International Journal of Sustainability in Business and Economics (ISSN: 3052-6752)
an Open Access journal by Wohllebe & Ross Publishing, Germany.
Volume: 01 Issue: 02 Year: 2025
https://doi.org/10.51137/wrp.ijsbe.2025.etrt.45854

Revitalization of Sustainable Procurement for Rural Development in the Midlands Region, Zimbabwe

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Abstract:

The main goal of the study was to evaluate the revitalization of sustainable procurement in the selected rural areas in the Midlands region in Zimbabwe. The guiding objectives were; to identify the significance of sustainable procurement to rural development as well as to recommend strategies that will improve the rural areas through the implementation of sustainable procurement. A population of two hundred (200) from the different rural areas selected with a sample size of forty (40) were picked. Data was collected through interview guides and interviews. Data from questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS and data from interviews was analyzed using Nvivo. Findings were that the understanding of sustainable procurement was not yet in place and understanding of its importance was lacking, there is real need to educate the population of the benefits of its implementation for rural development. The researcher recommends the use of sustainable procurement at each stage of the supply chain for the improvement of the rural areas in the Midlands region in Zimbabwe in line with sustainable development goals; 1,2,3,11 and 12.

Keywords:

Sustainability, Procurement, Development, Growth.

Submitted: 2025-07-16. Revised: 2025-07-23. Accepted: 2025-07-25.

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Introduction

Sustainable procurement involves taking social and environmental factors into consideration alongside financial factors in making procurement decisions. It involves making decisions based on whole life cost, associated risk, measures of success and implications for the society. Sustainable procurement may lead to poverty eradication, reduce inequality in the distribution of resources, labour conditions, human rights and contribution to economic development. Generally sustainable procurement mainly focuses on the three dimensions which are economic, social and environment. According to (Johnson, Howard and Miemczyk, 2014), taking into consideration the Procurement entities have shown that they are failing to manage environmental, social and economic risk while procuring goods and services which is crucial in rural development. The aim of the paper is to analyze the role of sustainable procurement in developing rural areas. For example, the issue of eliminating gender disparity and the empowerment of women especially in rural societies. The rural areas can also positively contribute to the success of the developing countries like Zimbabwe. Poverty elimination, zero hunger,good halth and wellbeing as well as sustainable cities and communities and last but not least responsible consumption and production may also be included in this paper. This paper shall answer the following questions; is there a critical need for sustainable procurement implementation in order to attain rural development and what are the possible contributors to rural development in the Midlands region rural areas namely Silobela, Lower Gwelo, Chiwundura, Shurugwi and Zhombe.

The concept of sustainable procurement is under pressure from Sustainable Development Goals which has arisen at the UN conference which aims to maintain a balance of three dimensions namely economic, social and environmental, which is the Triple Bottom Line. According to the Austrian Sustainable Procurement Guide (2018), the concept of sustainable procurement is under pressure from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emerged at a UN conference on sustainable development, in 2020, the actual purpose was to maintain a balance of the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic, social, and environmental, which is known as the triple bottom line (TBL) (Sustainable Development Knowledge Summary 2012). Furthermore, nations were designated to contribute their efforts towards the attainment of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals by the end of the year 2030.

According to (Johnson, Howard and Miemczyk, 2014), taking into consideration the implications of sustainable procurement play a part in sales growth, improving social benefits, and thriving to efficiency. Thus, it is part of procurement to guarantee that purchase decisions are found on good principles that maximize societal benefit and match community expectations while also guarding against reputational hazards (Pheasey, 2016). Procurement departments are so charged since they may influence purchasing efficiency and brand image by engaging in sustainable practices such as product definition, supplier sourcing, assessment, and supplier selection (CIPS 2013). For infrastructure projects, most

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governments also develop grievance and dispute resolution systems. Chari and Chiriseri (2014) argued that in this country of Zimbabwe, there has been turn around on sustainability and the various stakeholder groups have addressed issues such as human rights, women rights and environmental management. The promulgation of the public procurement and Disposal of public assets act in 2017 (PPDPA) has seen sustainable procurement being addressed as one of its objectives, the act shall secure the implementation of any environmental, social, economic factors to be considered by a procuring entity (PPDPA, 2017). Procurement entities have shown that they are failing to manage environmental, social and economic risk while procuring goods and services which is crucial in rural development. Rural residents have less access to health and education which creates inequality (Elkington 2004). Different projects have been put forward to improve the living standards of rural communities like solar projects, Presidential schemes and youth empowerment. In addition, the continuing loss of forest has resulted in climate change. In this case, the Environment Management Agency tries to ensure and monitor the sustainable management of resources and the protection of the environment in reducing pollution and environmental degradation.

Literature Review

Sustainable procurement involves looking beyond economic parameters and making decisions based on whole life costing, reducing harm to the society, poverty eradication, complying with environmental standards and the distribution of resources (Walker and Brammer 2012).

Triple Bottom Line Theory

In addition companies which are defined as entity that governs certain supply chain are held accountable for what happens in their supply chains (Lee and Klassen, 2008). Social or environment misconduct at any stage can cause reputational harm to the firm's brand. The three aspects of TBL forms the pillars of sustainability in procurement process.

Environmental aspect**s** of sustainability affect the utilisation of resources, the issue of carbon footprints, greenhouse gases and carbon emissions. This aspect focuses on encouraging firms to achieve environmental consideration through embracing green procurement in the entire lifecycle of products right from acquisitions to disposal (Brammer 2012). Green procurement includes practices like producing products which are recyclable, low energy consuming products, use bio degradable materials and non-ozone depleting substances to increase organisational performance (Carter and Easton 2011). Delmas and Pekovic (2013) indicated that there was a considerable evidence that social interactions within organisations impact on organisational outcomes such as engaging in sustainable procurement where entities adopt to environmental and social standards. Scholars have increasingly discussed the importance of procurement as a tool for economic development and a driver of innovation as it was stated by (Treviño-Lozano, 2021). Given the ongoing economic emergency, utilizing procurement to

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invigorate the local economy might be an attractive and opportunistic move for governments chasing to achieve such external goals (Johnsen, Howard and Miemczyk, 2014)

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory presents a large body of theoretical and empirical work connected by a common emphasis on social norms and shared expectations as key sources of organisations structure, actions and outcomes (David Bitektine 2009). Firms can implement strategies like following environmental ways that comply with rules and adopt industry standards, or lowering the environmental impact activities that are beyond what is required by law (ISO, 2017). Even if the structural shape does not improve efficiency, new and existing companies will accept it. This means that "institutional myths" are ceremoniously accepted in order for organizations to maintain legitimacy in the institutional context by using structure vocabularies such as job titles, procedures, and functions (Johnsen, Howard and Miemczyk, 2014).

Sustainable Development Theory

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) defined sustainable development as a stage of advancement that meet current needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own. The relevance of future generation is emphasized in this notion of sustainability. The emphasis on future impacts encourages careful planning, resource utilization, and environmental footprint. However, sustainability is not exclusively concerned with the environment or the "green" element only, social effects must also be considered as what Elkington (2004) suggested. Elkington (2004) also stated that the balance of economic, social, and environmental sustainability should be examined in harmony.

Sustainable Procurement and Rural Development

Sustainable procurement is the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles into a company’s procurement processes and decisions while ensuring they still meet the requirements of the stakeholders. Sustainable procurement integrates specifications, requirements and criteria that are compatible with the protection of the environment and society as a whole. It encompasses many issues beyond, for example, child labour or the use of harmful chemicals that can affect people or the environment.

Over the last years rural activity or farming has faced several hurdles as regards development and evolution. Generational transfer is one of the problems, though not the only one or the most serious. There are still grave disparities all over the world between urban and country life. Sustainable procurement aims to develop the rural domain through preserve natural, landscape and cultural resources. Rural development is about a process that seeks social change and sustainable economic development for the rural community´s ongoing progress. The ultimate goal is to improve their life quality

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and preserve the environment. There are three basic needs in rural development for a sustainable future which are improving millions of people´s welfare that live in the country, thus reducing the rural-urban gap, stamping out poverty and preventing city migration.

Challenges Faced When Implementing Sustainable Procurement

Sustainable products are often perceived as being expensive or requiring a big capital investment (Blair and Wrigh, 2012). The UN Procurement guide reiterates that the whole process and outcomes are professed to be expensive and time consuming. This conflicts with procurement objectives of obtaining the goods at the lowest possible price (Lyons and Farrington, 2006). Blair and Wrigh (2012) have identified lack of senior management support as a barrier to sustainable procurement. An organisational culture and structures, and processes that are supportive and conducive towards sustainable solutions, as well as senior management support are considered key in sustainable procurement. It appears that the status of the purchasing function tends to be lower than in other functional areas, particularly in the public sector (Uyarra, 2010).

Case Study; McCrudden (2004): The Role of Public Procurement in Achieving Social Goals

The study focused on how public procurement may aid in achieving social goals. The findings of the study showed that the focus of many EU sustainable procurement policies is more on environmental rather than social in nature. For instance, in Italy, 30 percent of goods purchased by the government must meet ecological criteria, while Denmark, France, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom have public procurement policies specifically for wood and paper products. Belgium requires that 50% of government cars meet certain environmental standards. Based on a European Union rule on public spending, it is now a legal duty in the United Kingdom to incorporate social factors into public procurement.

Case Study: Quayle and Quayle (2000): The Role of Procurement Procedures in Sustainable Procurement

They investigated procurement procedures in higher and further education institutions in the United Kingdom. The relevance of procurement's link with other activities at their respective institutions, the importance of supplier selection and relationship management, and the emphasis assigned to procurement as a value-adding activity were the starting points for their research. The findings revealed a need for total life-cycle management, procurement staff training, increased purchasing knowledge and priority, more accurate data, benchmarking, and the importance of purchasing consortia.

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Islam and Siwar, (2013): Sustainable Procurement Practices in Australia and Malaysia

The study aimed to examine and contrast current sustainable procurement practices in Australia and Malaysia, as well as the primary potential and impediments to sustainable procurement engagement. The data was gathered from questionnaires done in both nations. According to the findings of the study, some sustainable procurement techniques may be found in public sector procurement, although the extent and character of these practices differ greatly across the two countries. In Australia, government agencies place a greater focus on the safety aspects of sustainable procurement, but in Malaysia, diversity is valued highly. Malaysia's public sector outnumbers Australia's in terms of size. Financial pressure is the most major impediment to the adoption of sustainable procurement in both countries, according to the public sector.

Methods and Data

The researcher chose a descriptive research design because of its authenticity and that it provides guidance on how to record the study questions. The population was from the district councils which are in the midlands region as well as the residents of the rural areas in the Midlands region in Zimbabwe. There was an implementation of stratifies sampling for the selection of the potential respondents.

The researcher used Solvin's of 1960 formula to determine the sample size

Formula: $n = \frac{200}{5}$

$n = 40$

The researcher only used a sample of 40 people from 200 person workforce and residents in the different rural areas because they were actively affected by the sustainable procurement and sustainability issues in the areas they live. In this study the major instruments that were used were questionnaire and an interview guide to collect data from residents while interviews were for the employees in procurement. The researcher administered 35 questionnaires to the staff of all companies operating in midlands rural areas, 5 interviews were carried out one procurement manager from each rural district council. The use of a questionnaire with a blend of open ended and closed ended questions was a key source of data in this study. The results from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software package and from the interview guides Nvivo was utilized to analyse the data. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. We conducted the analysis using inferential statistics such as percentages, mean, and standard deviation. Pie charts, bar graphs, and tables were used to convey both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was created utilizing a step-

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by-step process that included revisions by the study supervisor to guarantee that field work was completed with high-quality data.

Results

The examination was completed focusing on the objectives of the research. The researcher divided each question into many questions in order to achieve more accurate answers. The respondents were asked on how environmental issues affect rural development in sustainable procurement in Midlands rural supply chain. The environmental issues measured by the researcher includes removal and recycling of products, natural resource utilization, commitment to ISO 14001 and level of emissions (toxic gases). The researcher asked the respondents to correspond to achievements made by their business organizations through sustainable procurement to bring rural development in selected Midlands Rural Areas. From the results; 33% of the respondents strongly disagreed that their business organizations achieved a lot on distribution of agricultural infrastructure and mechanization for rural development. 21% dis-agreed, 18% were not sure, 15% agreed and 13% strongly dis-agreed. The results showed that the cumulative frequency majority of 54% dis-agreed that business organizations are distributing agricultural infrastructure and mechanization.

Lingegård et al., (2021) revealed that both infrastructure projects were constructed in a context where political interests heavily influenced their decision-making, according to half of the interviewees. Interviewees 2, 3 and 5 mentioned, respectively, that often, “decisions on infrastructure reveal more to political rather than technical justifications”; “preparation processes are strongly contaminated by the political aspect” and “political achievements” are incompatible with “securing sustainability aspects”; and there is no compliance “if there is no political will to integrate different sustainable factors. The research findings shows that 34% agreed that their business organizations achieved a lot in construction of tarred roads, roads pavements and bridges to develop rural areas in the Midlands region through sustainable procurement, 30% strongly agreed, 18% were not sure, 8% dis-agreed while 10% strongly disagreed.

Pauser, Fuente and Djerma (2015) suggested that supply to remote settlements with low income is not economically sustainable, which is one of the major roadblocks to rural electrification. A cumulative majority of 61% of the respondents showed that their business organizations achieved a lot to supply health and welfare facilities in hospitals and clinics to improve rural development program in rural areas in the Midlands region while 37% strongly agreed, 24 % agreed, 18% were not sure, 10% dis-agreed same as with those who strongly agreed. The research revealed that majority of 33% and 21% disagreed and strongly disagreed that their business organization achieved the distribution of agricultural infrastructure and machinery for rural development through sustainable procurement due to political reasons. The study also revealed as the majority of 37% agreed that their organizations are supplying drugs and medicines to improve health and welfare facilities for rural development, while the minority of 10% disagreed.

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Discussion

The main purpose of the research was to analyze the role of sustainable procurement in rural development, a case of rural supply chains in the rural areas in the Midlands region. The research project managed to state environmental, social and economic issues in sustainable procurement that may lead to rural development as well as achievements made by various companies through sustainable procurement to rural development. The results showed that majority of respondents disagreed that natural resource utilization concept in business organizations plays a role on rural development. According to Lăzăroiu et al., (2020), environmental concerns have led to the development of a new concept of SM with the primary goal of reducing the manufacturing sector's environmental effect. Manufacturing industries are responsible for a large portion of the world's resource use and trash production. In order to attain objectives of the research, the research appraised significant theoretical and empirical literature to construct the precarious apprehensions on the issues that impedes the role of sustainable procurement on rural development. The researcher used questionnaire and interview guide to collect data regarding the role of sustainable procurement in rural areas. Data was collected from working staff of various organizations operating in selected rural areas in the Midlands region and a high response rate of 75% was achieved.

The research findings discovered that a majority of respondents indicated that they ensure the natural resource utilization of water, forestry and minerals in environmental sustainability through procurement for rural development with a mean of 3.211 and standard deviation of 1.255. However on ISO 14001 the majority of respondents were not sure that there business organizations accept and committed to that policy with a mean of 2,842 and standard deviation of 0,916. On removal and recycling of products the majority of respondents agreed that their business organization considers it while the minority of respondents dis-agreed with a mean of 2,842 and standard deviation of 0.916. In regard to social sustainability the majority of respondents dis-agreed that their business organizations ensure fair and ethical trading in procurement activities to ensure rural development with a mean of 2.421 and standard deviation of 1.269. The study also revealed that the majority of respondents dis-agreed that their business organizations buying from local suppliers.

Agricultural production supports animal husbandry and wellbeing by combining optimal environmental practices, maintaining biodiversity, and contributing to the conservation of natural resources. As proposed by (Bucea-Manea-ţoniş et al., 2021), a gap in this field has been identified in the ways by which agriculture can comply with and respect consumers' desires for healthy products.

T Danish Energy Management, European Union Energy Initiative and ACP-EU Energy Facility, 2007) added that the central government has a significant role in the majority of rural electrification business models. The federal government must enact enabling legislation and regulations, as well as provide support to those working to enhance and expand rural electrification central government has a significant

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role in the majority of rural electrification business models. The federal government must enact enabling legislation and regulations, as well as provide support to those working to enhance and expand rural electrification (Broesterhuizen et al., 2014).

In the healthcare sector, there are important concerns regarding green policies and procurement, the impact of products on the environment, inconsistent organizational strategies on GPP, a high value of cost or benefits balance of green products inefficient supplier value-chain, governmental law and nudges on GPP. Current government policy, according to Wilkinson and Kirtugo (2009), offers little to encourage the public sector to consider the carbon emissions connected with procurement. None of the National Indicators pertaining to climate change, for example, include procurement activity directly. As a result, the bulk of public sector organizations have paid little attention to lowering procurement-related emissions. The majority of respondents of agreed that in the Midlands region rural areas there is lower level of industrial emissions contributing to the role rural development in sustainable procurement. This research showed that there is less air pollution and clean air in these rural areas.

Purchasing products with recycled content act as an important part to reduce, reuse, and recycle life cycle. The demand for recycled materials and recycling is fueled by the purchase of recycled-content products. When manufacturers employ recycled materials rather than raw materials, they contribute to reduce manufacturing pollution, conserve natural resources, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. Making recycled products also helps to advance green technologies and build local economies, all while encouraging a sustainable community, business, and personal lifestyle (Kalubanga, 2012).

Active purchasing, according to Gwati (2014), aims to increase quality, equity, and efficiency by taking into account the population's health needs and the interventions that best satisfy those needs with the available resources. BUZAN (2016) added that it also covers the right balance of therapeutic, promotional, preventive, and rehabilitative services, as well as how and from whom they should be obtained. The formulation of a plan to revive the health sector in the shape of the 100-day plan began with the founding of the Government of National Unity in 2009. The strategy recognized that health financing is critical to the functioning of health systems in terms of equity, efficiency, and service quality. The conceptual framework of the plan was to restore basic health services and to provide social safety nets to vulnerable groups to access health services, thereby consolidating the policy of universal access to primary health care services (Bastas and Liyanage, 2018).Community amenities, new public spaces, or the provision of low-cost housing, post-event, or urban regeneration (possibly achieved through land remediation), for example, may be critical components of a winning bid. Bradshaw (2019) added that the procurement process was also subjected to independent assurance as part of the overall Games by a Sustainability Commission, whose mandate included tracking all stakeholder complaints, including human rights issues locally and in worldwide supplier chains.

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Trevino-Lozano (2021) hypothesized that developers provided direct and indirect jobs in his paper Sustainable Public Procurement and Human Rights: Barriers to Deliver on Socially Sustainable Road Infrastructure Projects in Mexico. Local workers were hired to build the road, and local suppliers provided food and beverages to company employees on the job site, giving local families new sources of income. Broesterhuizen et al., (2014) postulated that local engineering students received professional training through internship programs in the company. Local residents' living standards were also taken into account in terms of economic accessibility to road services, local mobility, and disaster resilience, such as flooding.

Conclusion

The comprehensive objective of the research was to determine the role of sustainable procurement in rural development. In all aspects of sustainable procurement there is certain areas they focus with and some areas they put less focus. However procurement activities are not fair and ethical to achieve sustainability due to corruption, bribes and kickbacks from suppliers and lack of transparent and auditing procedures. On economic sustainability, the results showed that organizations like schools, supermarkets and mining company are not in a position to promote Indigenization and Empowerment Policy by supporting local suppliers. Their focus is more on importing due to poor quality and expensive of goods produced by local suppliers. The efficiency of inventory is at moderate level as majority of the respondents replied that they were not sure. The inventory level efficiency is less due to low demand of goods and services as the consumers lacks enough finance to purchase goods due to economic hardships.

The study also concludes that business organizations achieved lot for rural development selected rural areas in sectors like infrastructural development on road construction, road pavements and bridges, supply of electricity in business centers and rural homes as well as supplying of health and medical facilities. All of these things achieved improved living conditions of local people due to easer transportation of goods and services, use of electricity as a source of energy.

Through sustainable procurement a mining companies like Jena mine in Silobela, Zimasco in Lalapansi as well as in Shurugwi also support local people with football kits, transport and finance for sports and other leisure activities. However, on support to agricultural infrastructure and machinery, there is corruption and political influences which result for it to be less successful. The research paper was proposed to revitalize the role of sustainable procurement in rural development using the case of rural areas in the Midlands region rural supply chains. As a result, this research is by no means comprehensive, there is need to carry other researches regarding the role of sustainable procurement in urban and town development. This current study is based on the case study of Midlands region rural areas, other researchers should conduct this similar research using other rural areas as case studies across the country to check if similar results can be achieved for more generalization of the research.

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