

Construction Procurement Processes in Public Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study of Gombe State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Previous research has highlighted that the procurement function often does not receive the due attention it is worth in many emergent countries. Primarily, the concern that prompted this study was the accusations of none compliance regarding the rules of conduct of public procurement processes in awarding construction contracts in higher academic institutions in Nigeria. The research examines the construction procurement processes before the award of contract in public tertiary institutions, and the study is limited in scope to public universities in Nigeria's state of Gombe. A qualitative research design was used, with fourteen (14) out of a total of 45 construction procurement expert interviewed. Major findings indicated that, there is competitiveness, and other procurement processes were mostly adhered to. In conclusion, the construction procurement processes at the studied tertiary institution are generally in line with standard guide for public procurement as claimed by the interviewees. However, it is recommended that, the authorities should invest more efforts towards revitalizing the processes, and ensure that construction professionals are more actively involved in every aspect of the procurement process, empowering them to perform their duties effectively and professionally.

Keywords: Construction projects, Public procurement, Processes, Contract awards, Tertiary institutions

INTRODUCTION

Construction procurement, refers to the process of purchasing, or owning constructed asset previously owned by different entity. According to Kehinde (2015), procurement involves finding, negotiating terms, and acquiring goods, services, or works from external sources, typically through competitive bidding or tendering. Velnampy and Kamalarupan (2009) emphasized that procurement is a specialized profession that requires public and private sector managers to focus on the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities to successfully

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implement procurement strategies that drive innovation. Effective public procurement in any society should prioritize economy, efficiency, fairness, reliability, integrity, transparency, accountability, and ethical standards (Nwogwugwu & Olumuyiwa, 2015).

In recent decades, Nigeria has experienced a significant decline in procurement processes, despite substantial investments in the sector (Abubakar et al. 2015). The procurement process has faced numerous challenges, and if not properly managed, it can be extremely costly for the government (Patil et al. 2016). For example, in Gombe, the procurement process has been plagued by inefficiencies and allegations, as noted by Muhammed (2019), who claimed that stakeholders were dissatisfied with the project delivery process at the Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State. Therefore, in view of underlining issues as reported by previous scholars, the study examined the construction procurement process before contract awards and it will be limited in scope to the perception of concerns stakeholders regarding Federal University Kashere. The study addresses the following questions:

- i. Is there opportunity for transparency and fairness in competition during the tendering process at the case study tertiary institution?
- ii. Does the standard format for advertisement invitations include all essential information for contractors wishing to bid at the case study tertiary institution?
- iii. Describe the constituent of the Bid Evaluation Committee at the case study tertiary institution?
- iv. Are the prequalification criteria aligned with best practices at the case study tertiary institution?

As noted by Shehu et al., (2023) it is widely acknowledged by related stakeholders that the construction industry can significantly drive economic growth and development globally. The procurement of construction projects is complex, requiring coordination among various individuals, firms, and companies to design, manage, and construct projects such as residential buildings, commercial spaces, and infrastructure (Inuwa, 2014).

The procurement process begins with identifying the relevant needs, followed by planning, selecting a procurement method, tendering (implementation of the procurement plan), awarding contracts, and managing those contracts (Joel, 2013). The International Competitive Bidding (ICB), according to Aduda (2007) and Shehu, Zakariyau, Yusuf et al., (2025) identified eight (8) clearly articulated stages that should be involved in public procurement, which include: (a) The choice of what to request. (b) The tender design, including the technical tender specifications and criteria of evaluation. (c) Pre-qualification/qualification/short-listing. (d) The tender. (e) Evaluation/contract award. (f) Negotiations/final agreement. (g) Execution/delivery, and (h) Evaluation/controls. The optimal procurement method for a project should align with its delivery model and contract type while identifying a capable tenderer or respondent that possesses the financial means, technical skills, and other necessary qualities for successful project execution (Austroad, 2014).

The critical steps in initiating the procurement process to contract award include: procurement planning, appropriation, advertisement, contractor prequalification, bid submission, tender/bid invitation, bid opening, bid evaluation, winner determination, and contract award (Kehinde, 2015; Onyechi, 2015). Similarly, Sa'ad et al., (2019) examined the implementation of the Public Procurement Act in tertiary institutions in Bauchi State and found that the most commonly executed processes were advertisement invitations, tender

evaluations per bidding requirements, procurement plans linked to budgets, and notification of successful bidders.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, which is particularly effective for evaluating social dimensions (Shehu, 2021). The research was conducted in Gombe State, and is limited in scope with concern participants at the Federal University of Kashere, Nigeria (FUK). The tertiary institution was selected due to its significant number of federally funded construction projects (Shehu & Shehu, 2022; Saidu et al. 2025), and its status as a newer educational institution in Nigeria. The interviewees are 45 individuals engaged in construction procurement activities at the university. The participants included construction professional staff from the works, maintenance and physical planning unit, consultants and contractors engages by the case study tertiary institution and personnel from the Procurement Unit (including business administrators, cooperative management economists, and procurement managers).

According to Kothari (2009), Shehu and Shehu (2023a) sample size refers to the number of items chosen from a population to form a sample, influenced by factors such as population size, education level, research nature, and economic considerations. Consequently, 14 interviewees were conveniently utilized in this study using open-ended interview questions. Interviews are one of several techniques for collecting qualitative data, which involves coding, organizing, interpreting, and using the information to explain or predict future interrelationships (McNabb, 2009).

The interview process followed the stages outlined by Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003), as cited in Aminu, 2012) which include drafting the interview questions, piloting the questions, selecting sample interviewees, and conducting the interviews. Responses received from the interviewees was then coded, well arranged, and contently analyzed. Content analysis involves examining interview content or observational field notes to identify emerging themes based on respondents' feedback (Shehu, 2021; Shehu & Shehu, 2023b). Fig 1 illustrates summary of the methodology adapted.

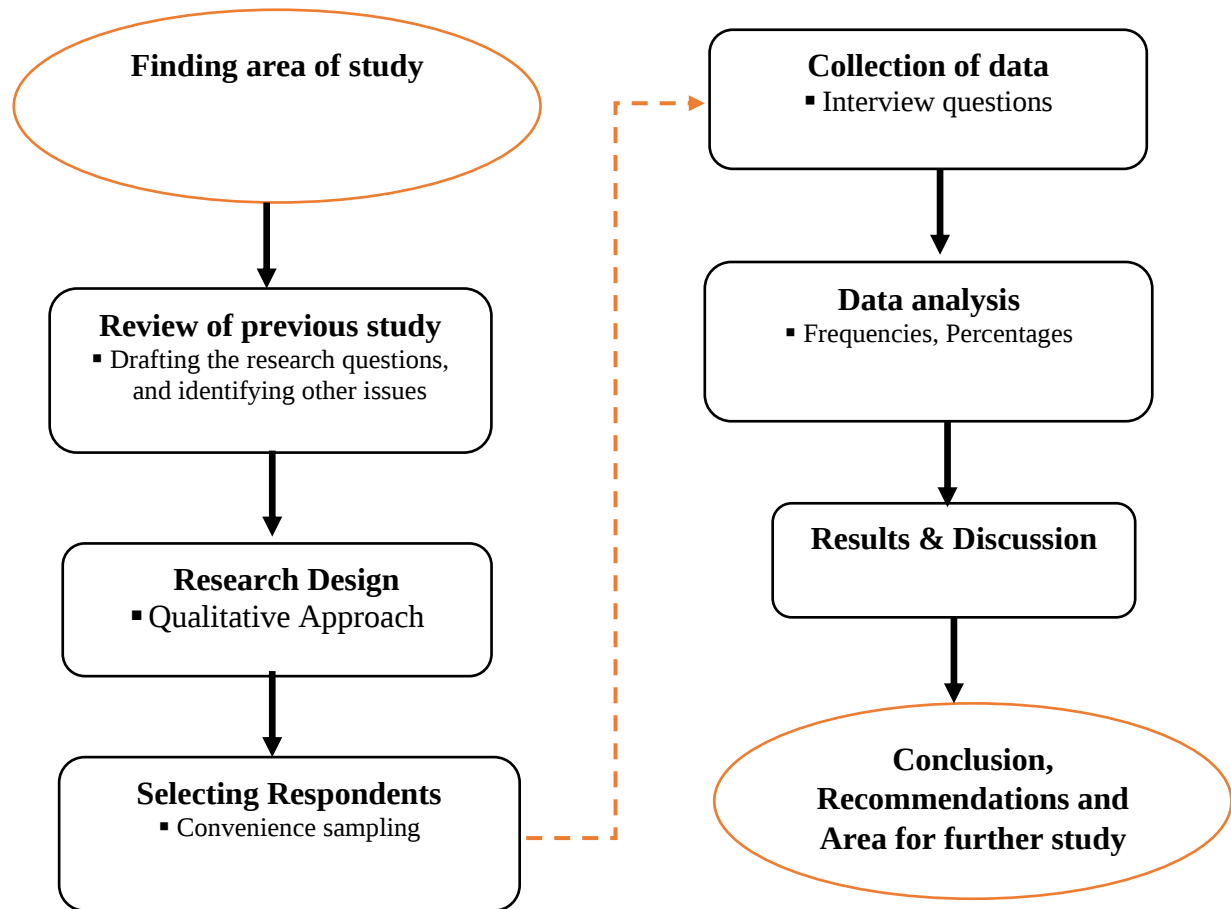


Figure 1 Summary of Research Methodology
Source: Adapted: Shehu, Ali, Shehu et al., (2025), Shehu (2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study were presented in tables using frequencies and percentages. Table 1 present the basic characteristics of the interviewees.

Table 1: Characteristics of interviewees

Respondents	Area of Expertise	Academic Qualification	Post-Qualification Experience	Experience with working Affiliation
A	Architecture	First degree in Architecture	16 Yrs.	15 Years
B	Civil Engineering	First degree in Civil Engineering	20 Yrs.	18 Yrs.
C	Quantity Surveying	Masters' in Quantity Surveying	15 Yrs.	8 Years
D	Building	First degree in Building	8 Yrs.	4 Yrs.
E	Architecture	Masters' in Architecture	15 Yrs.	10 Yrs.
F	Mechanical Engineering	First degree in Mechanical Engineering	11 Yrs.	7 Years
G	Architecture	Higher Diploma in Architecture	25 Yrs.	25 Yrs.
H	Architecture	Masters' in Architecture	8 Yrs.	8 Years
I	Business Administration	First degree in Business Administration	12 Yrs.	12 Yrs.
J	Coopr, Econs & Management	Higher Diploma in Coopr, Econs & Mgt.	8 Yrs.	7 Years
K	Civil Engineering	Masters' in Civil Engineering	6 Yrs.	6 Yrs.

L	Electrical Engineering	First degree in Electrical Engineering	22 Years	22 Yrs.
M	Proc.& Supply Chain Management	Bsc. Procurement and Supply Chain Management	11 Years	11 Yrs.
N	Quantity Surveying	Masters' in Quantity Surveying	14 Yrs.	14 Yrs.

Research interviewed Questions

- a) *Is there opportunity for transparency and fairness in competition during the tendering process at the case study tertiary institution?*

Table 2: level of Competition in tendering processes

Codes	Freq (N)	Per. (%)
▪ Mostly competitive	9	64.29
▪ Fairly competitive, but need improvement	4	28.57
▪ It is not fair and competitive	1	7.14
Sum	14.0	100

Table 2 revealed that 64.29% of the interviewees mostly claimed that, the tendering process in the case study tertiary institution is competitive; 28.57% believed it is fairly competitive, while 7.14% were of the opinion that the whole tendering processes is not fair and competitive.

- b) *Does the standard format for advertisement invitations include all essential information for contractors wishing to bid at the case study tertiary institution?*

Table 3: Basic information for Advertisement

Codes	Freq (N)	Per. (%)
▪ Basic information required are included	9	64.29
▪ Basic information required are fairly included	4	28.57
▪ It lacks the basic information	1	7.14
Sum	14.0	100

Major findings from Table 3 revealed that, the basic information for the advertisement of tendering at the case study tertiary institution are included as claimed by 64.29% of the interviewees; 28.57% claimed the basic information are fairly included. Meanwhile, 7.14% believed it lacks the basic information for proper advertisement.

- c) *Describe the constituent of Bid Evaluation Committee at the case study tertiary institution?*

Table 4: Membership of Tender Evaluation Committee

Codes	Freq (N)	Per. (%)
▪ The committee is constituted as required with most concerned stakeholders	7	50.0
▪ It is fairly constituted with all the relevant parties	5	35.71
▪ Not certain	2	14.29
Sum	14.0	100

Findings from Table 4 revealed that, 50% of the interviewees claimed that the committee is constituted with major parties concerned with the tendering processes in the case study tertiary institution; in addition, 35.51% believed it is fairly constituted. Meanwhile, 14.29% are not certain with their assertions.

d) *Are the prequalification criteria at the case study tertiary institution aligned with best practices?*

Table 5: Standard best Practice of Pre-Qualification Criteria

Codes	Freq (N)	Per. (%)
▪ They are in line with global best practice	8	57.15
▪ The criteria are fair	4	28.57
▪ They are not in line with global best practice	1	7.14
▪ Not certain	1	7.14
Sum	14.0	100

Major findings from Table 5 revealed that 57.15% of the interviewees claimed that, pre-qualification criteria are in line with global best practice in the case study tertiary institution; in addition, 28.57% believed the criteria are fair. Meanwhile, 7.14% are not certain with the pre-qualification criteria in the case study tertiary institution.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Basically, data analysis and interpretation of interview responses from this study revealed that, the advertisement for tenders included the essential details needed, which promotes a fair and open bidding processes. As such, it allows contractors from various parts of the country to participate, as noted by 64.29% of respondents. This aligns with the findings of Sa'ad et al., (2019), where advertisement was ranked as the most critical component. Furthermore, Omole (1999) emphasized that proper advertisement ensures that any interested contractor has the chance to tender, providing opportunities for capable yet lesser-known firms to be recognized. Additionally, 57.15% of the respondents claimed that the prequalification criteria used by the case study tertiary institution could align with global best practices. While 50% agreed that the Tender Evaluation Committee is usually formed according to requirements, which supports Sa'ad et al. (2019)'s ranking of tender evaluation as the second most practiced procedure in public procurement. However, there is still room for improvement as 37.57% of respondents indicated that the evaluation process at the case study tertiary institution requires significant reform. The contribution of the study's findings in the field of procurement also align with previous studies by scholars including Shehu (2025) where he reported that, practices including 'enforcement of public procurement rules and regulations; and ensuring transparency, accountability and integrity in the bid processes' as effective in ensuring compliance with due processes in public procurement of construction projects.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the construction procurement process for contract awards in public tertiary institutions in Gombe State, focusing on the Federal University of Kashere. Based on respondents' feedback, it concludes that, contrary to previous assumptions by scholars including, Muhammed (2019) who claimed that stakeholders were dissatisfied with the project delivery process at the Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State. However, in this study the contract award process at the university generally adheres to public procurement standards. However, to enhance more efficiency and transparency, it is recommended that the government take further steps to revamp the entire system with the active involvement of all relevant professionals. It is suggested that similar studies should be initiated in other tertiary institutions funded by the state government and private entities in Nigeria. Also, the study may as well be replicated using quantitative design research approach.

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