

Effectiveness of Procurement Policies in Promoting Ethical Sourcing Practices in the Zambia's Moving Industry: A Case of Stuttafords Zambia Limited

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of the procurement policies in promoting ethical sourcing practices within the Zambian moving industry, an area under scrutiny for sustainability and ethical standards. Despite the existence of procurement policies, many organizations struggle to integrate ethical standards into their procurement processes, highlighting a significant gap in policy enforcement and effectiveness. The main objective of this study is to assess how existing procurement policies impact sourcing behaviour and compliance with ethical standards. The study's methodology implored qualitative research methods and data were collected via structured interviews, supplemented by document reviews, and analysed using a thematic approach to identify patterns in policy application and impact. The findings indicate that while some policies incorporate ethical considerations, inconsistencies in enforcement limit their effectiveness, resulting in only marginal improvements in sourcing behaviors. The study identifies critical factors that enhance successful policy implementation, such as structured policy frameworks, supportive monitoring mechanisms, and ongoing training for procurement officers. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the Zambian government and industry stakeholders strengthen procurement policies by introducing robust monitoring systems and providing targeted training on ethical sourcing principles. These improvements are expected to create a more conducive environment for ethical sourcing, thereby supporting sustainable practices in the moving industry and contributing to broader social and environmental benefits across sectors. This research offers valuable insights for policymakers, suggesting that refining procurement policies could drive responsible sourcing behaviors and promote long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Ethical Sourcing, Sustainability, Procurement Policies, Policy Enforcement, Moving Industry, Supply Chain Ethics.

Introduction

The concept of ethical sourcing in procurement is increasingly becoming a focal point in business operations. This notion involves a commitment to ensure that the products and services sourced by companies are obtained in a responsible and sustainable manner. ethical sourcing encompasses various dimensions such as labour rights, environmental compact, and fair business practices. The importance of ethical procurement is particularly pronounced in industries where supply chains are extensive and complex, such as the

moving industry in Zambia. Ethical sourcing in procurement is not just about complying with legal standards; it goes beyond to include moral and ethical considerations in purchasing decisions (ZIPS 2022). It involves a proactive approach to ensure that the suppliers adhere to ethical standards, including fair labour practices, and anti-corruption measures. This approach is essential in mitigating risks associated with human rights abuses, environmental degradation and reputational damage.

The role of procurement policies in fostering ethical sourcing practices has garnered significant attention globally, especially within emerging economies such as Zambia. Ethical sourcing in the moving industry, which involves the transportation and relocation of goods and services, entails the adoption of responsible practices that prioritize fair labor, environmental sustainability, and transparency in supply chains (Linton et al., 2021). In Zambia, the growing demand for moving services has placed increasing pressure on businesses to ensure that their procurement processes not only meet operational efficiency but also adhere to ethical standards (Zhang & Zhang, 2020). Ethical sourcing in this context is seen as a critical lever for promoting social responsibility, reducing exploitation, and fostering economic growth through sustainable practices (Adams et al., 2020).

Effective procurement policies can provide the framework for enhancing ethical sourcing within the moving industry by ensuring that suppliers and contractors comply with regulations on labor rights, environmental protection, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Miemczyk et al., 2019). In Zambia, where procurement is often seen as a tool for advancing national development and addressing challenges such as poverty and inequality, the integration of ethical considerations in procurement decisions has become a priority for both the public and private sectors (Chirwa & Kachingwe, 2022). However, despite the potential benefits, questions remain about the practical effectiveness of these policies in transforming the industry's practices and achieving the desired outcomes of sustainability and social equity (Lyon et al., 2021).

This study explores the effectiveness of procurement policies in enhancing ethical sourcing practices within Zambia's moving industry. By examining the design, implementation, and outcomes of these policies, the research aims to contribute insights into how Zambia can align its procurement strategies with global standards of ethical and sustainable business practices. Moreover, it seeks to highlight the challenges and opportunities faced by companies in integrating ethical considerations into their supply chains, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between procurement and ethical sourcing in this sector.

Problem Statement

Ethical procurement is a growing concern across various industries globally, and the Zambian moving industry, where Stuttafords Zambia is a key player, is no exception. Haron & Mahzan (2019) highlight that the integration of ethical standards in procurement is a significant issue for many organizations. This challenge is particularly pronounced in the

moving industry due to its diverse range of stakeholders and complex supply chains. The Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (2023) emphasizes the need for policies that cover a spectrum of issues, from labor rights and environmental sustainability to anti-corruption and fair business practices. Despite the recognized importance, there remains a gap in the effective implementation of these policies. This gap is often attributed to factors like inadequate supplier awareness and challenges in monitoring and enforcement (Rosenke, 2020). The 2021 KPMG report on ethical supply chains further underscores the complexity of setting and maintaining ethical standards across diverse entities in the supply chain.

Neglecting to conduct a study on this matter could have several detrimental consequences. First, without a thorough understanding of the challenges and efficacy of ethical procurement policies, Stuttafords Zambia may continue facing operational and reputational risks. Ineffective policies can lead to compromised labor rights, environmental degradation, and foster corrupt practices, which not only affect the company but also the wider industry and community (Bohnenberger, 2022). Kim & Chae (2021) suggest that organizations engaging in ethical procurement practices can reap significant social, environmental, and financial benefits. The absence of a comprehensive study might mean missing out on these potential advantages, thereby hampering the industry's overall progress towards sustainable and ethical practices.

Existing studies in Zambia and other countries have predominantly focused on the formulation of ethical procurement policies rather than their practical application and impact (Kyeyune, 2020; Mulenga & Njovu, 2021; Hangoma, 2022). For example, Kyeyune (2020) analyzed sustainable procurement policies in Ugandan firms and found more focus on policy development rather than execution and measurement of sustainability outcomes. Additionally, Mulenga and Njovu's (2021) study on a Zambian state energy corporation revealed transparency gaps and superficial compliance with reforms, indicating shortcomings in policy implementation. Similarly, Hangoma's (2022) research on Zambian public hospitals exposed implementation and compliance challenges with ethical sourcing policies despite comprehensive guidelines being in place. There is a research gap in understanding how these policies are implemented and adhered to in real-world scenarios, especially in the Zambian moving industry. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing a detailed analysis of Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies, their implementation, adherence, and the tangible outcomes.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the procurement policies used at Stuttafords Zambia Limited.
2. To evaluate the specific ethical sourcing practices used by Stuttafords Zambia when interacting with suppliers.
3. To establish the influence of Stuttaford Zambia's procurement policies on their ethical sourcing practices.

Literature Review

Procurement Policies and Ethical Sourcing

Procurement policies are guidelines that organizations implement to govern how they acquire goods and services. In the context of ethical sourcing, these policies are designed to ensure that the suppliers meet the specific standards in areas such as fair labor practices, environmental protection, and anti-corruption measures (Blowfield & Murray, 2019). Ethical sourcing practices have gained global prominence due to increasing consumer demand for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability.

Previous studies have demonstrated that well-structured procurement policies can drive positive changes in supply chains. For example, Crane (2017) highlights that procurement policies can create incentives for suppliers to adopt ethical practices, improving worker conditions and reducing environmental footprints. However, studies on developing countries like Zambia suggest that enforcement and capacity building remain significant barriers to success.

The Zambian Moving Industry and Ethical Challenges

The Zambian moving industry, like many others in sub-Saharan Africa, is characterized by informal operations, low regulatory oversight, and limited transparency in business practices. These factors create a fertile ground for unethical practices, including the exploitation of labor, lack of environmental sustainability, and insufficient attention to human rights. Furthermore, the lack of a structured procurement framework often leads to poor supplier selection, which can exacerbate these issues.

Recent efforts by the Zambian government and private organizations to implement procurement policies aimed at enhancing ethical sourcing have shown mixed results. Some companies have adopted best practices, but overall industry standards remain low.

In order to assess the impact of the procurement policy on ethical sourcing, organizations need to establish clear criteria and employ robust methods. These criteria often include compliance with labor standards, environmental sustainability, and the integrity of supply chain practices. Assessment methods range from internal audits and performance metrics to third-party certifications and stakeholder surveys. One effective approach is the use of performance indicators that measure adherence to ethical standards. These indicators can include the number of suppliers compliant with ethical standards, the percentage of ethically sourced materials, and instances of non-compliance. Additionally, organizations can conduct regular audits, both internally and externally, to ensure that procurement practices align with established ethical standards (Andika, Iravo, & Ismael, 2021).

The globalization of supply chains, coupled with a growing emphasis on sustainability, ethics, and supplier relationships, has elevated procurement to a strategic organizational function. Modern procurement policies transcend the traditional focus on cost reduction, encompassing broader considerations such as quality, reliability, ethical sourcing, and the sustainability of supply chains (Wambua & Kagiri, 2019). This transformation has brought

to the fore key elements like supplier relationship management, risk management, sustainability, and innovation. These aspects are now seen as integral to procurement strategies, significantly influencing an organization's performance, reputation, and competitive standing (Dai, Yang, Feng, & Zheng, 2020).

Another method involves stakeholder feedback, which provides insights into the perception and effectiveness of procurement policies. This feedback can be gathered through surveys, interviews, and focus groups. It is vital to include a diverse range of stakeholders, including suppliers, employees, customers, and community representatives, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of procurement policies (Procurement: Ethics, 2020).

Ethical Sourcing in Procurement

Ethical sourcing in procurement has emerged as a critical component in modern business practices, intertwining moral principles with the procurement process. It involves a commitment to acquiring goods and services in a manner that demonstrates respect for ethical standards pertaining to labor, the environment, and society. At its 'core, ethical sourcing seeks to ensure that the products and services procured are produced and delivered under conditions that do not exploit workers or the environment (Etse, McMurray, & Muenjohn, 2023). This approach places a premium on human rights, fair labor practices, environmental sustainability, and corporate social responsibility. The principles of ethical sourcing extend beyond compliance with legal requirements. They involve proactive steps to promote transparency, integrity, fairness, and respect for human dignity in the procurement process. Ethical sourcing demands a thorough understanding of the supply chain, enabling companies to identify and address potential ethical risks associated with their procurement activities. This understanding includes awareness of the origins of products, the conditions under which they were produced, and the impacts of these processes on communities and the environment (Islam & Alharthi, 2020).

The increasing importance of ethical sourcing in procurement policies reflects the growing significance of sustainability and corporate responsibility (Migliore, Talamo, & Paganin, 2019). The integration of technology in procurement, such as e-procurement systems, automation, and data analytics, is revolutionizing procurement practices. These technologies lead to more efficient processes, improved decision-making, and increased transparency (Wambua & Kagiri, 2019).

Empirical studies across sectors and geographic contexts highlight procurement policies as pivotal in influencing ethical conduct within supply chains. Rigorous, well-enforced policies set clear expectations for transparency, integrity, and sustainability, driving higher standards (Bohnenberger, 2022). However, ineffective policies engender risks including labor exploitation, environmental damage, and corruption.

Research on policy impacts reveals nuances across contexts. Wanjiku's (2019) study exploring Kenyan manufacturing firms denotes coherent ethical guidelines as fundamental to uplifting procurement performance. Correspondingly, Zafar et al. (2023) work in

Pakistani textiles shows robust policies moderated by ethical leadership as crucial for ethical and efficient sourcing. While formal policies provide frameworks, their implementation hinges on enabling environments and responsible oversight.

Several empirical assessments focus specifically on ethical sourcing policy execution. Andika, Iravo, and Ismael (2021) analyzed devolved governments in Kenya, finding procurement ethics significantly influenced effective service delivery, affirming implementation efficacy's far-reaching ramifications. Within Ugandan public universities, assessment mechanisms for ethical practice enforcement remained inadequate, hampering performance Musaba (2019). Though policies seemed comprehensive, actualization lagged. This trend persists across sectors, as Ambe's (2020) study of South African manufacturers revealed. Despite stated sustainable sourcing commitments, execution was sporadic due to financial constraints and monitoring deficiencies.

Research on Zambian companies mirrors the complexities of ethical policy transitions from intent to impact. Evaluations of a state energy corporation uncovered transparency gaps amidst procurement reforms, indicating superficial adherence to anti-corruption measures (Mulenga & Njovu, 2021). For Zambian public hospitals, officials attributed persistent non-compliance to unawareness, availability limitations, and subjective interpretations of ethical codes (Hangoma, 2022). Resistance to ethical shifts manifests even with directive policies.

Several studies highlight common deterrents to successfully effecting ethical sourcing policies, including clashing priorities, inadequate resources, and weak enforcement (Sibanda et al., 2020). However, empirical evidence also indicates targeted interventions like supplier incentives, audits, and localized policies as impactful. In South Korea, mandatory human rights due diligence legislation compelled companies to address ethical concerns proactively (Byungho, 2022). Across sub-Saharan hospitals, tailored policies and standardized ethical training markedly increased sustainable healthcare procurement (Masuta, 2020).

While many analyses concentrate on policy formulation, fewer studies empirically evaluate execution effectiveness and ethical sourcing outcomes. Kyeyune's (2020) research in Ugandan firms stands out by connecting specific policy provisions to measure sustainability metrics. Findings revealed interventions like green public procurement and preferential treatment for certified sustainable suppliers as substantively raising eco-friendly purchasing. More measured assessments could further validate policies' efficacy and deficiencies.

Several works also uncover how policies intersect with modern realities through technology integration, emerging priorities, and globalized supply webs. Blaskovics (2020) examined Hungarian municipalities' adoption of e-procurement systems, uncovering mixed outcomes tied to process transparency versus cybersecurity vulnerabilities. As societal expectations and business environments evolve, so must sourcing policies to uphold relevance and responsiveness (Cheng et al., 2022).

Across contexts, comprehensive empirical insights remain lacking, especially policy impacts on ground-level ethical conduct in procurement. Most research relies on high-level assessments or perceptual surveys. Significant gaps persist in policy delivery monitoring, limiting causal inferences regarding interventions and ethical practice adoption. By tracing policies from development through observable supplier behaviors, a robust evidentiary base can inform effective ethical sourcing strategies.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

There exist various theories that support ethical procurement policies, and each of them identifies a different idea and concept. Stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility theory were chosen for this study. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are grounded primarily on stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility (CSR), both of which offer critical insights into the development and implementation of ethical procurement practices.

Stakeholder theory provides a framework to analyze how the company's procurement policies consider and balance the interests of diverse stakeholders. It guides the study to explore whether Stuttafords Zambia's procurement decisions reflect a commitment to not only shareholder value but also the well-being of suppliers and the broader community, thus aligning with ethical sourcing principles. In the realm of procurement, research by Smith and Rupp (2003) demonstrated how organizations could improve supplier relationships and ethical sourcing by considering the impacts of their procurement decisions on all stakeholders.

Corporate social responsibility theory is used to examine how Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies align with societal responsibilities and ethical practices. Bonsu's (2019) exploration of CSR in procurement provides a lens to assess how Stuttafords Zambia's procurement strategies contribute to sustainability, human rights, and fair labor practices. This theory helps to evaluate whether the company's procurement practices are not just about profit-making but also about making a positive impact on society.

Link between Theory and Research Objectives

The stakeholder theory is relevant for evaluating the effectiveness of procurement policies in promoting ethical sourcing practices. It provides a framework to analyze if the policies consider the interests of all stakeholders affected by procurement decisions at Stuttafords Zambia (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022).

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theory aligns with examining implementation and compliance aspects of ethical sourcing standards. It allows assessing if procurement practices at Stuttafords Zambia uphold sustainability, human rights, and fair labor principles—contributing to societal wellbeing (Bonsu, 2019).

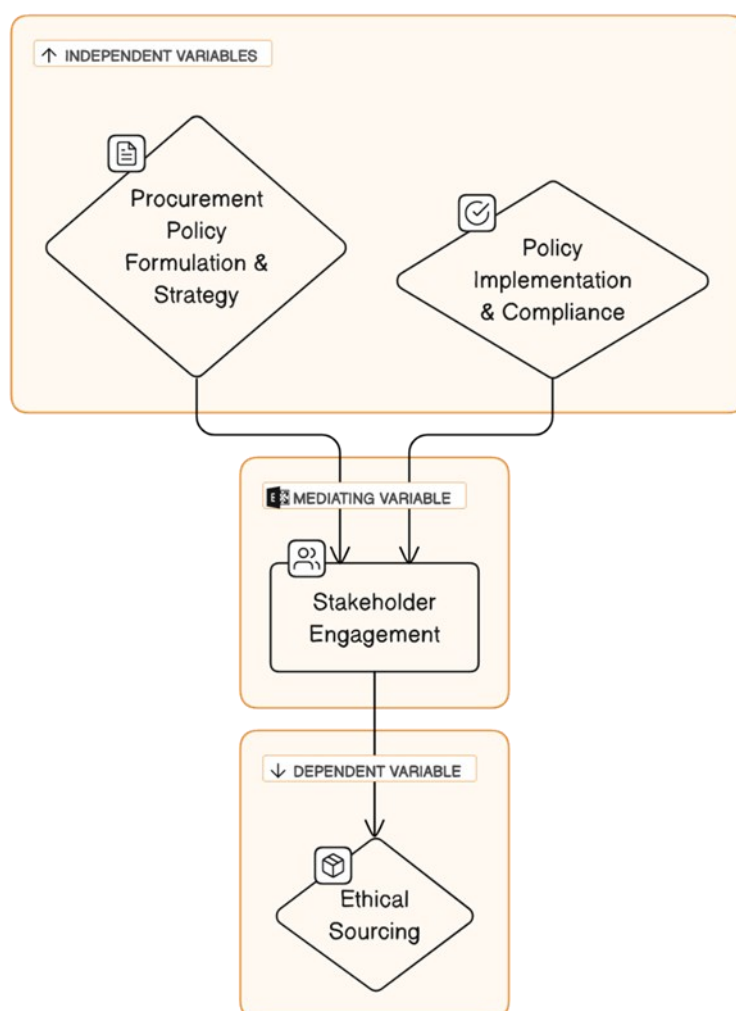
These theories guide formulating interview questions to uncover how stakeholder interests are balanced in procurement policies and If procurement practices reflect commitment to CSR values, thereby, the framework helps determine policy effectiveness in embedding

ethical sourcing across procurement activities at Stuttafords Zambia. It facilitates evaluating if the policies translate intent into positive impact on business sustainability and stakeholder welfare.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is built around several key concepts and variables that interlink to form a comprehensive understanding of the subject. This framework serves as a guide for exploring how procurement policies are formulated and implemented and their consequent impact on ethical sourcing practices.

Conceptual Framework: Procurement Policies and Ethical Sourcing at Stuttafords Zambia



Research Methodology

This section presents the methodology that was used to conduct the research as well as the justifications of the research methods used during the research. The section gives the research approach, research design, target population and sampling frame, sample size,

sampling technique, data collection instruments and procedure used, and procedure used for this research.

Research Philosophy

This study adopted an interpretivist philosophical stance. Interpretivism asserts that reality is subjective and socially constructed through human experiences and social contexts (Scotland, 2012). This aligns with the exploratory qualitative approach selected for this research. The interpretivist paradigm recognizes that there are multiple truths and perspectives associated with the procurement policy and ethical sourcing practices at Stuttafords Zambia. The research does not seek an absolute objective truth, but rather aims to understand and interpret the multiple realities experienced by procurement personnel in relation to the research objectives. The emphasis is on inductive logic, gathering subjective meanings, perceptions, and explaining phenomena through the perspectives of organizational actors (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This enables embracing the complexity of the procurement function and ethical dynamics within their real-world context at Stuttafords Zambia. An interpretive approach provides rich, nuanced insights into the implementation challenges, awareness levels, and cultural aspects that influence the effectiveness of procurement policies. By gathering subjective experiences, this philosophy facilitates deeper analysis of the social realities that shape ethical sourcing in procurement. Therefore, interpretivism allows addressing the research objectives through accessing contextual perspectives and meanings rather than prior assumptions.

Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature. This approach was chosen because it was well-suited for gaining a deep understanding of the nuances of procurement policies and ethical sourcing practices. Qualitative research allows for the exploration of perspectives, experiences, and motivations, which are crucial for this study. Interviews and document review are selected as the primary data collection methods. Interviews have provided in-depth insights from individuals directly involved in procurement processes at Stuttafords Zambia. This method enabled the collection of detailed and personal experiences, perceptions, and opinions, which were vital for understanding the practical aspects of procurement policies and their implementation. Document review complemented interviews by providing a concrete basis for understanding the official procurement policies, guidelines, and compliance documents. This method helped in gathering factual data about the existing policies and their intended goals and standards. This descriptive approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, focusing on data collection and summarization.

Selection of the Study Area

Stuttafords Zambia was chosen as the study area for several reasons. Firstly, it is a key player in the Zambian moving industry, making it a relevant and significant subject for

exploring procurement practices. The company's role in this sector provides an opportunity to understand procurement policies within a context that is both dynamic and critical to the Zambian economy. The selection of Stuttafords Zambia was also driven by its potential to provide insights into the challenges and best practices of implementing ethical sourcing in procurement. The location and operations of Stuttafords Zambia make it a suitable case for understanding how procurement policies can be effectively managed in a real-world business environment, aligning well with the research objectives of this study.

Sampling Procedure

The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling. This approach was selected because it allowed for the deliberate choice of individuals who are most relevant to the research objectives. In this case, participants were chosen based on their roles and involvement in the procurement process at Stuttafords Zambia. The criteria for selecting participants included their position within the company, their level of involvement in procurement activities, and their experience and knowledge regarding the company's procurement policies and practices. This method ensured that the study included insights from those who are most knowledgeable and directly impacted by the procurement policies.

Sample Size

The sample size was set at 15 participants from Stuttafords Zambia's procurement department and associated teams. In qualitative research, sample sizes should remain small enough to enable the researcher to provide thick, rich descriptions and explanations (Braun & Clarke, 2021). As Mason (2010) asserts, a sample size of 10-15 is often sufficient in qualitative studies using interviews to achieve data saturation, whereby no significant new themes emerge in additional data collection. Therefore, the proposed sample size is considered adequate to gain comprehensive insights without redundancy. This aligns with recommended guidelines for interpretivist studies seeking 'information-rich' perspectives relevant to phenomenon of interest, rather than representativeness (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Data Collection Instruments

For data collection in this study, two primary instruments were utilized: interview guides and document review checklists. The interview guides were designed to facilitate in-depth discussions with participants about Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policy. These guides consisted of open-ended questions that delved into various aspects of procurement, including policy formulation, implementation, and the impact on ethical sourcing practices. The development of these guides involved thorough research to ensure the questions were both relevant and comprehensive in covering all necessary topics.

Alongside the interviews, document review checklists were used to systematically analyze relevant procurement documents at Stuttafords Zambia. These checklists guided the examination of documents such as policy manuals, compliance reports, supplier contracts, and audit records, ensuring a thorough and consistent review process. To validate these data collection instruments, a pilot test with a select group from the target population was conducted. This will help refine the instruments, ensuring they effectively capture the required information.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was carried out with meticulous attention to detail, beginning with the systematic organization of data collected from interviews and document reviews. Interview responses were transcribed to ensure accuracy, while documents were summarized with a focus on extracting key information pertinent to the study's objectives. Following this, a thematic content analysis was conducted, which involved reviewing and categorizing recurring ideas and patterns within the data. This structured approach to data analysis was designed to be comprehensive, accurate, and insightful, ultimately enhancing the broader understanding of ethical sourcing within procurement practices.

Results and Discussion

This section is organized around the study's specific objectives, offering insights into the companies' current procurement policies, the ethical sourcing measures embedded within these policies, and the influence of these policies on promoting ethical conduct across their supply chain. The first objective's analysis reveals that Stuttafords Zambia procurement policies such as competitive bidding, vendor selection criteria, and a supplier code of conduct establish a structured framework aimed at transparency, efficiency, and adherence to ethical standards. Comparisons with other studies confirm that these practices align with industry best practices, which prioritize ethical compliance, fair competition, and accountability.

The findings from the first objective reveal that Stuttafords Zambia has established comprehensive procurement policies aimed at promoting ethical sourcing, transparency, and efficiency within its procurement processes. The key policies include ethical standards, competitive bidding, vendor selection, and structured approval processes. These policies help the company to maintain fairness and avoid favouritism, ensuring that supplier selection is transparent and value-driven. According to one respondent, *"competitive bidding is fundamental, with the organization typically sourcing three quotations to ensure fair supplier competition."* Another respondent highlighted *"vendor selection criteria,"* which guides the evaluation of suppliers based on compliance with ethical standards and ability to meet Stuttafords requirements. These practices are crucial in managing procurement decisions and maintaining operational transparency.

To address ethical sourcing, Stuttafords integrates guidelines within its procurement policies, such as the supplier code of conduct. This code requires suppliers to adhere to

ethical standards in labor, human rights, and environmental protection, thus promoting responsible sourcing practices. Participants also mentioned the due diligence processes, including audits and sustainability criteria, which reinforce ethical supplier behavior. By establishing clear compliance requirements, Stuttafords mitigates risks associated with unethical sourcing, as one participant stated, "we require our suppliers to disclose information about their sourcing practices and compliance with the labor laws".

In comparing Stuttaford's approach with other studies on procurement policies, it becomes clear that the company aligns with broader trends in ethical sourcing and compliance monitoring. Studies by Dai et al. (2020) and Wambua and Kagiri (2019) emphasize competitive bidding and vendor selection as essential practices for ensuring value and transparency in procurement. These studies support the idea that well-defined competitive bidding as seen at Stuttafords contributes to improving supplier relations.

Furthermore, Stuttafords' focus on the supplier code of conduct and ethical sourcing policies is consistent with findings by Chen et al. (2020) and Islam and Alharti (2020), who observed that clear ethical standards in procurement significantly improve the integrity of supplier relationships. These researchers argue that transparent ethical standards, such as those seen in Stuttafords' policies, are key to fostering a responsible and sustainable supply chain. Similarly, Zafar et al. (2023) demonstrated that when organizations prioritize ethical considerations, they benefit from strengthened reputational integrity and risk mitigation.

The practices observed at Stuttafords Zambia are supported by empirical research indicating that structured procurement policies and compliance mechanisms enhance organizational reputation and supplier relationships. Dai et al. (2020) show that structured approval and competitive bidding policies lead to procurement efficiency by balancing cost-effectiveness and transparency, a practice mirrored in Stuttafords' approach. Moreover, Wanjiku (2019) supports the notion that vendor selection processes help in upholding ethical standards within procurement, demonstrating that firms with strong procurement guidelines tend to have better outcomes in ethical sourcing.

The incorporation of ethical standards within procurement policies, as emphasized by Wambua and Kagiri (2019), ensures alignment with sustainability goals. Stuttaford's use of ethical criteria and due diligence reflects best practices in procurement, as it enables the company to monitor supplier adherence effectively. Similarly, Chen et al. (2020) underscore the importance of compliance requirements and the role of vendor audits in ethical sourcing, supporting Stuttafords' method of reinforcing supplier accountability and ensuring ethical standards are met.

The company has implemented ethical sourcing practices, requiring suppliers to follow strict standards in environmental sustainability and anti-corruption. Supplier selection, regular audits, and compliance checks reinforce ethical behavior, with supplier development programs providing additional support. The company's initiatives are consistent with global trends in ethical sourcing, as seen in comparable studies that

emphasize the importance of continuous supplier engagement and monitoring to uphold ethical standards.

The objective of examining the ethical sourcing practices when interacting with suppliers integrates ethical sourcing practices by establishing a comprehensive supplier code of conduct, which mandates compliance with strict ethical standards. This code covers essential areas, ensuring that suppliers adhere to ethical practices throughout their business operations. Respondents indicated that ethical sourcing requirements are embedded in every stage of the procurement process, from supplier pre-qualification to ongoing audits and compliance checks, ensuring continuous alignment with Stuttaford's ethical standards. This rigorous approach reflects Stuttaford's commitment to ethical integrity across its supply chain, as demonstrated by participants who mentioned that suppliers are required to sign agreements committing to these ethical standards.

The supplier selection criteria employed at Stuttafords Zambia further enforces ethical sourcing by including requirements related to fair labor practices. Prospective suppliers are evaluated based on their ability to meet these standards and provide documented evidence of compliance, which is then used for regular reviews. Suppliers are also expected to uphold fair trade principles, show environmental stewardship, and follow the anti-bribery policies. This process emphasizes the company's commitment to partnering only with suppliers whose values align with the company goals, as expressed by one participant: *"We assess potential suppliers based on their adherence to labor rights and ethical business practices."* Such comprehensive supplier selection practices are designed to ensure that new partnerships contribute positively to Stuttafords ethical procurement strategy. The company has implemented several initiatives to strengthen ethical sourcing among its suppliers through the provision of training sessions, compliance audits, and an ethics hotline for reporting issues. The company also runs supplier development programs and ethics workshops aimed at educating its stakeholders on ethical standards and offering tools to help them meet these requirements. Through these audits and workshops, suppliers are kept informed on their ethical expectations, reinforcing the organization's commitment to continuous improvement. Another participant described the supplier development program as central to educating suppliers about ethical standards, showing that these initiatives not only enforce compliance but also foster collaborative relationships that promote sustainable practices.

To ensure sustained compliance with ethical sourcing standards, Stuttafords conducts thorough and regular audits, including both scheduled and surprise inspections, to assess suppliers adherence to ethical standards. Monitoring mechanisms include routine compliance checks, performance reviews, and stakeholder feedback, providing multiple layers of assessment. Participants shared that they hold regular meetings with suppliers to discuss compliance and address any emerging issues, promoting a transparent and proactive approach to ethical monitoring. One respondent stated, *"Our monitoring process includes conducting regular ethical audits, reviewing compliance documentation, and*

analyzing supplier performance metrics." This structured approach underscores Stuttaford's dedication to maintaining ethical integrity within its supplier relationships.

When ethical issues are identified within the supply chain, Stuttafords Zambia implements corrective action plans in collaboration with the affected suppliers. These plans typically include setting deadlines for improvement, conducting follow-up inspections, and offering additional training or resources to support compliance efforts. Stuttafords takes a proactive approach to ensuring that suppliers resolve any compliance issues effectively, as illustrated by a participant who explained, *"We address ethical sourcing issues by implementing corrective action plans in collaboration with affected suppliers and providing additional support as needed."* This method not only resolves immediate ethical concerns but also strengthens the long-term alignment of suppliers with Stuttaford's ethical sourcing standards.

Stuttafords' commitment to embedding ethical sourcing into its procurement policies aligns with the best practice identified in other studies. Etse, McMurray, and Muenjohn (2023) found that implementing ethical sourcing policies such as supplier codes of conduct enhances supplier accountability and encourages sustainable practices. Similarly, Islam and Alharti (2020) highlight that companies promoting ethical sourcing through supplier training and development programs often see improved adherence to ethical standards within their supply chains. These studies reinforce the effectiveness of Stuttafords' approach to integrating training, compliance monitoring, and corrective actions into its ethical sourcing strategy.

Moreover, Wambua and Kagiri (2019) emphasize the significance of selecting suppliers based on labor and environmental criteria, noting that these measures foster greater ethical commitment. Stuttafords' supplier evaluation criteria resonate with these findings, as they ensure suppliers ethical conduct through stringent pre-qualification and regular compliance assessments.

Wambua and Kagiri (2019) provide empirical evidence that supplier selection criteria focused on labor and environmental standards help companies build robust ethical practices in their procurement operations. Additionally, Islam and Alharti (2020) suggest that companies that provide ongoing training and resources to suppliers tend to foster sustainable partnerships, which is evident in Stuttaford's initiatives to engage suppliers in ethics workshops and development programs. This proactive training and monitoring approach is validated by Etse et al. (2023), who argue that regular audits and compliance checks create a culture of accountability among suppliers, essential for maintaining ethical standards.

Stuttafords Zambia's ethical sourcing practices are comprehensive and align with global best practices. Through stringent supplier selection, continuous monitoring, supplier engagement initiatives, and corrective measures. Stuttafords maintains a high standard of ethical sourcing that is both proactive and collaborative. Comparative studies confirm the

efficacy of these practices, reinforcing that supplier development and rigorous compliance monitoring are essential for ensuring ethical integrity across the supply chain.

The third objective examines the influence of Stuttafords' procurement policies on ethical sourcing. Findings indicate that policies like the supplier code of conduct and regular compliance audits create a strong ethical foundation across the supply chain, promoting responsible practices and mitigating risks associated with unethical sourcing. Comparative studies affirm that well-defined procurement policies significantly shape ethical sourcing practices, enhancing accountability and transparency.

The third objective of the study was to understand the influence of Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies on their ethical sourcing practices. The findings indicate that Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies have a substantial influence on their ethical sourcing practices. Key procurement policy elements such as the supplier code of conduct, rigorous supplier selection criteria, and regular monitoring and evaluation processes play a pivotal role in embedding ethical sourcing principles across the companies' supply chain. By enforcing high standards for supplier conduct related to labor, environmental responsibility, and anti-corruption, Stuttafords not only strengthens compliance but also aligns its sourcing practices with broader ethical values. This alignment is evident as participants noted *that suppliers are required to sign agreements adhering to these standards*, thus establishing a baseline of ethical compliance from the outset of the supplier relationship.

One of the significant impacts of these procurement policies is on supplier accountability. The requirement for regular compliance audits and imposition of corrective actions, when necessary, compels suppliers to consistently uphold ethical standards. For example, Wambua and Kagiri (2019) emphasize that procurement policies with strict compliance mechanisms increase supplier accountability and lead to more transparent and responsible sourcing. This approach parallels the findings at Stuttafords, where compliance monitoring, including both scheduled and surprise audits, reinforces ethical behavior across the supplier base, ensuring that suppliers meet predefined ethical expectations.

The influence of Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies on ethical sourcing aligns with findings from similar studies, which highlight the essential role of structured procurement policies in promoting ethical behavior in sourcing. Dai et al. (2020) found that companies that integrate ethical criteria into procurement policies, such as vendor selection and monitoring requirements, significantly improve their ability to mitigate risks associated with unethical practices. In line with this, Stuttafords' use of comprehensive supplier evaluation, as observed in their adherence to fair labor practices and environmental standards, mirrors best practices seen in other research, where ethical criteria in vendor selection are found to enhance overall procurement outcomes.

The impact of procurement policies on ethical sourcing practices is reinforced in the study by Islam and Alharti (2020), who found that clear policy guidelines on ethical conduct encourage suppliers to adopt responsible practices. The alignment of Stuttafords procurement policies with ethical sourcing, particularly through initiatives like the supplier

code of conduct, promotes ethical compliance and minimizes the risk of unethical activities such as labor violations and environmental degradation. This is further supported by Kim and Chae (2021), who highlighted that companies that enforce ethical codes and conduct regular supplier evaluations are more likely to maintain ethically sound practices within their supply chains.

Empirical evidence from other industries and studies corroborates the influence of well-defined procurement policies on ethical sourcing practices. Zafar et al. (2023) demonstrated that procurement policies focusing on ethical criteria directly influence suppliers' compliance, especially when supported by regular audits and corrective measures. This is consistent with Stuttafords Zambia's practices, as participants noted that suppliers are held to strict standards and are supported through development programs, compliance checks, and training. Such practices ensure that ethical sourcing remains a continuous process, fostering a collaborative approach to achieving shared ethical goals.

It was found that procurement policies with a focus on compliance and monitoring strengthen ethical sourcing by building long-term relationships with responsible suppliers. Stuttaford's ongoing dialogue and regular evaluations with suppliers mirror this finding, as the company actively works with suppliers to address ethical issues and encourage continuous improvement. This approach underscores the positive influence of structured procurement policies in shaping a sustainable and ethically compliant supply chain.

Overall, it has been demonstrated that Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies play a critical role in promoting ethical sourcing practices, supported by mechanisms such as supplier evaluations, compliance monitoring, and corrective actions. The findings align with broader literature, underscoring that structured procurement policies are essential for fostering ethical standards in the supply chain, despite challenges related to regional regulatory differences and supplier capabilities.

Recommendations

- **Increase Frequency of Supplier Audits:** These audits can help identify and address potential issues early, strengthening supplier relationships and maintaining high ethical standards.
- **Establish a Supplier Feedback System:** by allowing suppliers to share challenges and insights, Stuttafords could better support compliance efforts and adapt its policies to address supplier needs effectively.
- **Introduce Ethical Sourcing Incentives:** Such initiatives can foster a competitive yet responsible supplier environment aligned with Stuttafords' ethical goals.

Future Research Areas

- **Longitudinal Impacts of Procurement Policies:** Future studies could focus on the long-term effects of procurement policies on ethical sourcing outcomes, exploring how consistent policy application influences supplier behavior and compliance.

- **Comparative Analysis Across Industries:** Comparing ethical sourcing practices in industries similar to and distinct from the moving industry could offer valuable insights into which policies and practices are universally effective and which may need industry-specific adaptation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitation	Description
Sample Size and Scope	The study's focus on a single company and a limited participant sample restricts the generalizability of findings to the broader moving industry.
Geographical Focus	Limited to Zambia, which may not reflect the regulatory, cultural, and economic differences affecting ethical sourcing in other regions or countries.
Reliance on Self-Reported Data	Data from interviews may contain biases due to personal perspectives or recall inaccuracies, potentially affecting the objectivity and reliability of responses.
Time Constraints	Conducted within a limited timeframe, which restricted the depth of data collection and analysis. A longer study could reveal more on policy evolution and long-term impacts.
Complexity of Measuring Ethical Impact	Evaluating ethical sourcing effectiveness is complex, with qualitative and quantitative factors that may not show immediate impact, requiring extended time for full assessment.
Lack of Industry-Wide Comparisons	Without data from other companies, it is challenging to benchmark Stuttafords Zambia's practices against broader industry standards, limiting conclusions on best practices.
Sampling bias	Given the scope of the study, the sample size may not fully represent the diverse range of companies within the moving industry. Smaller, informal businesses, which constitute a significant portion of the sector, may not be well-represented due to challenges in accessing this group. As a result, the findings might not reflect the perspectives or practices of all industry players, particularly those operating outside formal channels.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of procurement policies in promoting ethical sourcing in the Zambian moving industry remains limited due to a range of barriers, not limited to lack of awareness, enforcement challenges, and informal nature. However, there are opportunities for improvement through enhanced capacity building, stronger regulatory frameworks, and greater collaboration with stakeholders. By addressing these challenges, Zambia's moving

industry can move towards more ethical, sustainable sourcing practices benefitting both the economy and society at large.

The section is organized around the study's specific objectives, offering insights into the company's current procurement policies, the ethical sourcing measures embedded within these policies, and the influence of these policies on promoting ethical conduct across its supply chain.

Overall, it has been demonstrated that Stuttafords Zambia's procurement policies play a critical role in promoting ethical sourcing practices, supported by mechanisms such as supplier evaluations, compliance monitoring, and corrective actions. The findings align with broader literature, underscoring that structured procurement policies are essential for fostering ethical standards in the supply chain, despite challenges related to regional regulatory differences and supplier capabilities.

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