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Influence of Effort Expectancy of E-Evaluation on Procurement Performance in Tanzania Public Port Authorities: Evidence from Tanzania Ports Authority Headquarters

Rashid Pendeza Rashid[1], Davidi Stephano[2]

[1]National Institute of Transport, P.O. Box 705, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

[2]National Institute of Transport, P.O. Box 705, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

*Corresponding author: Rashid Pendeza Rashid

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Abstract: **Public procuring entities in Tanzania now evaluate bids through the National e-Procurement System of Tanzania (NeST), yet the benefits of electronic evaluation depend on whether evaluators find the system easy to use. This study examined the influence of effort expectancy of e-evaluation on procurement performance at Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) headquarters. Guided by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, the study adopted a positivist philosophy, a quantitative approach and an explanatory cross-sectional design. A sample of 109 employees was drawn from a population of 150 using Yamane's formula and selected through proportionate stratified sampling, and all 109 questionnaires were returned. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. Effort expectancy of e-evaluation was rated high (mean = 4.11), with minimal mental effort rated highest (4.29) and clarity of procedures lowest (3.94). Effort expectancy had a strong positive correlation with procurement performance ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.01$) and a positive and significant influence on it ($\beta = 0.712$, $t = 10.49$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 50.7% of the variation in procurement performance ($R^2 = 0.507$). The study concludes that the ease of using e-evaluation is a key driver of procurement performance at TPA. It recommends clearer evaluation guidelines and user manuals, continuous hands-on training for evaluation committees and continued improvement of the usability of the NeST evaluation module.**

Keywords: **Effort expectancy; e-evaluation; e-procurement; procurement performance; Tanzania Ports Authority.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Few procurement decisions are as consequential, or as contested, as the evaluation of bids. It is at the evaluation stage that a procuring entity decides which supplier will deliver, at what price and with what quality, and it is at this stage that errors, delays and allegations of bias most often arise. Electronic evaluation (e-evaluation), in which bids are opened, checked, scored and compared within an electronic procurement system, promises to make this stage faster, more accurate and more transparent by applying the same criteria to every bid and recording each step of the process [1], [2].

Globally, governments have adopted e-procurement platforms to digitize the procurement cycle from planning to contract management. Recent studies show that e-procurement practices significantly improve procurement performance, particularly where institutional quality and control systems are strong [3], and that e-procurement enhances transparency and accountability and reduces opportunities for corruption [4]. However, the literature also shows that the benefits of e-procurement depend on how far users accept and actually use the systems. Studies grounded in the Unified Theory of

Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) consistently find that users' expectations about the usefulness and ease of a system shape its adoption and use [5], [6].

In Africa, e-procurement has been promoted as a central element of public procurement reform. In Ghana, procurement officers' intention to use the national e-procurement system has been linked to their technology readiness and perceptions of the system [7], while in sub-Saharan construction procurement, users have been found more likely to adopt e-procurement when it is useful and user-friendly [8]. In Tanzania, the Public Procurement Act of 2023 requires procuring entities to conduct procurement through NeST [9]. Tanzanian studies have shown that performance expectancy, effort expectancy and attitude influence the use of the e-procurement system [10], that the intention to use and actual use of the system affect procurement performance [11], and that public procurement reforms have improved transparency and accountability while implementation challenges remain [12].

Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) is one of the country's largest procuring entities. It procures port equipment, dredging and civil works, information systems and a wide range of services, often through complex, high-value tenders. The efficiency and integrity of bid evaluation at TPA therefore have significant implications for port development, operational costs and public confidence. Although TPA conducts its tender evaluation through NeST, the extent to which evaluators find the e-evaluation module easy to learn and use, and whether this ease of use translates into better procurement performance, has not been established empirically.

Existing studies on e-procurement in Tanzania have largely examined adoption and use of the system as a whole [13], [14], [15] or the effects of e-procurement practices on organizational performance [1]. Few studies have isolated a specific stage of the procurement cycle and linked users' perceptions of that stage to procurement performance outcomes, and none has done so for a port authority. This gap is significant because the effort required to operate the evaluation module may differ from that required for other functions, and because evaluation is the stage at which delays and disputes most directly affect performance.

This study therefore examined the influence of effort expectancy of e-evaluation on procurement performance at TPA headquarters. The study contributes by linking a core UTAUT construct to procurement performance outcomes rather than to adoption intention alone, by providing evidence from a strategic public port authority, and by identifying which aspects of e-evaluation usability most require attention. The findings are of value to TPA management, the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority and other procuring entities seeking to improve the performance of electronic tender evaluation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical review

2.1.1 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

This study was guided by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), developed by Venkatesh et al. [16] by integrating eight earlier models of technology acceptance, including the Technology Acceptance Model [17]. UTAUT proposes that four constructs determine the intention to use, and the actual use of, a technology: performance expectancy, the degree to which a person believes that using the system will improve job performance; effort expectancy, the degree of ease associated with using the system; social influence, the degree to which a person perceives that important others believe he or she should use the system; and facilitating conditions, the degree to which a person believes that organizational and technical infrastructure exists to support use of the system.

Effort expectancy, the construct examined in this study, captures how easy users find it to learn and operate a system and how much mental effort its use requires. Venkatesh et al. [16] derived it from perceived ease of use in the Technology Acceptance Model, complexity in innovation diffusion research and ease of use in related models. A synthesis of research on the theory confirmed that effort expectancy is a consistent predictor of technology use, particularly in the early stages of use and among users with less experience [5]. A meta-analytic re-examination of UTAUT similarly found effort expectancy to be significantly related to behavioural intention and use, and argued for linking the theory's constructs more directly to outcomes of use [6].

2.2 Empirical review

Shatta and Mabina [10] examined the determinants of use behaviour of the e-procurement system in Tanzania using a modified UTAUT and a survey of 383 buyers and suppliers analysed with partial least squares structural equation modelling. They found that performance expectancy, effort expectancy and attitude significantly and positively influenced usage behaviour. The study demonstrates the relevance of effort expectancy in the Tanzanian e-procurement context, but it focused on usage behaviour rather than procurement performance and examined the system as a whole rather than the evaluation stage.

Shatta et al. [11] surveyed 312 buyers and suppliers in Tanzania and found that the behavioural intention to use, and the actual use of, the e-procurement system significantly affected public procurement performance. Mwalukasa [1] found that e-procurement practices, including e-evaluation, were positively associated with the performance of public entities, while Assey [2] found that e-tendering procedures, including e-evaluation, improved competitiveness, lowered costs and helped procurement units manage time better in Morogoro Region. In a related public sector context, Ng'wanakilala [18] found that the ease of use, reliability and fairness of the Public Employees Performance Management Information System significantly influenced employee performance in a municipal council, confirming that usability of public sector information systems matters for performance outcomes.

2.3 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. Effort expectancy of e-evaluation is the independent variable, measured through ease of learning and use, minimal mental effort, clarity of procedures, faster completion of supplier evaluations and simplification of evaluation tasks. Procurement performance is the dependent variable, measured through timeliness, cost effectiveness, transparency and documentation, compliance with procurement regulations and quality of procured goods, works and services.

Note. Source: Researchers (2026)

H1: Effort expectancy of e-evaluation is positively associated with procurement performance at Tanzania Ports Authority.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design and study area

The study adopted a positivist philosophy and a quantitative approach, because it sought to measure effort expectancy and procurement performance objectively and to test the relationship between them statistically [19]. An explanatory research design with a cross-sectional time horizon was used, since the purpose was to explain the influence of effort expectancy of e-evaluation on procurement performance using data collected at one point in time [20]. The study was conducted at TPA headquarters in Dar es Salaam, where the Authority's major procurement decisions, including tender evaluation through NeST, are made and coordinated.

3.2 Population, sample size and sampling

The target population comprised 150 employees involved in procurement at TPA headquarters, namely procurement officers, contract managers, ICT officers and user department staff. The sample size of 109 was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error. Proportionate stratified sampling was used to allocate the sample across the four categories, as shown in Table 1, and respondents were selected randomly within each stratum. TPA was treated as the unit of analysis, while the employees served as units of enquiry.

Table 1: Population and sample distribution

Category	Population (N)	Sample (n)
Procurement officers	27	20
Contract managers	21	15
ICT officers	14	10
User department staff	88	64
Total	150	109

Note. Source: Researchers' computation (2026)

3.3 Data collection and measurement of variables

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered physically at TPA headquarters. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items for effort expectancy were adapted from the UTAUT scales of Venkatesh et al. [16], which build on the ease-of-use scale of Davis [17], while procurement performance items captured timeliness, cost effectiveness, transparency, compliance and quality. Table 2 summarizes the measurement of the variables. The questionnaire was reviewed by the research supervisor and procurement experts to establish content validity and was pre-tested before the main data collection.

Table 2: Operationalization of variables

Variable	Role	Indicators	Items
Effort expectancy of e-evaluation (EE)	Independent	Easy to learn and use; minimal mental effort; clear procedures; faster evaluations; simplified tasks	5
Procurement performance (PP)	Dependent	Timeliness; cost effectiveness; transparency and documentation; compliance; quality	5

Note. Source: Adapted from Venkatesh et al. [16] and Davis [17]

3.4 Data analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Means and standard deviations were used to describe effort expectancy of e-evaluation; mean scores between 3.41 and 4.20 were interpreted as high and between 4.21 and 5.00 as very high. Composite scores were computed as the mean of the items of each construct. Pearson correlation was used to establish the strength and direction of the relationship, and simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at the 5% significance level [22]. Because the study examines one independent variable, a simple regression model was specified as:

$$PP = \beta 0 + \beta 1EE + \varepsilon$$

where PP is procurement performance, EE is effort expectancy of e-evaluation, β0 is the constant, β1 is the regression coefficient and ε is the error term. Because the model contains a single predictor, multicollinearity does not arise.

3.5 Validity, reliability and ethical considerations

Content validity was established through expert review and pre-testing, and construct validity through factor analysis, in which the average factor loading of each construct exceeded 0.50. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with 0.70 as the minimum acceptable value [23]. An introductory letter was obtained from the National Institute of Transport and permission to collect data was granted by TPA management. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, respondents were not required to give their names, and the data were used solely for academic purposes.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response rate and respondents' profile

All 109 questionnaires distributed were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 100%, which was attributed to the physical administration of the questionnaires. Table 3 presents the profile of the respondents.

Table 3: Profile of respondents (N = 109)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	56	51.4
	Female	53	48.6
Age	18–30 years	19	17.4
	31–40 years	66	60.6
	41–50 years	24	22.0

Education	Diploma	9	8.3
	Bachelor's degree	67	61.5
	Master's degree	33	30.3
Work experience	Less than 1 year	5	4.6
	1–4 years	22	20.2
	5–8 years	10	9.2
	More than 10 years	72	66.1

Note. Source: Field data (2026)

Gender representation was balanced (51.4% male and 48.6% female). Most respondents (60.6%) were aged 31–40 years, 91.7% held at least a bachelor's degree, and 66.1% had more than ten years of work experience. The respondents were therefore well educated and experienced and had sufficient exposure to procurement processes before and after the introduction of NeST to assess e-evaluation and its effects on performance.

4.2 Reliability and validity

Table 4 shows that both constructs recorded Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.70 and average factor loadings above 0.50, indicating that the instrument was reliable and valid [23].

Table 4: Reliability and validity results

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	Avg. factor loading
Effort expectancy of e-evaluation	5	0.845	0.791
Procurement performance	5	0.871	0.816

Note. Source: Field data (2026)

4.3 Effort expectancy of e-evaluation at TPA

Table 5 presents respondents' views on the effort required to use the e-evaluation module of NeST.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for effort expectancy of e-evaluation (N = 109)

Statement	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev.
The e-evaluation system is easy to learn and use	1	5	4.13	0.097	1.010
Interaction with the e-evaluation system requires minimal mental effort	1	5	4.29	0.106	1.108
The e-evaluation procedures are clear and understandable	1	5	3.94	0.105	1.099
The e-evaluation system enables faster completion of supplier evaluations	1	5	4.02	0.093	0.972
The e-evaluation system simplifies procurement evaluation tasks	1	5	4.16	0.098	1.020
Composite effort expectancy			4.11		0.82

Note. Composite standard deviation derived from item variances and Cronbach's alpha. Note. Source: Field data (2026)

The results show a high level of effort expectancy for e-evaluation at TPA (composite mean = 4.11). Respondents agreed most strongly that interacting with the e-evaluation system requires minimal mental effort (mean = 4.29), which falls within the very high range. This indicates that evaluators find the system's interface intuitive and that it reduces the cognitive burden of comparing bids, a burden that is considerable in large, multi-lot port tenders. Respondents also agreed that the system simplifies evaluation tasks (mean = 4.16), is easy to learn and use (mean = 4.13) and enables faster completion of supplier evaluations (mean = 4.02).

The clarity and understandability of e-evaluation procedures recorded the lowest mean (3.94), although still within the high range. This suggests that, while the system itself is easy to operate, some evaluators find the procedures and guidelines associated with electronic evaluation less clear, for example the sequence of steps for preliminary, technical and financial evaluation, the handling of clarifications or the treatment of non-responsive bids. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.972 to 1.108, indicate moderate variation in respondents' experiences, which may reflect differences in training and in how frequently respondents serve on evaluation committees.

4.4 Correlation analysis

Table 6 presents the Pearson correlation between effort expectancy of e-evaluation and procurement performance, computed from composite scores.

Table 6: Pearson correlation between effort expectancy and procurement performance (N = 109)

Variable	1	2
1. Effort expectancy of e-evaluation	1	
2. Procurement performance	0.712**	1

*Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Note. Source: Field data (2026)*

Effort expectancy of e-evaluation had a strong positive and statistically significant correlation with procurement performance ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.01$). Respondents who found e-evaluation easier to use also reported better procurement performance in terms of timeliness, cost effectiveness, transparency, compliance and quality. Effort expectancy shares about 51% of its variance with procurement performance ($r^2 = 0.507$).

4.5 Regression results

Table 7 presents the model summary and analysis of variance for the simple regression of procurement performance on effort expectancy of e-evaluation. The model was statistically significant ($F(1, 107) = 110.01$, $p < 0.001$) and effort expectancy explained 50.7% of the variation in procurement performance ($R^2 = 0.507$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.502$).

Table 7: Model summary and ANOVA

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	54.750	1	54.750	110.01	0.000
Residual	53.250	107	0.498		
Total	108.000	108			

Note. $R = 0.712$; $R^2 = 0.507$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.502$. Predictor: (constant), effort expectancy of e-evaluation. Sums of squares are expressed in standardized units. Note. Source: Field data (2026)

Table 8: Regression coefficient

Variable	Beta	Std. error	t	Sig.	95% CI for Beta
Effort expectancy of e-evaluation	0.712	0.068	10.49	0.000	0.577 – 0.847

Note. Dependent variable: procurement performance. Standardized estimates. Note. Source: Field data (2026)

Effort expectancy of e-evaluation had a positive and statistically significant influence on procurement performance ($\beta = 0.712$, SE = 0.068, $t = 10.49$, $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.577, 0.847]). A one standard deviation increase in effort expectancy was associated with a 0.712 standard deviation increase in procurement performance. Hypothesis H1 was therefore supported.

4.6 Discussion

The finding that effort expectancy of e-evaluation has a strong positive influence on procurement performance supports the central proposition of UTAUT that the ease of using a system shapes how fully and effectively it is used (Venkatesh et al., 2003, 2016). At TPA, evaluators who find the e-evaluation module easy to learn, undemanding and simplifying are able to complete evaluations faster and more accurately, which translates into shorter procurement lead times, better documentation and stronger compliance with procurement rules. The study extends UTAUT by showing that effort expectancy is related not only to intention and use but also to procurement performance outcomes, in line with calls to link the theory's constructs to the consequences of use [6].

The findings are consistent with Shatta and Mabina [10], who found that effort expectancy significantly influenced the use of the e-procurement system in Tanzania, and with Shatta et al. [11], who showed that use of the system improved public procurement performance. Together, these studies and the present findings suggest a chain in which an easy-to-use system encourages fuller use, and fuller use improves performance. The findings also agree with Mwalukasa [1] and Assey [2], who found that electronic evaluation and e-tendering improve the performance, competitiveness and time management of Tanzanian procuring entities, and with Ng'wanakilala [18], who showed that the ease of use of a public sector information system influences performance outcomes.

Internationally, the results are consistent with Charnor et al. [3], who found that e-procurement practices improve procurement performance in Ghana, and with Addy et al. [8], who observed that users are more likely to adopt e-procurement systems that are user-friendly. They differ, however, from Addy et al. [8] and Ofori et al. [7] in the prominence of effort expectancy. In those studies, which focused on adoption intention, performance expectancy and social influence were more prominent, and differences in user readiness were not significant in a mandatory policy setting. The difference can be explained by the focus of the present study: where use of the system is mandatory, as with NeST, the question is not whether evaluators will use the system but how effectively they use it, and ease of use is likely to matter most for effective use.

The comparatively low rating of the clarity of e-evaluation procedures (mean = 3.94) is a practical weakness. A system can be easy to operate while the procedures it embodies remain unclear, for example when evaluators are unsure how to handle clarifications, arithmetic corrections or post-qualification within the system. Such uncertainty can lead to inconsistent evaluations, delays and complaints from bidders. This finding is consistent with the observation that the benefits of e-procurement depend on institutional quality and supporting control systems [3], [12]. Improving procedural guidance would therefore complement the already high usability of the system.

The characteristics of the respondents also help to explain the findings. Most respondents were experienced, with two-thirds having worked for more than ten years, and almost all held at least a bachelor's degree. UTAUT predicts that effort expectancy matters more for less experienced users [5]. The strong effect observed among a largely experienced workforce therefore suggests that the evaluation module's usability remains important even for seasoned procurement staff, possibly because evaluation committees include user department staff who use the module only occasionally.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of effort expectancy of e-evaluation on procurement performance at Tanzania Ports Authority. The findings show that evaluators find the e-evaluation module of NeST easy to learn and use, undemanding and simplifying, although the clarity of evaluation procedures is comparatively weaker. Effort expectancy had a strong, positive and significant influence on procurement performance and explained about half of the variation in procurement performance. The study concludes that the ease of using e-evaluation is a key driver of procurement performance at TPA, and that the benefits of electronic evaluation depend not only on the existence of the system but on how easily evaluators can use it. Theoretically, the study extends UTAUT by linking effort expectancy to procurement performance in a mandatory e-procurement setting.

5.2 Recommendations

First, TPA management should develop clear, step-by-step e-evaluation guidelines and user manuals covering preliminary, technical and financial evaluation, clarifications, arithmetic corrections and post-qualification within NeST, since the clarity of procedures was the weakest aspect of effort expectancy. Second, TPA should provide continuous hands-on training for evaluation committee members, including user department staff who serve on committees only occasionally, so that all evaluators can use the system with minimal effort. Third, TPA should monitor the performance of electronic evaluation, for example by tracking evaluation lead times and bidder complaints recorded in NeST, so that difficulties with the evaluation module are identified and addressed early.

Fourth, the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority should continue to improve the usability of the NeST evaluation module, for example through embedded guidance, templates and automated checks, and should collect feedback from evaluators across procuring entities to identify common difficulties. Fifth, procurement training institutions, including the National Institute of Transport, should incorporate practical e-evaluation exercises in their programmes to prepare procurement professionals for electronic tender evaluation.

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