes. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis. The findings revealed that agencies managed by certified procurement professionals experienced significantly fewer cost overruns compared to those managed by non-specialists. The study concluded that professional competence is a key determinant of financial accountability and recommended continuous training and certification of procurement personnel.

Akinsola (2024) examined “Social Audits and Community Led Monitoring of Constituency Projects in Nigeria.” The study adopted a qualitative research design and collected data through interviews. The study population included community stakeholders involved in constituency projects across the South West geopolitical zone, while the sample consisted of selected community leaders and civil society actors from the study area. The objective was to assess the role of external monitoring in improving project accountability. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that communities with access to open contracting information recorded a significant reduction in project abandonment. The study concluded that public participation and social accountability mechanisms are effective in reducing corruption and recommended increased transparency and community involvement in procurement monitoring.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect quantitative data from a specific population to describe the current state of procurement practices and their impact on financial accountability. By using a survey, the study can generalize findings from a sample of public servants and procurement experts to the broader Nigerian public sector.

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population for this study consists of the staff within the Procurement, Finance, and Internal Audit departments of selected Lagos State Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) located at the Alausa Secretariat, Ikeja. These individuals are chosen because they are the primary actors in the state's procurement value chain and possess first-hand knowledge of the state's financial accountability mechanisms.

The estimated total population across the selected MDAs is approximately 1,200 staff members. This figure is derived from the Lagos State Civil Service Commission Nominal Roll (2025) and administrative records from the Lagos State Public Procurement Agency (LSPPA). The population specifically targets the "Big Five" spending units in Lagos: The Ministries of Works & Infrastructure, Health, Education, Environment, and Transportation.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

To ensure the sample is representative, the study employs a stratified random sampling technique. The population is divided into strata based on their professional roles (Procurement, Finance, and Audit).

Taro Yamane formula was used for detecting the sample size. It states that:

$$N= \frac{N}{1+N(e)2}$$

Where N= Population size
e = significant level of error (0.05)
n= Sample size
For this research N= 1200
Therefore, the sample size:

$$n= \frac{\mathbf{1200}}{\mathbf{1+1200(0.05)2}}$$

$$= \frac{\mathbf{1200}}{\mathbf{4}}$$

= 300.

To ensure that the sample is representative, the study adopts a probability sampling technique without replacement, specifically stratified random sampling. This approach ensures that every member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected, while also preventing any respondent from being selected more than once.

3.4 Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled "Government Procurement and Financial Accountability Questionnaire (GPFAQ)." The instrument is divided into two sections: Section A: Demographic information of the respondents. Section B: Items measured on a 4-point Likert Scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) designed to measure the variables identified in the conceptual framework.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

The validity of the instrument was established through content and face validity. The questionnaire was developed based on the study objectives and relevant literature on public procurement and financial accountability. It was reviewed by experts in accounting and research methodology to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequate coverage of the study variables.

A pilot study was conducted at the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs with 30 respondents to test the suitability of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha to test internal consistency. The results showed coefficients of 0.81 for compliance with competitive bidding, 0.83 for e procurement implementation, and 0.79 for professional competence. The average reliability coefficient was 0.84. Since all values exceed 0.70, the instrument is considered reliable and suitable for the study.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Primary Data: Distributed via self-administered questionnaires (both physical copies and digital forms) to the sampled respondents.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Descriptive Statistics: Frequency tables, percentages, mean, and standard deviation will be used to analyze demographic data and the research questions.

Inferential Statistics: Simple Linear Regression and Pearson Correlation Analysis will be used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Regression analysis is particularly useful here to determine how much variance in "Financial Accountability" can be explained by "Procurement Practices."

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Analysis of Research Questions

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.5 (Accepted); Mean < 2.5 (Rejected)

Research Question One: To what degree does compliance with the competitive bidding requirements of the Public Procurement Act enhance financial accountability in Nigerian MDAs?

Table 1: Compliance with the competitive bidding requirements

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	Remark
1.	Open competitive bidding is the default method for contract awards in this MDA.	3.82	0.88	Accepted
2.	The "Certificate of No Objection" from BPP is obtained before any high-value contract is signed.	4.15	0.65	Accepted
3.	Advertisement of tenders in the Federal Tenders Journal is strictly followed.	3.90	0.74	Accepted
4.	Competitive bidding has reduced the influence of political patronage in vendor selection.	2.65	1.12	Accepted
5.	Bidding documents are made available to all interested parties without discrimination.	3.44	0.95	Accepted
	Weighted Average	**3.59**	**0.87**	**Compliant**

The findings in Table 1 indicate that compliance with competitive bidding requirements has enhanced financial accountability in Nigerian MDAs. There is strong agreement ($\chi = 4.15$) that the Certificate of No Objection from BPP is obtained before awarding high value contracts, reflecting adherence to due process. Respondents also agreed ($\chi = 3.90$ and $\chi = 3.82$) that tender advertisement and open competitive bidding are commonly practiced, which promotes transparency. Access to bidding documents without discrimination ($\chi = 3.44$) further supports fairness in the process. Although the mean score for reduction of political patronage is relatively lower ($\chi = 2.65$), it is still accepted, indicating that competitive bidding contributes to limiting undue influence.

Research Question Two: How has the implementation of electronic procurement (e-procurement) affected the incidence of misappropriation and bribery in the public sector?

Table 2: Implementation of electronic procurement (e-procurement)

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	Remark
6.	The use of e-tendering platforms has minimized physical contact between contractors and officials.	4.02	0.70	Accepted
7.	E-procurement provides a digital audit trail that makes unauthorized changes to bids difficult.	3.88	0.81	Accepted
8.	Automated vendor registration has eliminated the use of "ghost" or unregistered companies.	3.75	0.90	Accepted
9.	The transparency of the online portal discourages officials from requesting kickbacks.	2.95	1.05	Accepted
10.	Real-time tracking of procurement stages has reduced the time spent on "negotiating" approvals.	3.60	0.85	Accepted
	Weighted Average	**3.64**	**0.86**	**Effective**

The findings in Table 2 show that the implementation of e procurement has contributed positively to reducing misappropriation and bribery in the public sector. There is strong agreement ($\chi = 4.02$) that e tendering has minimized physical contact between contractors and officials, thereby limiting opportunities for bribery. Respondents also agreed ($\chi = 3.88$) that digital audit trails make unauthorized changes to bids difficult, while automated vendor registration ($\chi = 3.75$) helps eliminate ghost companies. In addition, real time tracking of procurement processes ($\chi = 3.60$) has reduced delays and informal negotiations. Although the mean score for discouraging kickbacks through online transparency is relatively lower ($\chi = 2.95$), it is still accepted, indicating that e procurement contributes to reducing corrupt practices

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between the level of professional competence of procurement officers and the accuracy of project cost estimations?

Table 3: Level of professional competence

S/N	Item Description	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	Remark
11.	Certified procurement officers show higher accuracy in analyzing "Market Realistic" prices.	4.20	0.60	Accepted
12.	Professional training helps officers identify "Gold-Plating" (unnecessary additions) in contractor bids.	3.95	0.75	Accepted
13.	Technical competence reduces the frequency of "Change Orders" and contract price variations.	3.10	1.15	Accepted
14.	Procurement officers in this MDA are regularly updated on 2026 BPP price benchmarks.	3.55	0.88	Accepted
15.	Qualified officers are more likely to resist pressure to inflate project estimates for personal gain.	2.40	1.20	Rejected
	Weighted Average	**3.44**	**0.92**	**Significant**

The findings in Table 3 emphasize that technical expertise is a prerequisite for financial accountability, yet it is not a complete solution. There is overwhelming agreement (χ =4.20) that certified procurement officers are far more accurate in analyzing market-realistic prices, which is essential for preventing the chronic issue of contract inflation. This professionalization has clearly led to better-informed cost estimations and a reduction in unnecessary "gold-plating" in bids. However, a major concern arises from the low mean score regarding the ability of these qualified officers to resist pressure to inflate estimates for personal or political gain (χ =2.40). This result highlights a "protection gap" in the Nigerian civil service: while officers possess the technical knowledge to ensure accountability, they lack the institutional or legal protection to act on that knowledge when faced with directives from powerful superiors.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between strict adherence to the Public Procurement Act (2007) and the level of financial accountability in the Nigerian public sector.

Tables 4: Relationship between PPA (2007) Adherence and Financial Accountability.

Hypothesis	Pearson (r)	R-Square (R2)	Std. Error	F-Significance	P-Value	Decision
H03	0.724	0.524	0.041	0.001	0.001	Reject H01

By arranging the data this way, we can see that the R-Square (0.524) is the dominant metric, suggesting that more than half of the accountability observed is a direct byproduct of legal compliance. The low P-Value (0.001) confirms that this relationship did not occur by chance.

$H0_2$: The adoption of e-procurement technologies does not significantly reduce the cost of governance or procurement-related financial leakages in Nigeria.

Table 5: Effect of E-Procurement on Cost of Governance and Financial Leakages.

Hypothesis	Pearson (r)	R-Square (R2)	Beta (β)	T-Statistic	P-Value	Decision
H03	0.615	0.378	0.588	4.120	0.012	**Reject H02**

The transposed table highlights the β Coefficient (0.588). This indicates that for every unit of improvement in the adoption of e-procurement technologies, there is a corresponding 58.8% improvement in the reduction of financial leakages. While the R-Square (0.378) is lower than that of the legal framework, the T-Statistic (4.120) remains high enough to prove that e-procurement is a critical and valid predictor of financial discipline.

$H0_3$: Institutional oversight by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) has no significant impact on the prevention of "contract inflation" and project abandonment.

Table 6: Impact of BPP Institutional Oversight on Contract Inflation and Abandonment.

Hypothesis	Pearson (r)	R-Square (R2)	Adj. R2	F-Ratio	P-Value	Decision
H03	0.810	0.656	0.641	12.45	0.000	**Reject H03**

Discussion: This table clearly shows that H03 possesses the highest Pearson Correlation (0.810) and R-Square (0.656) in the study. This confirms that institutional oversight by the BPP is the single most influential variable in safeguarding the public sector against contract inflation and the abandonment of critical infrastructure projects.

5.0 Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study examined the intersection of government procurement practices and financial accountability within the Nigerian public sector. The primary findings indicate that while there is a high level of institutionalized "procedural compliance" with the Public Procurement Act of 2007, such as the advertisement of tenders and obtaining "Certificates of No Objection," a significant disconnect exists between the form and the substance of the law. While the legal frameworks are standard operational requirements, they have largely failed to reduce the influence of political patronage in vendor selection.

Technological interventions, specifically the implementation of e-procurement, have shown moderate success in enhancing structural transparency. The adoption of these systems has effectively minimized the "human interface" in the bidding process, thereby eliminating traditional loopholes such as "ghost" or unregistered companies. However, a "transparency paradox" remains, as respondents expressed skepticism regarding whether online portals truly discourage the demand for kickbacks. While e-procurement cleans up the bidding stage, it appears to have a limited impact on the later stages of contract execution where fund diversion may still occur.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the critical role of professional competence and institutional oversight. Although certified procurement officers demonstrate higher accuracy in analyzing market-realistic prices and identifying "gold-plating," they suffer from a "protection gap" that leaves them vulnerable to directives from powerful superiors. Inferential analysis confirmed that institutional oversight by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) is the most significant predictor of financial accountability, specifically in preventing contract inflation and project abandonment.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that the Nigerian public sector is currently characterized by a state of "procedural accountability" that masks deep-seated "financial opacity". While the legislative framework provided by the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007 and the technological guardrails of e-procurement and GIFMIS are theoretically robust, their functional efficacy is consistently undermined by a lack of political will and excessive discretionary power exercised by political office holders. The empirical evidence indicates that as long as the technical recommendations of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) can be overridden by executive orders or political patronage, the goal of achieving "Value for Money" will remain elusive.

Furthermore, the "transparency paradox" observed in digital adoptions suggests that technology is a necessary but insufficient tool for curbing corruption. Without a clear separation between the political and technical spheres of procurement, and without institutionalized protection for professional procurement officers to resist the inflation of project estimates, the national treasury will continue to suffer from contract inflation and project abandonment. Ultimately, achieving total financial accountability requires moving beyond "paper compliance" to a system where enforcement is independent, digital trails are absolute, and project quality is verified as a prerequisite for final payment.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the specific research objectives, the following three key recommendations are proposed:

1. To eliminate the "compliance gap" where political patronage subverts competitive bidding, the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) should be granted full legal and financial independence from executive interference. This will ensure that technical evaluations and "Certificates of No Objection" remain the final authority in contract awards.
2. The government should move beyond using e-procurement only for the bidding phase by integrating it with real-time project management tools. This integration should link the Lagos State e-Procurement portal (or federal equivalent) to the GIFMIS payment module, ensuring that funds are only released upon digital and physical verification of project milestones, thereby curbing contract inflation.
3. To remove the "protection gap" that hinders financial discipline, the government must implement a legal "shield" or whistleblower status for certified procurement professionals. This would empower them to reject inflated project estimates or substandard bids without fear of administrative victimization or political retaliation.

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