



THE INFLUENCE OF AWARENESS CREATION CAMPAIGNS ON SPECIAL GROUPS' PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN TABORA REGION, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

Making public procurement a tool for encouraging special groups' participation is an interesting agenda from developmental and economic perspectives. The initiative provides a ground for the groups to excel socio-economically. This is after realising there is inadequate participation of special groups in up-taking public procurement opportunities. This study documents the influence of awareness creation on the involvement of special groups in harnessing opportunities in public procurement. A cross-sectional research design was adopted while a sample of 224 respondents was selected using stratified and proportional random sampling techniques. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire and key informant interviews, while descriptive statistics and multiple regression models were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that training of special groups ($p=0.015$), availability of mentorship forums ($p=0.000$), and dissemination of information about preference schemes given to special groups ($p=0.000$) had a significant influence on special groups' participation in procurement opportunities. The study concludes that awareness creation, mentoring and training had a significant relationship with special groups' participation in public procurement opportunities. The study recommends that the Local Government Authorities should put more initiatives into creating awareness and enforcing the applicability of preference schemes to the special groups towards harnessing public procurement opportunities.

Keywords: Special groups, Public procurement, Opportunities, Participation, Mentorship forum

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1. Introduction

Public procurement as a process of acquiring goods, services and works by public sector for the welfare and interests of the public has recently been emphasised by governments for the purpose of properly functioning and delivery of services to its citizens. The process encompasses the purchase of office paper, contracting for the regular maintenance of roads, construction of schools, purchase of hospital supplies, renewal of the fleet of city buses or secure computer services in public buildings (World Bank, 2018; Komakech, 2016). Thus, public procurement has recently been considered an important tool to encourage participation of special groups-owned enterprises in developmental economic activities. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) opines that involving companies owned by special



groups in developmental economic activities seems to be an exciting fairground and forum from a developmental and economic perspective (OECD, 2018).

According to the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA), special groups in the public procurement perspective included the registered enterprises established by youth, women, elders and people with disabilities for the purpose of harnessing procurement opportunities, among other objectives (PPRA, 2020). Literature on issues related to people with disabilities, women, and youths, include the study by Karani (2017), United Nations (2019), and Hoekman and Tas (2019) indicate that inclusive growth is vital for achieving many Sustainable Development Goals. The engagement of special groups in harnessing opportunities in public procurement is a very important government function towards promoting inclusivity and development of local firms and enterprises through preferential schemes (Loader, 2013). Thus, access to procurement opportunities and the subsequent participation in public procurement is essential towards enhancing inclusivity. Participation is measured in terms of how many special groups have access to public procurement opportunities in the supply of goods, services and works through special groups' preferential scheme.

Around 2000s, governments in the world started struggling with practises of empowering youths, women, and people with disabilities (United Nations, 2000). As a mechanism to address the challenges, governments have been urged to ensure that adequate attention is provided in solving challenges associated with economic empowerment of special groups in the country (Wamoto, 2017). Such efforts among others are meant to address the issues of inadequate participation of special groups in various national development and economic issues, including their access to public procurement opportunities (Nicholas and Fruhmann, 2014). Public procurement being the largest consumer of government development budgets and the source of opportunities for business entities is considered to be among the avenue for hedging the challenge. In Tanzania for example, all procuring entities are required to set a mandatory thirty percent (30%) of their annual procurement volume for special groups to participate in public procurement (Regulation 30 C, PPR Amendments 2013). In Kenya, the findings by Karani and Moronge (2017) indicate that special groups constitute a significant portion of the entire population. However, despite the existence of preferential schemes their participation and access to public procurement opportunities was still less than 10%.

Mexico, one of the prominent North American countries, since 2008 instituted several policy reforms on the procurement system. Such efforts by Mexican government aimed at increasing the participation of people with disabilities, women and youths in accessing public procurement opportunities (Silva and Scott, 2014). The policies included but not limited to the establishment of law that pushes all procuring entities to procure at least 35% of all annual services, works, and goods from businesses owned by special groups, establishing Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) online support portal and SME training, and increase of financial support options (OECD, 2013). Additionally, such efforts have resulted in the increase of contracts awarded to companies owned by people with disabilities, women and youth from 17,660 to 110,017 million pesos between 2009 and 2016 (DCED, 2017).

The Republic of Korea, on the other hand provides another good example of the countries that have made commendable efforts in empowering and improving special groups' participation in developmental economic activities. According to Jones (2011), the Republic of Korea has established procurement policies that empower special groups to participate in procurement opportunities. The efforts include increased access to financial services, waiver of various bidding procedure fees, capacity building through training and advance payments to special groups (WTO, 2016; OECD, 2016; ADB, 2012; and Jones, 2011). Asian Development Bank (2012) reports that, after implementing the aforementioned policies, almost 99.5% of the registered bidders on the electronic procurement system were from small and medium enterprises, and some of them were owned by special groups. However, challenges facing companies owned by special groups remained. Such challenges included bid-riggings, corruption, lack of securities for large contracts, and late payments for completed contracts (Jones, 2011).

The same situation has been observed in India, where the Ministry of Finance issued basic guidelines on procurement policies and regulations to encourage special groups' participation in government procurement opportunities (DCED, 2017). These include the formation of Consortia, where groups of companies owned by special groups were allowed to join efforts and hedge their chances of winning larger contracts which would otherwise have not been possible for them to succeed on their own based on capabilities (Garcia, 2009). The special groups were exempted from paying security deposits and earned money and penalties for payment delay (beyond 90 days) where procuring entities are liable to pay interest at a rate of 5% higher than the prevailing bank rate to the companies owned by special groups (WTO, 2015 and Varhad Group, 2013).

Besides Mexico, the Republic of Korea and India, the government of Ghana also made great efforts in reforming the public procurement system towards capacity-building initiatives to enhance the participation of special groups (International Trade Centre, 2015). The reforms provided an opportunity to sensitise procurement officials to unique issues pertaining to the special group businesses, including the benefits of preferential policies. In East Africa, the Kenyan government has also made initiatives to establish a policy requirement for allocating at least 30% of all public procurement opportunities to special groups. The requirements have hardly been realised due to some challenges faced by companies owned by the special groups, including shortage of funds, limited access to information, lack of training and poor tendering process (Ngure and Simba, 2015).

In Tanzania, the government has enacted laws and put in place regulations requiring every procuring entity to include specific procurement opportunities for special groups in their annual procurement plans (URT, 2016). Nevertheless, despite the effort, the annual procurement performance evaluation reports by the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) indicate that there is inadequate participation of special groups in public procurement opportunities (PPRA, 2018, 2019). Moreover, the PPRA annual performance evaluation report for the 2017/2018 financial year documented that only 13 firms were accepted for registration in the preference scheme. Furthermore, out of 103 audited Procuring Entities (PE), 70 Procuring Entities were penalised for not granting an exclusive preference of 30 percent in their annual procurement plans to special groups in the financial year 2018/2019. Other challenges include limited adherence to the established regulations by the procuring entities, lack of access to information about procurement opportunities lack of financial capacity and inadequate awareness creation on preference scheme given to special groups (Kimambo, 2019; PPRA, 2019; Wamoto, 2017; Karani and Makori, 2017).

In a nutshell, the literature including Hivos (2018), International Growth Centre (IGC) (2019) and PPRA (2020) show that successful engagement of special groups in public procurement opportunities require rising general awareness about special groups and providing training that would give proper skills in preparing tenders, procurement procedures, project execution, managing financial issues and dispute resolution. Additionally, the provision of training and mentorships on information and communication technology (ICT) skills such as searching procurement opportunities through the internet (tender portal) can help transform their perception towards undertaking investments and engaging in public procurement opportunities (International Growth Centre, 2019). This implies that the increase in creating awareness to special groups is likely to increase their participation in public procurement opportunities. Thus, the study is hypothesised that:

H₁: There is no significant relationship between the provision of training and special groups' participation in public procurement opportunities;

H₂: There is no significant relationship between conducting mentorship forums and special groups' participation in public procurement opportunities; and

H₃: There is no significant relationship between awareness creation through media and special groups' participation in public procurement opportunities.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

The theory of inclusive development guided the study as it emphasises equity and empowerment of special groups as the means of reducing poverty among them (Asian Development Bank, 2007). Also, it deals with human resource development (education, health care), ensuring special groups' participation in economic and social decision-making. Moreover, the theory focuses on gender equality by ensuring the involvement of women in societal and economic development to reduce vulnerabilities as well as risks associated with age and disability (Rauniyar and Kanbur, 2010).

In many developing countries, economic growth has increased inequality (Sen, 2010). Thus, the inclusion theory addresses the arising structural inequalities faced by the disabled, women, youths and indigenous people (UNRISD, 2013). The theory provides that the economic gap that exists could not be bridged without dealing with the governance system as not only a continuous process but also an interactive and adaptive process. Comprehensive growth is likely to occur in a context where there is good governance system such as the rule of law, equity, accountability, respect for human rights, strategic vision, and coherence (Sachs, 2004; Gupta, 2015).

Furthermore, the theory focuses on the poorest, most vulnerable groups (in terms of location, age and sex) and disadvantaged people as well as a gender-sensitive focus on unemployment, income and assets (World Bank, 2009). Inclusiveness also comprises the creation of awareness and ambitions of disabled people, youths, local people, and women in the development practice and enhances their participation in developmental activities (Borel-Saladin and Turok, 2013). Lastly, inclusive growth calls for participatory methodology in capacity building and governance so as to empower special groups excluded in economic activities (Gupta, 2015). Thus, based on the advantages mentioned above, the study applied the theory to analyse awareness and access to procurement opportunities as well as the rising challenges among the special groups.

3. Methodology

A cross-sectional research design was adopted in the study with a mixed methods approach used for the collection of data. The study took place in the Tabora Region. Specifically, it was conducted in three districts, namely, Tabora Municipal, Uyui District, and Nzega Town whereby data were gathered between March and May 2021. The region was chosen because it had registered special groups that were accessible to the researcher.

The study population consisted of 505 special groups registered in the region. The unit of analysis was the special groups, where the company manager of each selected group was approached for the interview as a representative. The study used a sample size of 224 respondents estimated by using Yamane's formula as the study population was less than 10,000 respondents; finite and well-known as shown below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N*(e)^2}$$

Where

N = Population (505 groups)

e = 95% confidence level with +/- 05% i.e. (0.05)

n = sample size

$$n = \frac{505}{1+505*(0.05)^2} = 224 \text{ respondents}$$

The population was divided into three groups (stratum), namely groups of women, youths, and people with a disability based on their similarities. In order to ensure that the sample size was evenly distributed in the geographical study area, the computation of sample size for each group and each district was based on stratified and proportional random sampling. Respondents in each stratum (women, youths, and disabled people) were selected using simple random sampling techniques to avoid bias. A total of 12 key informants were interviewed, including seven procurement staff and five social welfare staff in the study area, which provided basic needed information to get meaningful details for the interpretation of findings.

A survey questionnaire and structured interview guide were used in data collection. The researcher administered the questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions to 224 managers of special groups as representatives. To ensure data validity, the study consulted advice and comments from various experts in procurement and social groups on designed instruments for data collections. Later on, some questions were modified and other themes were added before being provided to the respondents. The study also used internal consistency reliability to measure the degree to which instruments were measured the same way each time they were used under the same condition with the same subjects.

Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and a multiple regression model. Descriptive statistics applied were percentages, mean, and standard deviation analysis for demographic characteristics of respondents, while a multiple regression model was used to test the developed study hypotheses. Multiple regression analysis was used because the dependent variable was numerical data (the number of special groups that participated in the procuring entities offered by the procuring entity). The model assumptions were tested before data analysis. Normality of variables was tested using Kolmogorov and Shapiro-Wilk and the results were both above 0.05, implying that collected data were normally distributed. To test the presence of multicollinearity, the study calculated both the tolerance test and variance inflation factors. The results were >0.01 and <10, respectively, in all predictor variables, implying no presence of multicollinearity.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \dots + \beta_n x_n + \varepsilon$$

Where;

- Y = Participation of Special groups (number of participating groups)
- α = Intercept of the equation
- β_1 to β_n = Regression coefficients.
- X_1 to X_n = Predictor variable
- ε = error term

Table 1: Variable Matrix

Variable	Definition and units of measurement	Expected Sign
Y Participation in Special Groups	A number of Special Groups participated in procuring opportunities	
X ₁ Training (are conducted)	Likert Scale: 5-Point (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)	+
X ₂ Mentorship forums (are existing and working)	Likert Scale: 5-Point (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)	+
X ₃ Advertisements (done on TV, Radio, and Social Media)	Likert Scale: 5-Point (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)	+

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

The characteristics of respondents were categorised in terms of sex, the age, level of education, working experience, and group category of special groups. With regard to sex, findings show that males were 54 (25.5%) while females were 158 (74.5%). This shows clearly that women dominate many special groups which is against other general business areas. Likewise, the demographic statistics of respondents in term of age indicates that 41 (19.3%) of respondents were between 18 and 25 years, 117 (55.2%) between 26 and 35 years old, 50 (23.6%) between 36 and 45 years, and 4 (1.9%) between 46 and 55 years old. These feature reveals that 167 (78.8%) of the respondents in the special group were between 26 and 45 years old, implying that the special groups were dominated by matured youths. The findings agree with Chepkangor and Lubale's (2017) study that majority of people upon reaching the age of 46 to 55 leave this business category. In terms of education level, the highest level of education of the respondents was categorised into five levels which include; secondary school level, basic certificate and ordinary diploma level, bachelor degree level, master degree level, and any other level of education.

Findings reveal that 84 (39.6%) attained secondary education, 52 (24.5%) had certificate or ordinary diploma, 67 (31.6%) had bachelor degree, and 9 (4.2%) had primary education. Also, in understanding working experience of members in special groups, the working experience was classified into three groups showing experience of less than one year, between two to four years, and above five years.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of Respondents		
Male	54	24.5
Female	158	74.5
Age of Respondents		
Between 18 and 25 years	41	19.3
Between 26 and 35 years	117	55.2
Between 36 and 45 years	50	23.6
Between 46 and 55 years	4	1.9
Education level of Respondents		
Primary education level	9	4.2
Basic Certificate/ diploma education level	52	24.5
Bachelor degree education level	67	31.5
Bachelor degree education level	11	17.5
Working experience		
Less than 1 year	37	17.5
Between 2 and 4 years	123	58.0
Above 5 years	52	24.5
Categories of the Respondents		
Women group	144	67.9
Youth group	65	30.7
People with disability group	3	1.4

As shown in Table 2, the findings show that 175 of respondents 2.5% had substantial experience of at least two years in this business area. This implies that respondents had sufficient information about their business operations and participation in accessing opportunities in public procurement. The findings support those by Ngaga and Jeckoniah's (2019) with observation that business experience has a significant influence on the success of a business.

The category of respondents in special groups was another important part that was included to understand the background information of the respondent in the study. Findings reveal that 144 of respondents 67.9% were from the women special groups, 65 (30.7%) were from the youths' special group and only 3 (1.4%) of respondents were from people with disability as detailed in Table 2. Thus, large portion of special groups were dominated by the women group. Such findings imply that most women are willing and able to establish as well as conduct the business in the form of groups compared to other categories.

4.2 Relationship between awareness creation and participation of special groups

In this study, multiple regressions were performed to predict as to whether awareness creation among special groups significantly influenced their participation in up-taking public procurement opportunities or not. Three independent variables, namely, conducting training, mentorship forums, and strong advertisements through televisions, radios, newspapers, and socio-media were used. Since data were collected through Likert scale, the study combined Likert-type items of a dependent variable into a single composite score during data analysis to provide a quantitative measure for a character.

The preliminary summary of the results of the multiple regression model shows that R Square was 0.594 and the adjusted R square was 0.589. The computed coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.589$) implies that

the three predictor variables under the study, explain only 58.9% influence of awareness creation on the participation of special groups in public procurement opportunities. Furthermore, the study tested the fitness of the applied model where the analysis of variance indicated that $F=18.405$ at $p=0.000$ was statistically significant. The findings suggest that the applied model had enough explanatory power to predict the influence of awareness creation on special groups' participation in public procurement opportunities as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA

Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.335	3	2.445	18.405	0.000 ^b
Residual	27.632	208	0.133		
Total	34.967	211			

The influence of training programmes on the participation of special groups in taking opportunities of public procurement was tested at $p < 0.05$ and produced statistically significant results with $p = 0.015$ and β -value = 0.168, as provided in Table 4. The $p = 0.015$, which is less than 0.05, indicated a significant statistical relationship between conducting training programmes and special groups participation in procurement opportunities. The β -value = 0.168 implies that, with every increase of one more training programme, the involvement of special groups increases by 0.168 more in up-taking public procurement opportunities. The study rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the provision of training and special groups' participation in procurement opportunities. Thus, training provisions to special groups, in turn, influence the groups to participate in up-taking opportunities arising from public procurement activities.

Table 4: Influence of awareness creation on special groups participation in procurement opportunities

Variables	Unstd. Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients	Sig.
	β	S.E		
(Constants)	2.920	0.236		0.000
Training programs	0.100	0.041	0.168	0.015
Mentorships forums	0.219	0.034	0.414	0.000
Social-media advertisement	0.735	0.042	0.854	0.000

These findings concur with Shadrack and Warsanga's (2020) findings that one of the motivating factors for women to engage in micro enterprise is acquiring skills for business operations. Also, Munene (2018) noted that training strongly impacted vulnerable groups' participation in procurement opportunities arising out of government procurement activities. Nevertheless, the study findings are inconsistent with the theory of Inclusive Development, which emphasises much on equity and empowerment of special groups, through training with the aim of ensuring their participation in developmental economic activities (Rauniyar and Kanbur, 2010).

The mentorship forum was another strong predictor of awareness of special groups' participation in opportunities arising from public procurement activities. The findings from multiple regression indicate a statistically significant relationship at β -value = 0.414, p -value = 0.000, as shown in Table 4. The p -value = 0.000, which is less than 0.05 implies that the relationship was statistically significant between the predictor variable (mentorship forum) and the dependent variable (participation of special groups). Also, findings $\beta = 0.414$ show that a unit increase in mentorship forum had an influence by 0.414 on the participation of special groups. Based on the findings, the study rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between conducting mentorship forums and special groups' participation in opportunities of public procurement. The findings correspond with Kimambo's (2019) observation that a significant positive relationship between mentorship forums and the participation of youth groups in tender opportunities advertised by the government. Similarly, PPRA (2019) recommended that the National Economic Empowerment Council conduct mentorship forums for capacity building for special groups to enhance their participation in up-taking public procurement opportunities.

Awareness creation through effective advertisements also had a statistically significant influence at β -value = 0.854, p -value = 0.000 (see in Table 4). Thus, conducting effective advertisements about a given preference scheme (a maximum of 30% of the annual procurement volume) to special groups significantly influence groups' participation in procurement opportunities. Furthermore, the findings reveal that holding other independent variables to zero, and an additional of one unit of advertisement of preference scheme given to special groups would increase their participation in public procurement opportunities by 0.854s. Also, a positive significant level of p -value = 0.000 indicates that advertisements were significantly positive for special groups' participation in public procurement opportunities undertakings.

The findings correspond with Tritama's (2016) study findings that social media positively influenced awareness creation to special groups particularly youths and women. Also, the findings are in line to Kumburu's (2021) observation that effective communication is positively allied with SMEs' performance. Thus, social media can create more awareness among special groups, such as youths and women as they are interested in the advertisement displayed. This was supported by a comment of one of the respondents who said that:

“.....if there are effective disseminations of information through social media, televisions, radios and other means of communication about special preference schemes given to special groups in the country, there will be a huge number of special groups registered and participating in public procurement opportunities.....” (Tabora, 12 April 2021).

Therefore, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between awareness creations through media and participation of special groups” is rejected.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Awareness creation through training, mentorship and dissemination of information through televisions, radios, and social media, greatly influences special groups' participation in utilising public procurement opportunities. Thus, the study rejected the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant contribution of awareness creation, mentoring and training on the special groups' participation towards harnessing opportunities in public procurement. The study contributed to what should be done in order to ensure special groups fully participate in public procurement opportunities. The findings on awareness creation generate useful information for policymakers and stakeholders involved in planning and implementing empowering strategies for special groups.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) should continue to sensitise and create awareness to the special groups about the given preference scheme in public procurement opportunities. This can be done through training, provision of mentorship forums, and dissemination of information through media about the registration of special groups and the applicability of preference schemes given in public procurement. Also, special groups should be courageous and upscale their operations to utilise the opportunities given rather than having misconceptions that public procurement opportunities are for large companies only.

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