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## Effect of Purchase Order Management on Financial Performance of Kenya Medical Supplies Authority

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### ABSTRACT

The financial performance of KEMSA has been weakened by procurement inefficiencies, causing major losses and poor service delivery. In 2022, it fulfilled only 40% of supply requests, losing KSh 1.5 billion as counties opted for private suppliers. The 2023 Auditor General's report flagged KSh 1.2 billion in irregular spending due to flawed bidding and delays. Weak POM systems continue to worsen these challenges. Hence the need to assess the effect of purchase order management on financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority. This study, guided by Agency theory, used a causal design to explore the effect of purchase order management on KEMSA's financial performance. The target population was 73 procurement and finance staff at KEMSA Nairobi. Data was collected via semi-structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS v26. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and regression, showed a strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.735$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Key challenges included delivery mismatches, pricing errors, and approval delays. The study recommends adopting automated systems, streamlining approvals, and training staff to improve procurement efficiency.

**Key Words:** Purchase Order Management, Financial Performance, Kenya Medical Supplies Authority

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Purchase Order Management (POM) is a critical procurement process that involves the creation, approval, tracking and fulfillment of purchase orders to acquire goods or services within an organization, (Sharma, Sengupta, & Roy, 2020). It serves as a structured mechanism to ensure that procurement activities align with organizational budgets, policies, and operational needs, thereby enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability, (Mkhize, Maseko & Ngidi, 2019). Effective POM ensures that state corporations, which are government-owned entities tasked with delivering public services, manage their financial resources prudently by controlling costs, preventing overspending, and ensuring timely delivery of goods and services. Purchase order management significantly enhances the financial performance of state corporations by efficiently allocating resources, reducing losses in procurement processes, and improving operational effectiveness, which collectively drive greater profitability and ensure long-term sustainability, (Van der Walt, & Ngwenya, 2021).

Despite its importance, POM in state corporations often faces challenges that undermine financial performance. Inefficient POM systems, characterized by manual processes, lack of automation, and poor integration with financial systems, lead to delays in procurement, cost overruns, and non-compliance with procurement regulations, (Kumar, Singh, & Kumar, 2022). These inefficiencies can result in financial losses due to overpayments, duplicate orders, or failure to secure competitive pricing from suppliers. Additionally, inadequate supplier management and lack of transparency in the POM process can lead to fraud, mismanagement, and poor accountability, further eroding the financial performance of state corporations, (Muriithi, Wanjau, & Nyaga, 2019). In many cases, the absence of effective POM frameworks contributes to

budget mismanagement, delayed service delivery and reduced stakeholder confidence, all of which negatively affect the financial sustainability of these entities, (Kamau, Njeru & Ombui, 2021).

Purchase order management is a cornerstone of effective procurement in state corporations across the globe enabling these entities to manage public resources efficiently and deliver essential services. For instance, State corporations in India often referred to as Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), play a significant role in the economy, contributing to sectors such as energy, transportation, and manufacturing, (Kumar, Singh, & Kumar, 2022). POM in Indian PSUs is governed by the Public Procurement Policy, which emphasizes transparency, competitiveness, and cost-effectiveness. Effective POM enables PSUs to control costs, ensure timely procurement, and comply with regulatory standards, thereby enhancing financial performance through optimized resource utilization and reduced procurement costs, (Sharma, Sengupta, & Roy, 2020). However, challenges such as bureaucratic delays, limited adoption of e-procurement systems, and occasional procurement irregularities hinder financial outcomes. The introduction of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has significantly improved POM by facilitating digital procurement, reducing costs, and ensuring compliance, which has positively impacted the financial performance of PSUs, (Gupta, & Mishra 2021).

South African state-owned enterprises (SOEs), such as Eskom and Transnet, are critical to the economy but face financial challenges due to inefficiencies in POM. The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) mandates transparent and competitive procurement processes to ensure value for money, (Mkhize, Maseko, & Ngidi, 2019). Effective POM in SOEs supports cost control, timely project execution, and regulatory compliance, contributing to improved financial performance. However, issues such as irregular expenditure, non-compliance with procurement policies, and inadequate supplier vetting have led to significant financial losses, with Eskom reporting irregular expenditure of ZAR 4.3 billion in 2022, (Sithole, Hlongwane, & Mokoena, 2023). Reforms, including the adoption of digital procurement platforms and stricter oversight, aim to enhance POM efficiency and financial outcomes by reducing wasteful expenditure and improving accountability.

In Kenya, state corporations like the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) rely on POM to procure essential goods and services for public service delivery. The Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (PPADA) governs POM, promoting fairness, transparency, and cost-effectiveness, (Wanjohi, Njeru, & Ombui, 2020). Efficient POM enables Kenyan state corporations to optimize budgets, reduce procurement costs, and enhance financial performance through competitive sourcing and timely delivery, (Chebet & Kithika, 2021). However, challenges such as procurement delays, non-compliance with PPADA, and reliance on manual POM systems have led to financial losses, with KEMSA reporting KSh 1.2 billion in irregular expenditure in 2023. The adoption of e-procurement systems and stricter adherence to PPADA guidelines are critical for improving POM efficiency and financial performance, (Odhiambo & Muturi, 2023).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The financial performance of the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority has been significantly compromised by persistent inefficiencies in procurement and supply chain operations, leading to substantial financial losses and diminished healthcare delivery. In 2022, KEMSA delivered only 40 out of every 100 requested medical supplies, resulting in a loss of KSh 1.5 billion in potential revenue as counties turned to private suppliers (Ramadhani, 2022). The Auditor General's 2023 report identified KSh 1.2 billion in irregular expenditure due to non-competitive bidding and delayed procurement processes (Kenya National Audit Office, 2023). According to Kenya National Audit Office, (2024), KEMSA's financial statements disclosed KSh 800 million in unaccounted procurement funds, further exacerbating financial mismanagement. These inefficiencies, coupled with inadequate inventory management and non-compliance with the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act, have led to reduced funding, operational delays, and compromised healthcare delivery, threatening KEMSA's financial sustainability and its ability to fulfill its mandate. These challenges, are driven by inefficiencies in POM, such as delayed order processing, non-compliance with procurement regulations and poor supplier coordination which have led to reduced funding and operational delays. Ineffective POM systems further exacerbate financial losses and compromise healthcare delivery by failing to ensure timely and cost-effective procurement, threatening KEMSA's financial sustainability and its ability to fulfill its mandate. Hence the need to assess the effect of purchase order management on financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to assess the effect of purchase order management on financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority.

### **1.4 Hypothesis of the Study**

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** Purchase order management has no statistically significant effect of financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study is also guided by the Agency theory, which was first advanced by Jensen and Meckling (1976). The theory explains the relationship between principals (owners or stakeholders) and agents (managers or public officers) in an organization. In public institutions like KEMSA, the government and citizens are the principals, while the managers and procurement officers act as agents tasked with making financial decisions on behalf of the public. The core argument is that agents may act in their own interests rather than those of the principals unless effective controls, such as structured purchase order systems, are in place to reduce agency costs. Agency theory thus emphasizes the need for accountability, transparency, and structured controls including purchase order management as tools to align agents' actions with institutional goals and improve financial outcomes.

A key strength of the theory lies in its applicability to public financial management. According to Nyang'au and Wanyoike (2016), implementing formal procurement systems such as purchase order tracking, authorization hierarchies, and supplier verification mechanisms can reduce procurement fraud, unauthorized spending, and inefficiencies. Chepchirchir and Njihia (2019) also found that when public institutions strengthen internal control systems tied to procurement, agency conflicts reduce, leading to improved budget absorption and better financial reporting. Further, Oduor, Wanyoike, and Muturi (2020) highlight that well-monitored purchase order systems encourage ethical behavior and reduce opportunistic tendencies among procurement officers, safeguarding public funds and enhancing financial performance. These findings confirm the theory's strength in advocating for mechanisms that increase accountability in managing public financial resources.

However, Agency Theory has been criticized for its underlying assumption that all agents are inherently self-interested and will act contrary to the principal's goals unless strictly monitored. Eisenhardt (1989) notes that this assumption oversimplifies human behavior and ignores intrinsic motivations such as public service or professional ethics. Moreover, Ghoshal (2005) argues that the theory may encourage over-regulation and mistrust in institutions, creating environments where innovation and efficiency are stifled. Another limitation is the theory's narrow focus on hierarchical relationships, overlooking collaborative frameworks or shared governance structures that are increasingly relevant in modern procurement and public finance systems.

In relation to this study, Agency theory is particularly relevant to the objective of examining how compliance with procurement approval and authorization procedures within purchase order management affects financial performance. Inadequate controls may result in procurement malpractices, inflated prices, or delayed deliveries outcomes that reduce institutional financial performance. Thus, by evaluating whether KEMSA's purchase order systems mitigate agency-related inefficiencies, this study applies Agency theory to understand the financial implications of public procurement practices.

### **2.2 Purchase Order Management**

Carter and Patel (2021) conducted a study on the impact of purchase order management on procurement efficiency in Amazon, a global e-commerce and logistics company in the United States. A cross-sectional research design was used, targeting a population of 3,000 procurement and supply chain employees across Amazon's U.S. fulfillment centers, with a sample of 1,500 selected via stratified random sampling to represent various regions and job roles.. Descriptive findings

showed widespread use of cloud-based POM tools and high employee satisfaction with order automation. Inferential results indicated that automated POM significantly improved procurement efficiency by reducing order processing times and errors. The study concluded that robust POM systems are critical for efficiency in e-commerce supply chains. It recommended continuous investment in AI-driven POM tools and regular staff training to sustain efficiency gains.

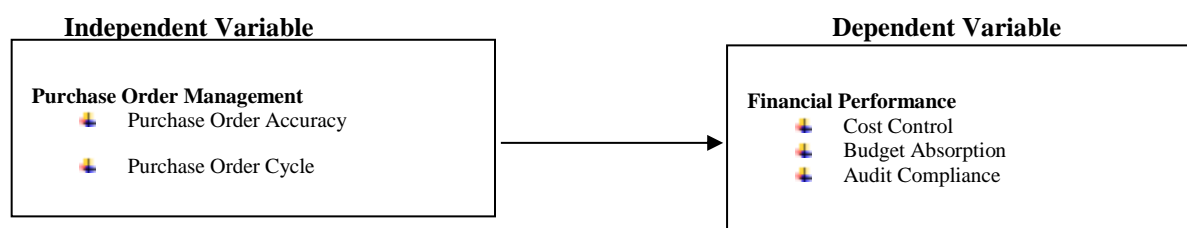
Lim, Tan and Wong (2023) investigated the effect of purchase order management on supply chain resilience in DBS Bank, a leading financial institution in Singapore. A longitudinal research design was adopted, tracking data over two years from a target population of procurement and finance staff across DBS's Singapore offices. Data were gathered via structured questionnaires and procurement system audits, analyzed using descriptive statistics to outline POM practices and structural equation modeling to evaluate resilience impacts. Descriptive findings highlighted high adoption of digital POM platforms and their perceived role in supplier coordination. Inferential results confirmed that standardized POM significantly enhanced study concluded that POM systems strengthen financial supply chains. It recommended supply chain resilience by reducing payment delays and improving supplier trust. The integrating POM with blockchain technology and conducting supplier feedback sessions.

Olawale and Adeyemi (2020) examined the influence of purchase order management on cost reduction in Dangote Group, a major manufacturing conglomerate in Nigeria. A descriptive research design was used, targeting procurement, logistics, and finance employees across Dangote's cement and sugar plants. Data were collected via questionnaires and financial records, analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize POM implementation and correlation analysis to assess cost impacts. Descriptive findings indicated moderate adoption of ERP-integrated POM systems and positive perceptions of cost savings. Inferential findings showed a strong positive correlation between POM digitization and reduced procurement costs, particularly in bulk purchasing. The study concluded that POM systems significantly lower costs in manufacturing firms.

Kamau (2018) explored the effect of purchase order management on procurement performance in Safaricom, Kenya's largest telecommunications provider. A cross-sectional research design was used, targeting procurement and logistics employees at Safaricom's Nairobi headquarters. Data were collected through online questionnaires and ERP system data, analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize POM adoption and ANOVA to evaluate performance impacts. Descriptive findings showed extensive use of automated POM systems and high employee confidence in their efficiency. Inferential results indicated that POM automation significantly enhanced procurement performance by reducing order errors and lead times. The study concluded that POM systems are vital for telecom procurement efficiency.

Wambui, and Muturi (2021) investigated the influence of Purchase Order Management on operational efficiency in KenGen, Kenya's leading electricity generation company. The study's objective was to determine if POM automation improves workflow efficiency in energy utilities. A descriptive research design was adopted, targeting a population of 1,000 procurement and operations staff across KenGen's power plants, with a sample of 500 selected through purposive sampling to focus on key operational roles. Data were collected via surveys and system audits, analyzed using descriptive statistics to outline POM practices and regression analysis to assess efficiency impacts. Descriptive findings highlighted moderate adoption of digital POM tools and their perceived value in streamlining operations. Inferential results confirmed that POM automation significantly improved operational efficiency by reducing procurement delays and optimizing resource allocation. The study concluded that POM systems enhance efficiency in energy firms.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework



### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a causal research design. This design is suitable for examining cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The target population consisted of employees directly involved in procurement and financial operations at KEMSA headquarters in Nairobi. These included officers and managers from the procurement department, finance department, internal audit, and supply chain management. Based on KEMSA's organizational structure, the estimated accessible population was 73 employees drawn from these departments. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires. Data collected was coded and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, particularly Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analysis, were used to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between purchase order management and financial performance. Results were presented using tables to enhance clarity and comparison.

### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The study administered 73 questionnaires out of which 62 questionnaires were successfully filled and returned giving a study 84% response rates.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

Question Issued	Question Collected and Filled	Response Rate (%)
73	62	84

#### 4.2 Purchase Order Management

The researcher sought to assess the effect of purchase order management on financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority. The findings are as indicated on table 2

**Table 2: Purchase Order Management**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
Our purchase orders often match the quantities delivered by suppliers.	21	45	7	19	8	3.517	1.149
Price details in our purchase orders are usually accurate.	25	43	9	17	6	3.641	1.107
Most purchase orders align with the specifications requested.	23	47	6	15	9	3.601	1.125
The time taken to approve and dispatch purchase orders is satisfactory.	17	39	8	23	13	3.241	1.271
Delays in purchase order processing are minimal.	13	35	10	27	15	3.041	1.297
Our department adheres to set timelines in the purchase order cycle.	29	41	5	18	7	3.671	1.093

According to the findings, 8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 19% agreed, 7% were neutral, 45% disagreed, while 21% of the respondents strongly disagreed that purchase orders often match the quantities delivered by suppliers with a mean of 3.517 and a Std. deviation of 1.149. This implies that purchase orders frequently do not match the quantities delivered by suppliers. The study findings are in line with those of Mwangi, Njoroge, and Kamau (2018) on procurement performance in Safaricom, Kenya, found that automated purchase order systems improved delivery accuracy.

According to the findings, 6% of the respondents strongly agreed, 17% agreed, 9% were neutral, 43% disagreed, while 25% of the respondents strongly disagreed that price details in purchase orders are usually accurate with a mean of 3.641 and a Std. deviation of 1.107. This implies that price details in purchase orders are often inaccurate. From the findings the study revealed 9% of the respondents strongly agreed, 15% agreed, 6% were neutral, 47% disagreed, while 23% of the respondents strongly disagreed that most purchase orders align with the specifications requested with a mean of 3.601 and a Std. deviation of 1.125. This implies that most purchase orders do not align with the specifications requested.

In addition, the study revealed 13% of the respondents strongly agreed, 23% agreed, 8% were neutral, 39% disagreed, while 17% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the time taken to approve and dispatch purchase orders is satisfactory with a mean of 3.241 and a Std. deviation of 1.271. This implies that the time taken to approve and dispatch purchase orders is often unsatisfactory. The study findings are in tandem with those of Wambui and Muturi (2021) who noted that automated purchase order systems reduced approval times.

According to the findings, 15% of the respondents strongly agreed, 27% agreed, 10% were neutral, 35% disagreed while 13% of the respondents strongly disagreed that delays in purchase order processing are minimal with a mean of 3.041 and a Std. deviation of 1.297. This implies that delays in purchase order processing are often significant. According to the findings, 7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 18% agreed, 5% were neutral, 41% disagreed, while 29% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the department adheres to set timelines in the purchase order cycle with a mean of 3.671 and a Std. deviation of 1.093. This implies that the department often does not adhere to set timelines in the purchase order cycle. Carter, and Patel (2021) on procurement efficiency who found that cloud-based purchase order systems improved timeline adherence.

#### 4.3 Financial Performance of KEMSA

The researcher sought to assess the financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority. The findings are as indicated on table 3

**Table 3: Financial Performance of KEMSA**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	STD
KEMSA effectively tracks operational costs to avoid overspending	23	43	8	18	8	3.551	1.135
The management has reduced unnecessary expenses for the last two years	17	39	9	22	13	3.251	1.267
KEMSA has minimized financial leakages for the past two years	15	37	10	25	13	3.161	1.279
Expenditure control mechanisms are in place to prevent financial leakages.	21	45	7	19	8	3.511	1.147
KEMSA utilizes its approved budget effectively within the fiscal period.	19	41	6	22	12	3.331	1.225

Financial records are maintained in accordance with audit standards and regulatory guidelines. 33 43 5 15 4 3.861 1.057

According to the findings, 8% of the respondents strongly agreed, 18% agreed, 8% were neutral, 43% disagreed, while 23% of the respondents strongly disagreed that KEMSA effectively tracks operational costs to avoid overspending with a mean of 3.551 and a Std. deviation of 1.135. This implies that KEMSA often does not effectively track operational costs to avoid overspending. According to the findings, 13% of the respondents strongly agreed, 22% agreed, 9% were neutral, 39% disagreed, while 17% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the management has reduced unnecessary expenses for the last two years with a mean of 3.251 and a Std. deviation of 1.267. This implies that the management has often not reduced unnecessary expenses for the last two years.

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According to the findings, 12% of the respondents strongly agreed, 22% agreed, 6% were neutral, 41% disagreed, while 19% of the respondents strongly disagreed that KEMSA utilizes its approved budget effectively within the fiscal period with a mean of 3.331 and a Std. deviation of 1.225. This implies that KEMSA often does not utilize its approved budget effectively within the fiscal period. From the according, 4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 15% agreed, 5% were neutral, 43% disagreed, while 33% of the respondents strongly disagreed that financial records are maintained in accordance with audit standards and regulatory guidelines with a mean of 3.861 and a Std. deviation of 1.057. This implies that financial records are often not maintained in accordance with audit standards and regulatory guidelines.

#### 4.4 Correlation Analysis

The study further examined the correlation between purchase order management on financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority. The findings are presented in Table 4

**Table 6: Correlation Analysis between Purchase Order Management on Financial Performance**

		Financial Performance
Purchase Order Management	Pearson Correlation	.735*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
	N	62

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The study as shown in Table 6 established that there was a strong positive correlation existed between purchase order management on financial performance of Kenya medical supplies authority, ( $r = 0.735$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). According to the findings, a strong positive correlation exists between Purchase Order Management and Financial Performance, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.735 and a significance level of 0.021 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that improvements in purchase order management are strongly associated with enhanced financial performance at KEMSA.

#### 4.5 Regression Analysis

The table shows the overall significant test results for the hypothesized research model

**Table 7: Regression Coefficients**

odel	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.175	.121		.212	.852
<sup>1</sup> Purchase Order Management	.321	.092	.415	4.032	.002

The interpretations of the findings indicated follow the following regression model.

$$Y = 0.175 + 0.321X + e \dots\dots\dots 4.1$$

According to the intercept ( $\beta_0$ ), when the purchase order management is held constant, the value of financial performance at KEMSA will be 0.175. In addition, holding all other independent variables constant, a unit increase in purchase order management would lead to a 0.321 increase in financial performance at KEMSA.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study concluded that KEMSA faces significant challenges in purchase order management, with frequent mismatches in quantities delivered, inaccurate price details, misaligned specifications, and delays in approval and processing, indicating inefficiencies that hinder cost-effective procurement. The financial performance is similarly constrained by ineffective cost tracking, persistent unnecessary expenses, financial leakages, weak expenditure controls, inefficient budget utilization, and inadequate financial record-keeping, limiting fiscal discipline and transparency. Despite these issues, a strong positive relationship exists between improved purchase order management and enhanced financial performance, suggesting that addressing procurement inefficiencies could significantly improve KEMSA's financial outcomes.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that KEMSA adopt automated procurement systems to enhance the accuracy of purchase orders, streamline approval processes to reduce delays, and train staff on supplier coordination and system use to improve efficiency. For financial performance, KEMSA should implement robust cost-tracking mechanisms, strengthen expenditure controls through automated systems, improve budget planning to ensure effective utilization, and invest in digital record-keeping systems to meet audit standards, supported by staff training to enhance compliance and transparency.

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