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## PROCUREMENT PRACTICES AT A GOVERNMENT MEDICAL CENTER: EFFICIENCY, RESPONSIVENESS, AND END-USERS' SATISFACTION

**MAE SHEEN B. SUMBILLA**

**Administrative Officer I**

Western Visayas Medical Center

maesheen0297sumbilla@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This study explored procurement practices at Western Visayas Medical Center, focusing on efficiency, responsiveness, and end-user satisfaction. A qualitative research design was used, with data gathered through semi-structured interviews involving 9 participants from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), Technical Working Group (TWG), and end users. Thematic analysis revealed that procurement practices are systematic, regulated, and guided by established policies. Although efficiency has improved through simplified procedures, it still relies heavily on accurate planning, complete documentation, and workload conditions. The system was found to be highly responsive in urgent or emergencies. Moreover, issues such as delays in approvals, documentation mistakes, and weaknesses in planning continue to affect performance. End-user satisfaction was generally moderate due to variations in processing time. The study emphasizes planning as a central factor and recommends improving planning systems, streamlining procedures, and implementing digital solutions.

**Keywords:** *Procurement Practices, Government Medical Center, Efficiency, Responsiveness*

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## INTRODUCTION

Procurement plays a critical role in the daily operations of government hospitals, ensuring the availability of essential goods and services for healthcare delivery (Preker et al., 2005). In healthcare institutions such as the Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC), the availability of medicines, medical supplies, equipment, and other essential services depends largely on the effectiveness and organization of the procurement system. When procurement processes are inefficient, hospital operations may be disrupted, directly affecting both healthcare workers and patients (World Health Organization, 2021).

In the Philippines, government procurement is governed by Republic Act No. 9184, also known as the Government Procurement Reform Act of 2003, which promotes transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public purchasing (Republic Act No. 9184, 2003). While the law provides a clear legal framework, the actual performance of procurement systems varies across institutions due to differences in internal management practices, interdepartmental coordination, and resource capacity.

As a tertiary government hospital serving the Western Visayas region, WVMC must ensure that its procurement processes not only comply with legal mandates but also respond effectively to operational demands. Efficiency in this context refers to the optimal use of time, cost, and resources in acquiring goods and services (World Bank, 2020). Responsiveness, on the other hand, reflects the ability of the procurement system to adapt quickly to urgent needs, supply shortages, and changing healthcare requirements (OECD, 2019). Equally

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important is end-user satisfaction, as healthcare personnel who directly utilize procured items provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of procurement practices (GAO, 2018).

Given these considerations, this study focuses on evaluating WVMC's procurement practices for efficiency, responsiveness, and end-user satisfaction. By examining these aspects, the research aims to identify strengths and areas for improvement that could enhance service delivery and overall institutional performance.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research design, research method, participants of the study, sampling design, research instrument, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

### Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design to explore procurement practices at the Western Visayas Medical Center regarding efficiency, responsiveness, and end-user satisfaction. Qualitative research focuses on understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding a particular phenomenon.

### Research Method

The study employed a Key Informant Interview (KII) approach using a semi-structured interview guide. This method enabled the researcher to gather detailed information directly from individuals involved in the procurement process. Through open-ended questions, participants described their experiences and perspectives on procurement procedures, challenges encountered, and possible improvements to the system.

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This research design is appropriate for the study because it provides an in-depth understanding of procurement practices from different stakeholders within the institution.

## Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were individuals directly involved in the procurement process at the Western Visayas Medical Center. These participants included representatives from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), Technical Working Group (TWG), and End-Users of procurement services.

Specifically, the study included three (3) participants from each group, namely:

Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) – responsible for overseeing procurement activities and ensuring compliance with government procurement regulations.

Technical Working Group (TWG) – responsible for evaluating technical specifications and assisting the BAC in procurement processes.

End-Users – hospital personnel or departments that request and utilize supplies, equipment, and services procured by the hospital.

These participants were selected because they possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding procurement practices within the institution.

## Sampling Design

This study used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who have direct experience and sufficient knowledge about the topic being studied.

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The researcher purposely selected 3 key informants from each participant group (BAC, TWG, and End-Users) who are actively involved in procurement activities or transactions within the hospital. This method ensured that the information collected was relevant, reliable, and rich in insights.

### Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-made Key Informant Interview Guide. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding procurement practices in the hospital.

The interview guide included questions related to the following areas: 1) Procurement practices and procedures, 2) Efficiency of procurement processes, 3) Responsiveness of the procurement office, 4) Challenges encountered during procurement transactions, 5) End-users' satisfaction with procurement services.

The use of open-ended questions allowed participants to freely express their views and experiences, enabling the researcher to obtain detailed and meaningful data.

The researcher also adhered to the interview protocol for key informants and followed ethical guidelines in conducting the interviews. This involved asking questions related to the main issue, as well as other relevant inquiries to assess the Procurement Practices at Western Visayas Medical Center in terms of efficiency, responsiveness and end users' satisfaction.

The interview questions were also translated into Hiligaynon for the convenience of the participants and the researcher. Transcripts of the interview were translated into English for the benefit of future readers of this research.

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## Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the interview guide was reviewed by experts in public administration and research methodology. The validators examined the questions to assess their clarity, relevance, and appropriateness to the study's objectives.

Based on the validators' recommendations, necessary revisions were made to improve the wording and structure of the questions. This process ensured that the interview guide effectively captured the information needed for the study.

## Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher followed several steps in collecting the study's data.

First, the researcher secured permission from the appropriate authorities of the Western Visayas Medical Center to conduct the study. After obtaining approval, potential participants were identified based on their involvement in procurement activities.

Second, the researcher contacted the selected participants and explained the study's purpose. A consent form was provided to ensure that participation was voluntary and that all information would remain confidential.

Third, the researcher conducted Key Informant Interviews with the participants using the prepared interview guide. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. With the participants' permission, the researcher took notes and recorded the interview to ensure accurate documentation of responses.

Finally, the collected data were transcribed and organized for analysis.

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## Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, a common qualitative research method.

The process involved the following steps:

First, Data Familiarization – The researcher carefully read and reviewed the interview transcripts to become familiar with participants' responses.

Second, Coding – Important statements and ideas from the responses were identified and assigned codes.

Third, Generating Themes – Similar codes were grouped into broader themes related to procurement practices, efficiency, responsiveness, and satisfaction.

Fourth, Reviewing Themes – The themes were examined and refined to ensure they accurately represented the participants' experiences.

Fifth, Interpretation – The themes were interpreted and discussed to provide insights into procurement practices at the Western Visayas Medical Center.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the procurement practices at the Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC) regarding efficiency, responsiveness, and end-user satisfaction, identified the challenges encountered, and derived policy recommendations from the findings. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with selected participants from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), Technical Working Group (TWG),

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and End Users. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and generate meaningful interpretations of procurement practices within the institutional context.

Regarding procurement efficiency, the findings revealed that WVMC operates under a structured, systematic procurement framework guided by legal mandates, such as Republic Act No. 9184 and related policies. Participants consistently described procurement as a step-by-step process governed by standard operating procedures, ensuring compliance and accountability. However, while the system is institutionally efficient, its operational efficiency is significantly influenced by the quality of planning and the completeness of documents. Inefficiencies arise when procurement requests are incomplete, technically inaccurate, or delayed in approval, resulting in extended timelines and repeated processing.

In terms of responsiveness, the study found that the procurement system can respond effectively to urgent and emergencies. Participants noted that procurement processes can be expedited, when necessary, particularly in critical cases involving shortages of medical supplies. However, responsiveness is not consistent across all transactions. It is largely situational and dependent on the classification of requests and the completeness of supporting documents. Additionally, communication plays a vital role in shaping perceptions of responsiveness. Timely updates, follow-ups, and the accessibility of procurement personnel significantly influence how users evaluate the system's responsiveness.

Regarding end-users' satisfaction, the findings indicate that participants are generally satisfied with procurement services, particularly in terms of support, professionalism, and the quality of procured items. However, this satisfaction is conditional and tempered by recurring

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issues such as delays, inconsistencies, and procedural complexities. End users expressed appreciation for procurement personnel's efforts but also highlighted the need to improve turnaround time and the predictability of service delivery.

In relation to challenges encountered in procurement practices, the study identified two major issues: bureaucratic and procedural delays, and planning and technical deficiencies. Multiple layers of approval lead to bureaucratic delays, extensive documentation requirements, and complex procurement processes. Planning deficiencies, on the other hand, stem from inaccurate forecasting, incomplete documentation, and a lack of technical knowledge among requesting units. These challenges are interconnected and contribute to inefficiencies across the procurement process.

Finally, in terms of policy recommendations, participants emphasized the need to strengthen planning and technical capacity, simplify procurement processes, enhance coordination, and adopt digital systems to monitor and track procurement activities. These recommendations reflect a collective recognition that procurement improvements must address both structural and operational issues to achieve better outcomes.

The findings of this study provide several important insights into the nature of procurement practices within a government healthcare institution. First, the study reveals that procurement at WVMC is fundamentally compliance-driven, where adherence to legal and procedural requirements takes precedence over speed and flexibility. While this ensures transparency and accountability, it also introduces rigidity that limits the system's ability to respond efficiently to routine operational needs.

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Second, the study highlights that procurement efficiency is not solely determined by the system itself but is significantly influenced by the quality of inputs provided by stakeholders. Planning, technical specifications, and documentation play a critical role in shaping procurement outcomes. This suggests that inefficiencies are often input-driven rather than process-driven, indicating that improving procurement performance requires strengthening the capacity of end users and technical personnel.

Third, the study demonstrates that procurement responsiveness is situational rather than systemic. The system is capable of rapid action in emergencies, but does not consistently maintain the same level of responsiveness in routine transactions. This creates an imbalance in service delivery, where urgent needs are prioritized while routine requests are delayed.

Fourth, the study reveals that end-users' satisfaction is conditional and fragile. While users appreciate the support and professionalism of procurement personnel, their satisfaction is affected by service delivery inconsistencies and delays. This indicates that maintaining satisfaction requires not only delivering quality outputs but also ensuring consistency and predictability in procurement processes.

Finally, the study underscores that procurement challenges are systemic and interconnected, rather than isolated issues. Procedural delays, planning deficiencies, and coordination challenges are linked and collectively contribute to inefficiencies. Addressing these challenges, therefore, requires a holistic approach that considers both upstream and downstream factors in the procurement process.

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## Conclusions

The study's analysis and insights reveal several conclusions.

First, procurement practices at WVMC are characterized by a strong institutional framework that ensures compliance with legal standards and promotes accountability. The structured nature of the procurement system provides stability and consistency in operations. However, this structure also contributes to procedural rigidity, which limits operational efficiency and responsiveness.

Second, the efficiency of procurement processes depends heavily on planning and preparation. Inaccurate specifications, incomplete documentation, and delays in approvals significantly affect procurement timelines. This indicates that improving efficiency requires strengthening planning processes and enhancing the technical capacity of stakeholders involved in procurement.

Third, procurement responsiveness at WVMC is effective but inconsistent. While the system can respond quickly to urgent needs, it does not consistently deliver the same level of responsiveness for routine transactions. This suggests the need for more balanced, systematic approaches to improving responsiveness across all procurement activities.

Fourth, end-users' satisfaction with procurement services is generally positive but not fully achieved. Satisfaction is influenced by the quality of service, support from procurement personnel, and the reliability of the system. However, recurring delays and inconsistencies limit overall satisfaction, indicating the need for improvements in service delivery.

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Fifth, procurement challenges at WVMC are primarily rooted in procedural complexity and planning deficiencies. These challenges are interconnected and require comprehensive solutions that address both system design and operational practices.

Finally, the study concludes that improving procurement practices at WVMC requires a holistic and integrated approach. This includes strengthening planning and technical capacity, streamlining procedures, enhancing communication and coordination, and adopting digital systems to improve transparency and efficiency. By addressing these areas, the institution can enhance procurement performance and improve service delivery outcomes.



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