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Progress on the Economic Empowerment of Female Entrepreneurs in Kenya's 30% Preferential Public Procurement Policy

Rukaya Mohammed
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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Progress on the Economic Empowerment of Female Entrepreneurs in Kenya's 30%
Preferential Public Procurement Policy

by

Rukaya Mohammed

MA, Clark University, 2006

BS, University of Development Studies, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

September 2019

Abstract

In Kenya, a 2013 presidential directive reserved 30% of government procurement opportunities for enterprises owned by women, youth, and persons with disabilities to promote economic empowerment; however, as of 2016, female entrepreneurs continued to be outpaced by their male counterparts. The lack of policy evaluation from the female entrepreneur perspective limits the ability to assess progress and identify obstacles. Through purposeful sampling and semistructured interviews, this qualitative phenomenological study obtained the perceptions of the implementation and impact of Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) on economic empowerment from the perspective of 20 female entrepreneurs in Kenya previously awarded procurement contracts. Responses were coded and analyzed thematically using Moustakas's modified van Kaam method in the context of the policy feedback theory and empowerment. Five themes emerged from the female entrepreneurs' experiences: (a) enhanced economic empowerment; (b) improved potential to earn new government contracts motivated enrollment in the AGPO; (c) access to business development services enhanced competitiveness to obtain government tenders; (d) negative financial impact due to government-delayed payments for goods and services; and (e) success impeded by procurement officers' incompetence, corruption and harassment. Social change may be promoted through the economic empowerment of women being maximized with stronger implementation and regulation of this affirmative policy primarily through a streamlined application process, prompt payments for services rendered, flexible funding, and regulated competent and ethical procurement practices.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my aunt Adisa Issa, father, Mohammadu Yakubu (deceased), and my mother, Yatasu Mahamud, for instilling in me a strong aspiration for higher education and solid work ethic and perseverance. I also dedicate this work to my husband, Abdul-Razak Mohammed for his constant support and encouragement and to my sons, Jamal Abdul-Razak and Dayan Abdul-Razak, for inspiring me to complete this dissertation. To my siblings, Mariam Mohammed, Mohammed Ben Abdallah and Saieda Mohammed, your moral support and constant motivation to reach this final stage was invaluable.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta amended the Public Procurement and Disposal (Preference and Reservations) Regulations (PPDR, 2013) by reserving 30% of government procurement of goods, services, and civil works for enterprises owned by women as well as youth and persons with disabilities (inclusive of women). A minimum of 70% ownership and 100% of leadership and decision-making positions must be occupied by these three groups to be eligible for PPDR benefits (Oduor, 2017). In furtherance to this mandate, the government of Kenya, under the National Treasury Public Procurement Directorate, began the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO, 2013) Program in October 2013 to facilitate access to 30% of public procurement contracts by disadvantaged groups in line with Article 2 of the PPDR of 2013 and Article 27 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) on equality and freedom from discrimination.

Since enactment of the PPDR in 2013 and the amendments established for special groups, access to 30% of public procurement contracts has been slow mainly because of limited access to loans and credit, along with complex bidding and government registration requirements (The Institute of Social Accountability, 2017; UN Women, 2016). Despite an extensive literature search, I found no qualitative research to determine the progress, or lack thereof, and obstacles of the affirmative policy in promoting women's economic empowerment in Kenya. The aim of the study was to offer recommendations to government officials in Kenya on ways to strengthen the

implementation of the 30% preferential procurement quota to maximize the economic empowerment of women and explore the possibility of replicating the policy in other contexts. Enhancing female entrepreneurs' access to public procurement contracts could result in the expansion of female-owned businesses and improve the well-being of women, their households, and their communities, thus contributing to positive social change. Included in Chapter 1 is information about the background of the study; problem statement; purpose of the study; research question (RQ); conceptual framework; nature of the study; definitions of terms; assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations; significance of the study; and a summary.

Background

In 2002, Mwai Kibaki came to power in Kenya with the promise of sound public financial management and the eradication of corruption. The government drew up new procurement regulations benchmarked against global best practices. The model law on public procurement was based on the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (1966), which sought to achieve value for money while eliminating procurement malpractices. This trade law was used as the basis of drafting reforms that resulted in the Public Procurement and Disposal Act (PPDA) of 2005, which set up the guidelines for the procurement and disposal of assets (Republic of Kenya, 2005). The PPDA not only promotes efficiency, integrity, fairness, and accountability in the conduct of public procurement but also contains preferences and reservations for disadvantaged groups as well as micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. Policy feedback theory ties into the PPDA's notions of efficiency, integrity, and accountability (Sabatier & Weible, 2014), all

of which were highlighted in this study's objectives. Three entities were established by the PPDA (Republic of Kenya, 2005) to facilitate procurement activities: (a) the Public Procurement Oversight Authority to ensure compliance, implementation, and monitoring of public procurement systems; (b) the Public Procurement Oversight Advisory Board to oversee the administrative and financial operations of the Public Procurement Oversight Authority; and (c) the Public Procurement Administrative Review Board to review complains and resolve disputes.

According to Vyas-Doorgapersad and Kinoti (2015), several measures were added to the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 to promote gender equality. For example, Article 27(8) states that no more than two-thirds of members of the same gender shall be elected or appointed for public positions at the national level. A similar requirement at the county level is contained in Article 197, which states that no more than two-thirds of any elected national assembly, senate, county assembly, and executive members, will be of the same gender. Article 227 mandates the public procurement of goods and services to be "fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost effective" (p. 117) and that this procurement accords protection to or the advancement of groups or persons previously disadvantaged by unfair competition or discrimination.

In 2011, the government enacted the PPDR, which contains provisions for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups, enterprises owned by women as well as youth and persons with disabilities (inclusive of women). In 2013, the new government of President Uhuru Kenyatta amended the PPDR by reserving 30% of government procurement of goods, services, and works for enterprises owned by these three groups in line with

Article 2 of the PPDR of 2013 and Article 27 of the Constitution of Kenya on equality and freedom from discrimination (Constitution of Kenya, 2010; PPDR, 2013), the Government of Kenya under the National Treasury Public Procurement Directorate, began the AGPO program in October 2013.

The AGPO program had registered 101,834 businesses owned by women (41,668), youth (55,537), and persons with disabilities (PWD; 4,629) by February 2019 (AGPO, 2019). The National Treasury of Kenya reported the total number of tenders awarded to youth, women, and PWD from 2013 to early 2019 was 106,096, amounting to a minimum of 117 billion Kenyan shillings (approximately 1 billion U.S. dollars); however, it is important to note that additional procurements exist, but may not have formally been reported to the treasury. Figures 1 and 2 display the number and value of historical tender procurements awarded to youth, women, and PWD in Kenyan and American currency, respectively. Examination of the historically awarded tenders to these specific types of recipients demonstrates that among these underserved entrepreneurs, the majority of tenders are earned through state corporations and ministry procurements. Particularly, the steadiest growth in tenders tend to be awarded by state corporations. It is important to interpret this data with the caveat that the summary reporting of tenders awarded by procurement entities to youth, women, and PWD does not allow the further disaggregation of male and female youth or PWD. However, this data does provide context and a point of reference for the importance of the current research question addressing women's empowerment in business and, specifically, government tenders.

Procurement Entity	Financial Year	Recipient			Total - Youth, Women, & PWD
		Youth	Women	PWD	
Commissions	2016-2017	332,221K (882)	473,297K (953)	23,368K (106)	828,886K (1,941)
	2017-2018	239,709K (778)	262,593K (918)	37,481K (105)	539,783K (1,801)
	2018-2019	221,207K (757)	220,452K (911)	40,304K (105)	481,963K (1,773)
Counties	2016-2017	710,447K (468)	554,422K (283)	49,758K (27)	1,314,628K (778)
	2017-2018	500,094K (291)	410,092K (196)	246,430K (23)	1,156,616K (510)
	2018-2019	458,023K (256)	381,226K (179)	285,764K (22)	1,125,014K (456)
Ministries	2013-2014	1,374,055K (2,133)	4,374,810K (2,518)	24,942K (50)	5,773,807K (4,701)
	2014-2015	7,511,705K (3,416)	8,807,468K (3,372)	357,639K (261)	16,676,812K (7,049)
	2015-2016	5,099,202K (2,538)	5,201,061K (2,694)	198,541K (186)	10,498,805K (5,418)
	2016-2017	7,508,622K (3,899)	7,703,076K (5,104)	312,141K (409)	15,523,839K (9,412)
	2017-2018	6,066,824K (2,630)	7,289,843K (3,214)	602,759K (244)	13,959,426K (6,088)
	2018-2019	7,005,378K (2,729)	7,872,850K (3,353)	718,323K (283)	15,596,550K (6,365)
State Corporations	2014-2015	554,022K (836)	420,037K (689)	36,295K (70)	1,010,355K (1,595)
	2015-2016	2,495,185K (5,225)	2,291,222K (6,101)	389,808K (741)	5,176,216K (12,067)
	2016-2017	2,982,387K (5,641)	3,094,417K (7,278)	403,215K (689)	6,480,019K (13,608)
	2017-2018	3,897,577K (5,437)	5,236,228K (8,545)	448,641K (951)	9,582,447K (14,933)
	2018-2019	4,566,288K (6,357)	6,199,467K (10,116)	531,111K (1,127)	11,296,865K (17,601)
Grand Total		51,522,946K (44,273)	60,792,563K (56,424)	4,706,521K (5,399)	117,022,030K (106,096)
		0K 200,000,000K KSh	0K 200,000,000K KSh	0K 200,000,000K KSh	0K 200,000,000K KSh

Figure 1. Presented in Kenyan currency, the figure displays the change in number and value of tenders historically awarded to these recipient populations by each procurement entity.

Procurement Entity	Financial Year	Recipient			Total - Youth, Women, & PWD
		Youth	Women	PWD	
Commissions	2016-2017	\$3,198K (882)	\$4,555K (953)	\$225K (106)	\$7,978K (1,941)
	2017-2018	\$2,307K (778)	\$2,527K (918)	\$361K (105)	\$5,195K (1,801)
	2018-2019	\$2,129K (757)	\$2,122K (911)	\$388K (105)	\$4,639K (1,773)
Counties	2016-2017	\$6,838K (468)	\$5,336K (283)	\$479K (27)	\$12,653K (778)
	2017-2018	\$4,813K (291)	\$3,947K (196)	\$2,372K (23)	\$11,132K (510)
	2018-2019	\$4,408K (256)	\$3,669K (179)	\$2,750K (22)	\$10,828K (456)
Ministries	2013-2014	\$13,225K (2,133)	\$42,106K (2,518)	\$240K (50)	\$55,571K (4,701)
	2014-2015	\$72,297K (3,416)	\$84,769K (3,372)	\$3,442K (261)	\$160,508K (7,049)
	2015-2016	\$49,078K (2,538)	\$50,058K (2,694)	\$1,911K (186)	\$101,047K (5,418)
	2016-2017	\$72,268K (3,899)	\$74,139K (5,104)	\$3,004K (409)	\$149,411K (9,412)
	2017-2018	\$58,391K (2,630)	\$70,162K (3,214)	\$5,801K (244)	\$134,354K (6,088)
	2018-2019	\$67,424K (2,729)	\$75,773K (3,353)	\$6,914K (283)	\$150,111K (6,365)
State Corporations	2014-2015	\$5,332K (836)	\$4,043K (689)	\$349K (70)	\$9,724K (1,595)
	2015-2016	\$24,015K (5,225)	\$22,052K (6,101)	\$3,752K (741)	\$49,819K (12,067)
	2016-2017	\$28,704K (5,641)	\$29,783K (7,278)	\$3,881K (689)	\$62,368K (13,608)
	2017-2018	\$37,513K (5,437)	\$50,397K (8,545)	\$4,318K (951)	\$92,228K (14,933)
	2018-2019	\$43,949K (6,357)	\$59,668K (10,116)	\$5,112K (1,127)	\$108,728K (17,601)
Grand Total		\$495,890K (44,273)	\$585,106K (56,424)	\$45,299K (5,399)	\$1,126,295K (106,096)
		\$0K \$2,000,000K	\$0K \$2,000,000K	\$0K \$2,000,000K	\$0K \$2,000,000K
		\$ US	\$ US	\$ US	\$ US

Figure 2. Presented in U.S. currency, the figure displays the change in number and value of tenders historically awarded to these recipient populations by each procurement entity.

Comparing the total value of tenders awarded to the three groups from fiscal year 2017-2018 with the 2017 annual procurement spending estimated at 480 billion Kenyan shillings or approximately \$4.6 billion U.S. dollars (Hansard, as cited in Njeri & Getuno, 2016; Kenyan Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis 2018), only 5.3% of the procurement value was sourced from these three special groups. Tables 1 and 2 display the 2017-2018 tenders awarded in Kenyan shillings and U.S. dollars, respectively.

Table 1

2017-2018 Tender Awarded to Preferential Groups Compared to Estimated 2017 Annual Procurement Spending (Kenya Shillings - KSh)

Procurement entity	Youth-awarded tenders		Women-awarded tenders		PWD-awarded tenders		Total tenders awarded to youth, women, & PWD	
	Number	Amount (KSh)	Number	Amount (KSh)	Number	Amount (KSh)	Number	Amount (KSh)
Ministries	2,630	6,066,823,829	3,214	7,289,843,113	244	602,759,413	6,088	13,959,426,355
State corporations	5,437	3,897,576,862	8,545	5,236,228,431	951	448,641,440	14,933	9,582,446,733
Commissions	778	239,709,096	918	262,593,189	105	37,481,020	1,801	539,783,305
Counties	291	500,093,991	196	410,092,184	23	246,429,899	510	1,156,616,074
Total	9,136	10,704,203,778	12,873	13,198,756,917	1,323	1,335,311,772	23,332	25,238,272,467
Estimated annual procurement spending								480 B
Percentage of share of youth, women, & PWDs								5.26%

Table 2

2017-2018 Tender Awarded to Preferential Groups Compared to Estimated 2017 Annual Procurement Spending (U.S. Dollars)

Procurement entity	Youth-awarded tenders		Women-awarded tenders		PWD-awarded tenders		Total tenders awarded to youth, women, & PWD	
	Number	Amount (\$ US)	Number	Amount (\$ US)	Number	Amount (\$ US)	Number	Amount (\$ US)
Ministries	2,630	\$58,390,990	3,214	\$70,162,109	244	\$5,801,342	6,088	\$134,354,440
State corporations	5,437	\$37,512,771	8,545	\$50,396,809	951	\$4,318,012	14,933	\$92,227,591
Commissions	778	\$2,307,114	918	\$2,527,365	105	\$360,741	1,801	\$5,195,219
Counties	291	\$4,813,224	196	\$3,946,989	23	\$2,371,799	510	\$11,132,012
Total	9,136	\$103,024,098	12,873	\$127,033,272	1,323	\$12,851,894	23,332	\$242,909,263
Estimated annual procurement spending								4.6 B
Percentage of share of youth, women, & PWDs								5.26%

Obtaining gender-disaggregated data for youth and PWD presented difficulty to determine the exact procurement value sourced from all female entrepreneurs. Although

the PPDR and AGPO have been viewed as positive moves, the eligibility criteria of business registration, tax compliance, and 70% ownership required by the AGPO have made it challenging for the majority of target groups, approximately 80%, to gain procurement opportunities (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). Given these challenges, government institutions aim to increase financing availability to these disadvantaged groups.

Specifically, the government put in place the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF) and Local Purchase Order (LPO) Financing under the National Development Funds for Persons with Disabilities. These funding modalities enable the disadvantaged groups to obtain loans for the supply of goods and services under AGPO. From 2013 to March 2019, WEF disbursed 100,403,869 Ksh to 568 preferential groups consisting of 307 women (53,186,847 Ksh), 212 youth (40,530,212 Ksh), and 40 PWDs (6,686,810 Ksh; Women Enterprise Fund, 2019). The bureaucracy surrounding the AGPO certificate renewal process, the 45-day turnaround time, and the relatively new digitization of the process are among the major challenges in accessing WEF. Through LPO Financing, 105 PWD-owned businesses received funds since its inception in 2017 amounting to 28,784 Ksh. It is important to note that only 22 of the 105 recipients were female, which demonstrates that female PWDs were not accessing the funds. Further, only 57 out of the 105 recipients repaid the loan compared to the other 48 recipients with the outstanding combined loan amount of 16,914,595 Ksh (National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), 2019). Beyond the PWDs' limited awareness of LPO financing, there is a lack of clear guidelines and procedures governing

the allocation, payment, default of financed loans and non-compliance by some procuring entities that opt to pay applicants directly rather than through the NCPWD.

Since enactment of the PPDR of 2013, there has been no direct study to determine its effectiveness in promoting women's economic empowerment from the perspectives of the women who had won contracts. Amadi (2016) determined the extent to which Kenya's public procurement law, especially the privatization of telecommunication services, enhanced the empowerment of women. Amadi used secondary data to conclude that women did not benefit more from the privatization of telecommunication because of the effects of neopatrimonialism, the practice of awarding contracts to individuals, mostly men, connected to the people in power. Amadi recommended harmonization of the national constitution with privatization and enforcement of the PPDR to improve women's active participation in the telecommunication sector.

The focus of Amadi's (2016) study was on privatization policy, not the 30% PPDR that was meant to be reserved exclusively for businesses owned by women, youth, and PWD (inclusive of women). The UN Women (2016) study focused on access and support services to female entrepreneurs but not economic empowerment. UN Women (2017c) looked at the three target groups of the 30% affirmative policy and noted the opportunity that the policy gave to groups to do business with the government. UN Women (2017c) also highlighted some implementation challenges faced by both procuring entities and target entrepreneurs. Interviewees were not solely women who had won contracts, and the focus was not on females' economic empowerment. Other

researchers, such as Njeri and Getuno (2016) and the Institute for Social Accountability (2017), have focused on youth, much to the exclusion of older female entrepreneurs.

It was imperative to determine the impact of the PPDR on women's economic empowerment, given the paucity of data in this area and the estimated national procurement spending of 30% (Hansard, as cited in Njeri & Getuno, 2016) of the 1.6 trillion Ksh 2017 Kenyan national budget (Kenyan Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis 2018). This huge fund could boost the entrepreneurship development and socioeconomic empowerment of women. The results of the study could contribute to implementation of the PPDR as an effective way to empower disadvantaged women, young women, and women living with disabilities.

Problem Statement

Female entrepreneurs are not succeeding at the same pace as their male counterparts despite preferential public procurement policies (Amadi, 2015; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; International Trade Centre [ITC], 2014). In Kenya, only 1.4% of annual procurement contracts are sourced from special interest groups comprising women, youth, and PWD (Njeri & Getuno, 2016). The limited access to public procurement by female entrepreneurs has had serious consequences for inclusive economic growth and has continued to stall efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; ITC, 2014). According to Stevenson and St-Onge (as cited in Lock & Smith, 2016), female entrepreneurs, relative to male entrepreneurs, have small businesses with limited capital investment, low growth potential, and low profitability.

Six million women in Kenya are entrepreneurs (Karanja, Mwangi, & Nyakarimi, 2014), and starting a microenterprise in Kenya has become easier because it is considered a successful model that women can use to take themselves and their families out of poverty and powerlessness (Blomgvist et al., as cited in Brixiová & Kangoye, 2016; Lock & Smith, 2016). However, female entrepreneurs in Kenya face barriers to expand their enterprises that impact their potential to boost the socioeconomic growth of their enterprises (Karanja et al., 2014; Lock & Smith, 2016). The promotion of gender equality has not been a consideration in the public procurement policies of most African countries (Nyeck, 2015), but the government of Kenya issued a directive in 2013 that 30% of public procurement be reserved for businesses owned by women, youth, and PWD, inclusive of women, in an effort to enhance their access to economic opportunities (Amadi, 2015). Njeri and Getuno (2016) discussed improvements in youth access to government procurement opportunities in the judiciary of Kenya between 2011 and 2015. Though the term youth comprises young men and women, the data were not disaggregated, and the study focused on the perspectives of judiciary employees, not the youth entrepreneurs themselves.

Despite the resources invested by government agencies, nonprofit organizations, the United Nations, and the private sector regarding preferential procurement policy implementation, there has been no research to evaluate the progress of this preferential policy on women's economic empowerment from the perspectives of the women who won public procurement contracts. Amadi (2015) focused only on the privatization of the telecommunication sector in Kenya and discovered that the policy did not empower

female entrepreneurs. Empowerment is the pursuit of power-oriented goals that are personally meaningful while taking into consideration self-efficacy, knowledge, competence, action, and impact on individuals (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to obtain the participants' perceptions of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya. To address this gap, I conducted semistructured interviews with 20 purposively selected female entrepreneurs who had been awarded public procurement contracts to obtain information on the lived experiences, impacts, and challenges resulting from the PPDR.

Research Question

In phenomenology, the RQ is centered on lived experiences rather than an abstract interpretation of the experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology is more of a method of questioning than a method of answering and, through the process, of facilitating an understanding of and insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Van Menon, 2016). One RQ guided the current study:

RQ: What are the participants' perceptions of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya?

Conceptual Framework

Two theories, the policy feedback theory and the empowerment concept, served as the foundation of the study. The policy feedback theory developed by Mettler and Sorelle refers to the ways that policies are created, are reshaped, and affect subsequent

policymaking (as cited in Sabatier & Weible, 2014). The policy feedback theory facilitates political consideration in policy analysis, and it determines how policies affect governance and how feedback from policy implementation helps to shape policy.

Policy Feedback Theory

Analyzing the policy feedback theory helped to shed light on the impact of policy on democracy and reveal other unintended impacts (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). As shown in Figure 3, the 30% affirmative public procurement policy (i.e., at the policy level) has made civil society organizations instrumental in advocating for women to access public procurement contracts while providing business development services including capacity strengthening to enhance the market competitiveness of female entrepreneurs (i.e., at the civil society organization level). These supports are meant to enhance the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs (i.e., at the individual level; Goss, 2010). The policy feedback theory was relevant in understanding the effectiveness of the 30% PPDR on female entrepreneurs' empowerment. The goal of the study was to use lessons learned to inform the revision and replication of similar policies in other African countries that have a growing interest in leveraging public procurement policy as a tool giving economic empowerment to female entrepreneurs (ITC, 2014).

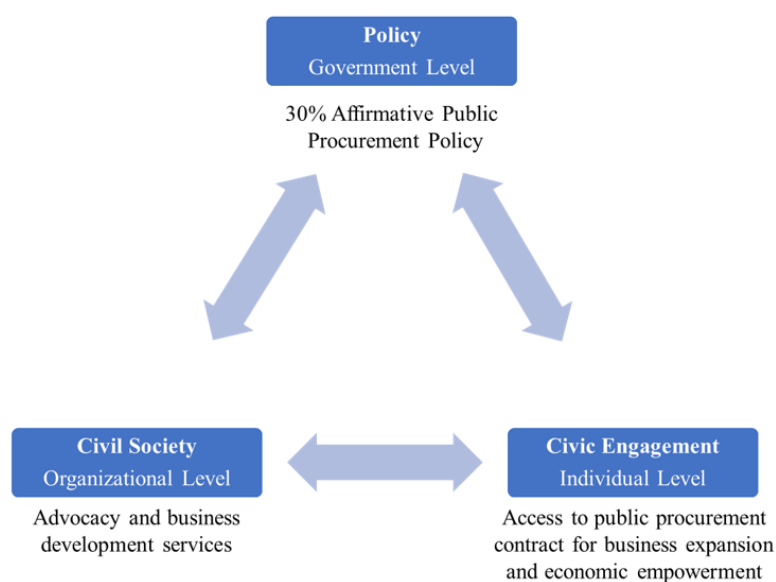


Figure 3. Multilevel policy feedback process.

Empowerment Concept

The empowerment concept refers to the ways that people experiencing social injustice have their lives improved psychologically and through material well-being (Jefferson & Harkins, 2011). The PPDR was meant to facilitate positive change in women's economic empowerment. Women invest 90% of their income in their families and communities, thus promoting inclusive economic growth (ITC, 2014).

Nature of the Study

I conducted a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994; Starks & Trinidad, 2007) to describe female entrepreneurs' lived experiences of the PPDR and its contribution to their economic empowerment. The purpose of using phenomenology was to obtain information about the women's lived experiences and perceptions relevant to the PPDR (see Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenologists ignore empirical interpretations of the phenomena being studied and take what is inwardly experienced, that is, the pure experience, as ideal (Husserl, 2017; Moustakas, 2017). According to Sayre (2011), phenomenology comprises multiple descriptions of the participants' experiences to highlight the underlying meanings. The essence or the key commonalities and the structure of the lived experiences are described to make meaning (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). In phenomenology, reality is understood through embodied experience (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

The phenomenological process has been described by Moustakas (2017) as epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. Epoche, also known as bracketing, entails setting aside knowledge, biases, and previous ideas. Phenomenological epoche sets aside everyday knowledge that is learned in advance as empirical fact and focuses on what is experienced internally to make new ideas and meanings (Husserl, 2017).

With phenomenological reduction, researchers describe texturally what is experienced by the participants both externally and internally, with the focus on the quality and the meaning of the experience (Husserl, 2017). The process requires competency, clear reflection, and the ability to describe with clarity. Imaginative variation is the process of seeking possible meanings through imagination and viewing the phenomena being studied from different perspectives to arrive at the structural descriptions of the phenomena, the underlying factors of the experiences (Husserl, 2017). Synthesis of meaning and essences, the final step of the phenomenological process, is the

integration of the textural and structural descriptions into unified statements of the essence of the lived experience as whole (Moustakas, 1994; Sayre, 2011; Van Manen, 2016). The lived experiences of a sample of female entrepreneurs were described, analyzed, interpreted, and transformed into themes to describe what they experienced after winning procurement contracts and what those experiences meant.

I used purposive sampling to ensure the collection of unbiased and transparent data through interviews, document reviews, and poems (see Creswell, 2013). Purposive sampling was preferred because the target participants had been predefined (Web Center for Social Research Methods, 2006). I selected 20 female entrepreneurs who had won public procurement contracts from a database through quota sampling, a process in which female entrepreneurs who had accessed contracts were selected nonrandomly based on a fixed quota (see Web Center for Social Research Methods, 2006). I also interacted with representatives of business development service providers drawn from the government, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and the private sector who supported female entrepreneurs.

I collected primary and secondary data over one month. The latter data were collected from the government, United Nations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector. I conducted semistructured interviews with the use of an interview guide. Each interview lasted for an average of 45 minutes. The interview questions were pilot tested with two participants, which resulted in a few minor revisions. The two female entrepreneurs were included in the study because the minor changes made did not affect the quality of the responses.

I explained the informed consent letter to potential participants prior to conducting the interviews so that they understood the voluntary nature of their participation, the potential benefits and risks of joining the study, the protection of data confidentiality and participant anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time (see O'Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008). I carried out the same interview protocol of seeking informed consent for the pilot test participants and the study participants (see Appendix A). I tape recorded the interview responses to ensure that I had captured their responses accurately.

Following data collection, I used NVivo v.12 to code and analyze the data to identify emergent themes. The coding involved making sense of the transcriptions by identifying common themes and discrepancies. I did not introduce any personal bias that could have influenced the interpretation of the findings.

Creswell's (2013) approach to phenomenological data analysis, a simplified version of the steps explained by Moustakas (1994), guided the data analysis. The simplified steps included describing the participants' personal experiences of the phenomenon, developing a list of significant statements, grouping significant statements into themes, describing *what* the participants experienced with the phenomenon (textural description), describing *how* the experiences happened, and writing a composite description by combining the textural and structural description.

Definition of Terms

Access to government procurement opportunities (AGPO): The government in Kenya established AGPO to ensure that women, youth, and PWD (inclusive of women) actively participate in public procurement (AGPO, 2013).

Affirmative action: Affirmative action refers to preferential measures to redress systemic disadvantages faced by members of population groups that are underrepresented in socially esteemed and economically influential positions (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015).

Economic empowerment: Economic empowerment allows men and women to equally and fairly participate, contribute to, and benefit from growth opportunities.

Empowerment: Empowerment refers to the enhancement of capacities to take individual or collective action to address inequalities and unequal power relations.

Female-owned businesses: Female-owned businesses have been defined as “a legal entity in any field that is more than 51-percent owned, managed and controlled by one or more women” (UN Women, 2016, para. 4). For the purpose of this study, a business is eligible to participate in government procurement as women owned when there is 70% ownership or 100% leadership.

Public procurement: Public procurement refers to the process by which government, in an effort to fulfill its public mission, purchases goods, civil works, and services from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. The acronyms PPDR (Public Procurement and Disposal Regulation), PPDA (Public Procurement and Disposal Act) are used interchangeably in the study.

Assumptions

Several assumptions applied to the study. Primarily, I assumed the participants possessed the requisite experience of the phenomenon under study. Female entrepreneurs were willing to participate in the study as an opportunity to share their experiences of the 30% PPDR. Additionally, I assumed that the RQ served the research purpose and that semistructured interviews and observations were sufficient to understand the lived experiences of the female entrepreneurs. Similarly, I assumed phenomenology to be the most appropriate approach to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of the female entrepreneurs. Finally, I assumed the findings are expected to improve implementation of PPDR to empower female entrepreneurs economically and advance positive social change. These assumptions were necessary because the policy feedback theory coupled with the empowerment concept served as a guide for this study by focusing on the perspectives and experiences of female entrepreneurs.

Scope and Delimitations

This phenomenological study involved exploring, understanding, and describing the perceptions and lived experiences of female business owners who had accessed the 30% PPDR opportunities. The 30% PPDR targets businesses owned by women as well as youth and PWD (inclusive of women), but I focused on women because they fell into all the categories. The participants were 20 female entrepreneurs in Kenya. The sample comprised only registered female entrepreneurs whose first procurement contracts were awarded a year or more ago in any geographical area in Kenya. This criterion ensured that the participants had the requisite lived experiences to be in the study. I documented

the steps of the study to facilitate transferability. Data collection and analysis were completed professionally to ensure that the findings were in line with the participants' experiences.

Limitations

The study had some limitations. Because the participant group comprised 20 female entrepreneurs who had won public procurement contracts regardless of business type, transferring the findings to other contexts might be a challenge. The sample was not representative of the population, making it difficult to generalize the results. The study promoted dependability as the process of conducting research would be documented and could be replicated. Researcher bias could have influenced research quality given personal knowledge and understanding of the situation of female entrepreneurs, but I used bracketing (see Creswell, 2013) to set aside personal biases and focus on the experiences of the female entrepreneurs. The dissertation committee members also reviewed the study to ensure that it adhered to all required standards.

Significance

The study will help to fill a gap in comprehending the effectiveness of the 30% PPDR on empowering female entrepreneurs to alleviate poverty in Kenya and Africa as a whole. Results of the study also could contribute to developing policies on women's economic empowerment, addressing implementation challenges, and offering recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the PPDR in promoting gender equality and female empowerment in Kenya. Insights from the study could help government, civil society organizations, academia, UN agencies, and the private sector to find ways to

strengthen their strategies to support holistic implementation of the PPDR. The PPDR allocates 30% of public procurement contracts to businesses owned by women, youth, and PWD in Kenya. This initiative is in line with Kenya's Vision 2030 which recognized the empowerment of women, youth, and PWD as a key government priority.

Neighboring countries such as Ethiopia and South Sudan whose governments have expressed an interest in developing gender-responsive public procurement policy might use the Kenyan experience to develop their own public procurement policies. These actions will enhance inclusive economic growth, promote gender equality, and empower women while accelerating achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of promoting gender equality and women empowerment (UN, 2015a). When women's access to procurement contracts is enhanced, the result could be the expansion of businesses and improvements in the well-being of women and their households.

Summary

I conducted this phenomenological study to explore and understand the contribution of the 30% PPDR on the empowerment of female entrepreneurs. The government of Kenya amended the PPDR in 2013 by reserving 30% of government procurement funds to obtain goods, services, and civil works from enterprises owned by women, youth, and PWD (inclusive of women). Despite the policy, female entrepreneurs have yet to access public procurement contracts globally, including in Kenya (Amadi, 2016). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to obtain the experiences and perspectives of the participants regarding progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya.

Chapter 2 is a review of literature from peer-reviewed journals, government research studies, books, government databases, and websites. Chapter 3 is an explanation of the methodology and includes details about the research design and rationale, RQ, rationale for the phenomenological design, role of the researcher, and data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 contains an introduction, pilot study, setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results and summary. Chapter 5 include my interpretation of the findings, the study limitations, recommendations for future studies, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In comparison to their male counterparts, female entrepreneurs have been able to access only about 1% of public procurement contracts globally (ITC, 2014). This low percentage has had serious negative consequences for inclusive economic growth and has retarded efforts to promote gender equality and female empowerment (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; ITC, 2014). According to Stevenson and St-Onge (2005), female entrepreneurs have small businesses with limited capital investment, low growth potential, and low profitability relative to male entrepreneurs. These challenges have rendered female-owned businesses less competitive than male-owned ones.

In 2013, the government of Kenya issued a directive stating that 30% of public procurement contracts had to be reserved for businesses owned by women, youth, and PWD to enhance their access to economic opportunities (Amadi, 2015). Despite this directive, Kenya still needs to improve the policies, regulations, and programs that were developed with the intention of supporting the informal sector, where women dominate, to accelerate human development and female empowerment (Lock & Smith, 2016).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine the impact of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya. I used semistructured interviews to obtain information on the lived experiences of 20 purposively selected female entrepreneurs who had been awarded public procurement contracts. The results of this study are important in helping to determine the degree to

which the 30% preferential PPDR has been effective in empowering female entrepreneurs to alleviate poverty in Kenya and Africa as a whole.

An extensive review of the literature found no previous studies on the impact of the PPDA of Kenya on empowering female entrepreneurs economically. Amadi (2015) focused only on the privatization of telecommunications in Kenya and found that the policy did not empower female entrepreneurs. UN Women (2017c) found challenges faced by the target entrepreneurs and procuring entities, but the focus of the study was not on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs from the perspectives of the females who had won public procurement contracts. For the current study I reviewed peer-reviewed journals, government studies, books, government reports, and websites. Included in Chapter 2 are details about the literature search strategy, affirmative public procurement laws and policies, and empowerment of female entrepreneurs through public procurement, along with a chapter summary.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the Walden University Library research databases to narrow the broad search for relevant literature. I searched a variety of databases and search engines, including Thoreau Multi-Database Search, Political Science Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, SAGE Premier, Science Direct, ProQuest Central, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. I also used the following search terms to find relevant information: *public procurement, government spending, government acquisition, public purchasing, government contracts, women, woman, female, Kenya, Africa, empowerment, power, Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act 2015, Public*

Procurement and Disposal Act of 2005, Public Private Partnership Act 2013, National Treasury, Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) law, entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, small-scale entrepreneurs, women-owned business, women-owned microenterprises, and women vendors.

Using reference lists in peer-reviewed articles, books, and dissertations, I found copious literature related to female empowerment. The focus of the literature research was to identify different affirmative public procurement policies globally, as well as in Kenya in particular, to determine how these policies and programs have contributed to empowering female entrepreneurs.

Key Variables and Concepts

This section provides explanation of key variables and concepts related to procurement including affirmative action policies, public procurement, United Nations gender-responsive procurement, empowerment of female entrepreneurs through public procurement, and female entrepreneurs. These descriptions provide context for understanding the study rationale.

Affirmative Action Policies and Laws

The historical injustices and continuing discrimination and inequalities directed toward women, youth, and people with disabilities (the latter two being inclusive of women) in education, political participation, business ownership, and access to business contracts have compelled public and private organizations, including international and national development organizations, to explore innovative approaches to correct this situation (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). Affirmative

action refers to preferential measures to redress systemic disadvantages faced by individuals who are underrepresented in socially esteemed and economically influential positions (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). The objective of the policy includes, but is not limited to, promoting gender and racial equality, boosting domestic and minority businesses, eradicating poverty, reducing unemployment, protecting the environment, and establishing fair employment practices (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Nyeck, 2015; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). In the current study, affirmative action referred to legislation, policies, and programs that favored historically disadvantaged groups in society. These special groups in Kenya include women, youth, and PWD (inclusive of women); however, women were the focus of the study.

PPDA and policies have been used predominantly as tools to achieve political, social, and economic change (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Hampton, 1981; Hills, 2015). The types of affirmative action tools or policies in public procurement depend on the context and purpose. The preferences tool, such as the price preference points, is added to broad-based Black economic empowerment (BBBEE)-certified companies in South Africa, and the reservations tool, such as reserving procurement exclusively for competition by disadvantaged groups in Kenya, is used to ensure equitable access to public procurement contracts. The preferences tool, which has been used widely, entails granting a price preference or margin of preference to eligible businesses during bid evaluations (ITC, 2014). During the bid evaluation process, the procuring entities increase the bid prices of nonpreferred businesses by certain points while not changing the bid prices of preferred firms. The lowest evaluated firms are awarded the contracts, thus increasing the

competitiveness of the targeted firms (ITC, 2014). Addition of the points enhances the chances of female-owned businesses winning contracts.

The calculation of preferences used in other countries entails the addition of points to preferred businesses. In South Africa's preferential public procurement system, businesses with certified BBBEE status are granted additional points at the time of evaluation (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). This approach gives targeted firms a more competitive edge to enhance their participation in the mainstream economy. Reservations, or set asides, entail the exclusive reservation of one or more procurement opportunities for competition among certain preferred categories of firms, notably, female-owned businesses (ITC, 2014). Although preferences and reservations are important affirmative action tools in public procurement policy, international trade agreements and rules can impede the use of preferences and reservation schemes because of their perceived discrimination against foreign firms.

In addition, the legitimacy of affirmative action is rooted in national constitutions that emphasize the principles of equality and nondiscrimination. Tension often exists between award criteria that promote social goals and criteria that ensure compliance with the principle of equal treatment (Luigi & Kim, 2010). For instance, based on the founding principles of the South African Constitution are nonracist and nonsexist preferential procurement policies that must be used as long as they do not discriminate against foreign female-owned businesses and are supported by national legislation (ITC, 2014). Notwithstanding, preferential measures address concerns about equity and empowerment instead of only competition and transparency in public purchasing.

Public Procurement

Public procurement is the process by which governments fulfill their public mission and purchase goods, construction, and services from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors (Nyeck, 2015; UNCITRAL, 2011). Public procurement processes have gained increased recognition as a powerful tool in achieving broader social goals (Luigi & Kim, 2010). According to the ITC (2014), public procurement spending constitutes approximately 15% to 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP), accounting for more than 30% of GDP in developing countries and some 10% to 15% of GDP in developed countries. These percentages amount to approximately \$10 trillion per year in the direct purchase of goods and services, accounting for a huge part of the global economy. Public procurement spending also constitutes 20% to 30% of the GDPs of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations, excluding military expenditures (Nyeck, 2015). In Sub-Saharan Africa, public procurements constitute 50% of national expenditures (Mariz et al., as cited in Nyeck, 2015). The United Nations alone procured \$18.8 billion worth of goods and services in 2018 (UN, 2018). Corporate procurement is another untapped avenue to accelerate female empowerment. Vazquez and Sherman (2013) asserted that corporations spend trillions of dollars acquiring goods and services. These investments render public procurement spending as one of the most strategic areas for potential socioeconomic transformation.

The purchasing power of government can have a positive influence on economic development and female empowerment if invested much more effectively and equitably among female- and male-owned firms. Increasing the competitiveness of female-owned

businesses will contribute to business expansion and job creation, especially for other women (ITC, 2014). Women continue to be underrepresented as procuring agents (buyers) and as business owners (suppliers) in the public procurement arena. As buyers, women are typically involved at the transactional level but are underrepresented at the strategic and decision-making levels. Gender stereotyping, poverty, low literacy, and the widespread inability to pay for accredited procurement training contribute to this low representation. On the supplier side, the access of female-owned businesses to public procurement contracts has been limited to only about 1% globally (ITC, 2015). Limited information on public procurement opportunities, complex tendering procedures, cumbersome technical and financial qualification requirements, and so on, have accounted for the low participation of female-owned businesses in public procurement contracts (Amadi, 2015; ITC, 2014).

Given the dual roles of government in public procurement policy and contracts as market regulator and participant (policy and contracts), public procurement can be used to achieve socioeconomic objectives, including the promotion of gender equality and female empowerment. In September, 2010, the Global Platform on Sourcing from Women Vendors concluded that companies should consciously purchase goods and services from female vendors and support capacity building to make female-owned businesses more competitive (ITC, 2010). Between 1994 and 2014, governments agreed and broadly established preferential policies within the World Trade Organization's plurilateral Agreement on Government Procurement, which legally bound member states

to the exclusive use of specific economic criteria for evaluating the goods procurement policies to target female-owned businesses (Hetland, 2012; Nyeck, 2015).

In addition to specific preferential policies, UNCITRAL (1966) recognized the need for governments to advance national goals via public procurement (Nyeck, 2015) to facilitate market access, business expansion, and the growth of female-owned businesses (ITC, 2014). A World Bank report from 2012 (as cited in ITC, 2014) indicated that governments can use the power of the purse to mandate that its contractors have specific levels of female employment and female management as a prerequisite to receive government contracts. Increasing women's access to public procurement contracts will ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth across society: Women spend more than 90% of their incomes on their families, households, and communities (ITC, 2014).

Economic measures that restrict women's active participation are detrimental to national economic growth and prosperity (ITC, 2014; UN Women, 2015). As a result, the Beijing Declaration of 1995 established a global advocacy platform to obtain government commitments to a number of gender equality objectives. While notable as a measure toward government action, the use of public procurement as a tool for gender equality advocacy was a glaring omission in the Beijing Declaration.

Ten years later, the Beijing +5's strategic objectives attempted to remedy this error by establishing a direct connection between "public procurement and key women interest advocacy in the areas of health, access to resources and trade" (Nyeck, 2015, p. 19; UN Women, 2015). The objectives urged governments to initiate and operationalize nondiscriminatory policies in business, commerce, and contract laws for female-owned

micro-, small-, and medium-scale businesses in rural and urban areas (UN Women, 2015). Subsequently, public and private financial institutions acted to enhance women's involvement at the project planning and implementation stages of public investment programs (UN Women, 2015). Thus, the concept of public procurement gained prominence in the Beijing +5 strategic objectives and continues to gain momentum across the globe, albeit at a slow pace.

Nyeck (2015) reviewed the World Bank's public procurement country reports in Africa to determine their gender equality sensitivity. He discovered that the promotion of gender equality has not been a consideration in the public procurement policies of most African countries. Of the public procurement policies of 16 African countries, only two, Kenya and Zambia, have identified female empowerment as part of their preferences and reservation schemes. In Kenya and Zambia, women have not been considered a normative category in key national procurement legislation; rather, they have been viewed as a preferential category, along with other disadvantaged groups, thus making it difficult to disaggregate and measure the progress that women have made in terms of accessing public procurement contracts. Women can be looked at from three perspectives when developing public procurement policies: buyers (government procurement officers); suppliers or vendors (female entrepreneurs who supply to government); and users of the goods, services, and civil works procured by the government (women as end users of what the government procures).

Recognizing the potential of public procurement policy as a viable tool to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, governments; the private

sector; international organizations, including the United Nations; and national organizations have made a conscious effort to increase women's participation in public procurement at the legislative, policy, and program levels. The South African BBBEE Act 2003 granted higher ratings to firms classified as BBBEE certified, giving them a competitive edge and enhancing their participation in the mainstream economy (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013). As mentioned earlier, Kenya's PPDR (2013) reserves 30% of annual government procurement opportunities for exclusive competition by firms owned by women, youth, and people with disabilities to bridge the inequality gap in accessing public tenders. In Chile, the government modified its public procurement regulations and guidelines to increase the participation of female entrepreneurs by including gender considerations in the evaluation criteria upon which decisions to purchase goods and services were made (Inostroza, 2016). In addition to legislative commitments, corresponding programs have been set up to operationalize the acts by building the capacity of target businesses and procurement officials to enhance the successes of these commitments. The government of Kenya established the AGPO to ensure that women, youth, and PWD could participate actively in public procurement opportunities (AGPO, 2012).

The terms preferential procurement policy and affirmative procurement policy were used interchangeably in the study. However, the policy often has been considered a double-edged sword. Some researchers have suggested that the policy facilitates access to public procurement contracts; others have disagreed (Amadi, 2015; Nyeck, 2015). Following the introduction of preferential procurement legislation in Brazil in September

2007, access of small and microbusinesses (SMBs) to public contracts increased, but it did not lead to significant change in cost. Conversely, SMB contracts, as compared to contracts with larger firms, were likely to be terminated early because of poor performance (Reis & Cabral, 2015). The finding, though important, placed SMBs into one category, making it difficult to determine if the results would be different if the focus were on female-owned businesses, a subset of SMBs.

Chiloane-Tsoka (2013) studied the ways that effective PPDA assisted female entrepreneurs operating small business in South Africa. Results showed that the policies were not useful in empowering Black female entrepreneurs. Chiloane-Tsoka recommended the establishment of a central database of all bids awarded to prevent one person from holding multiple contracts with different government departments.

Williams-Elegbe (2013) examined the mechanism that the World Bank used to drive public procurement reform in Africa. Using a case study, Williams-Elegbe focused on Nigeria and South Africa and found that South Africa had made significant progress in the reform relative to Nigeria. Factors such as vested interest, lack of political will, and limited capacity had hampered the progress of reform in Nigeria. Although Williams-Elegbe's results added to the knowledge base on the implementation of public procurement reform, the selection of two countries, that is, Nigeria (far behind in affirmative public procurement) and South Africa (far advanced in affirmative public procurement), made the comparison difficult. Williams-Elegbe recommended that the World Bank apply pressure on African countries to change their old practices of

procurement that favored large businesses predominantly owned by men, thus discriminating against female-owned businesses.

Although PPDR have been emphasized, the capacity of public officials to implement preferential policies has been equally important. The ITC (2017) and UN Women (2016) have been providing policy and capacity-building support to the private and public sectors on ways to implement affirmative action policies that benefit female entrepreneurs.

United Nations Gender Responsive Procurement

The United Nations has increasingly recognized procurement as a critical tool for promoting inclusive growth, gender equality, and sustainable development (UN Women, 2016). The UNCITL (1966) revised its model law on public procurement 2011, which sought to assist all nations, especially developing nations and nations with economies in transition, to develop or strengthen their current public procurement laws to promote harmonious international trade and improve competition while ensuring the equitable treatment of all suppliers. To further help governments to implement gender-responsive procurement policies, the ITC (2014) developed a document that provided guidance to governments, procuring entities, and other key stakeholders on the challenges that female-owned businesses faced in accessing public procurement opportunities and practical tools to address the challenges to enhance the active participation of female-owned businesses in public procurement opportunities.

In September 2015, the global community adopted 17 SDGs (UN, 2015a) aimed at ending poverty and hunger; protecting the planet; and ensuring prosperity for all

people while fostering peaceful, just, and inclusive societies (UN Women, 2017b). One of the key objectives of Goal 5 was to achieve gender equality and female empowerment. Although the SDG goals have been dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, Goal 5 has been indispensable to attaining the remaining sustainable development goals. Empowering women through procurement opportunities can accelerate the achievement of the goals (UN Women, 2017b). Similarly, the UN's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment established by the UN Secretary General in January 2016 identified improvements in public sector practices in procurement and employment as part of the seven drivers to transformation (UN, 2016).

The UN has had multiple role in public procurement transactions. Aside from its role in setting public procurement standards, norms, and guidelines to support countries to promote gender responsive procurement (ITC, 2014; UN Women, 2016), the UN also has strengthened the capacity of female-owned businesses to enhance their competitiveness in accessing public tenders (UN Women, 2017b). In addition, the UN as an institution procures goods, civil works, and services from vendors. In 2016, the UN alone procured \$17.7 billion worth of goods and services (UN, 2016). What has been unclear has been the percentage of UN procurement directed toward female-owned businesses; hence, the need for increased attention to gender-responsive procurement policies.

Specific Gender-Responsive Procurement Programs

Gender-responsive procurement programs refer to the selection of services, goods, and civil works that considers the impact on gender equality and women's

empowerment (UN Women, 2016). Female-owned businesses have been defined as “a legal entity in any field that is more than 51-per-cent owned, managed and controlled by one or more women” (UN Women, 2016, para. 4). UN Women has been instrumental in promoting norms, standards, policies, and programs to promote gender equality and female empowerment. In terms of gender-responsive procurement opportunities, UN Women (2017b) has developed guidelines, tools, and strategies that are being implemented to increase the participation of female-owned businesses in UN Women’s procurement spending as well as strong commitment to promoting gender-responsive procurement within the UN system.

UN Women and the UN Global Compact jointly initiated the Women’s Empowerment Principles (International Federation of Business and Professional Woman, 2010) – Equality Means Business. The principles comprise seven steps on ways that businesses can empower women in the workplace, the marketplace, and the community. UN Women (2016) invites suppliers with more than 10 employees to become signatories to the WEPS (2010), and companies with fewer than 10 employees are invited to sign the UN Women’s “Voluntary agreement to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.” More than 1,000 CEOs across the globe have pledged commitments to gender equality by signing the CEO Statement of Support for the WEPS since it was launched in 2010. To better guide companies, a free user-friendly and confidential WEPS gender gap analysis tool has been developed to support corporations, as they analyze their strengths and weaknesses, to find opportunities for improving their gender equality performance. UN Women (2017b) developed a corporate guide to give companies and

their suppliers an in-depth understanding of the barriers faced by female-owned businesses as well as the tools and techniques to eliminate the barriers to full participation in corporate procurement opportunities.

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP, 2017) was founded in 1963. It is the largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide. The WFP (2017) has been empowering female smallholder farmers through its Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, which has pledged to source 10% of its food purchases from smallholder farmers. The program facilitates access to training, productive assets, finance, and markets. Of the 1 million smallholder farmers impacted by the P4P, 300,000 are women (WFP, 2017).

Empowerment of Female Entrepreneurs Through Public Procurement

Women and girls constitute 50% and 53% of poor individuals in developing and developed regions, respectively (UN, 2015b). Material deprivation is a manifestation of poverty attributed to unequal power relations (United Nations, 2015b). This situation places women in a disadvantaged and subordinate position, making them dependent on men who have access to and control over resources. With the increasing trend of women lacking substantive control, empowering women is of paramount importance in the current environment. Paramanandam and Packirisamy (2015) stressed the importance of female empowerment in advancing economic growth.

Rais (as cited in Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015) defined empowerment as the process of “enhancing human capacity and capabilities which expands choices and opportunities to lead a life of respect and value” (p. 7). Lyria (2014) measured

empowerment by using such indicators as assets acquisition, income, and savings. Kabeer (2005) defined empowerment as the process through which people previously prevented from making choices acquire the ability to do so through interrelated pathways of agency, resources, and achievement. Agency entails the ability to exercise choices and challenge power relations; resources are material, social and human, including actual allocations and future expectations; and achievement is the extent to which agency and resources are achieved. Thus, enhancing empowerment by transforming the interpersonal, organizational, and institutional relationships that put women at a disadvantaged position relative to men is a step in the right direction.

Lyria (2014) summarized the empowerment literature as an enabling environment for disempowered persons to make and implement life-changing decisions for themselves on an ongoing basis because empowerment is a process, not an outcome. Similarly, the Overseas Development Institute (2009) defined empowerment as people gaining control over their lives while increasing their capacity to act on issues important for themselves.

The themes in all of the aforementioned definitions included increased access to resources and opportunities resulting from the enhancement of skills and capabilities to facilitate decision-making power and choices, individually and collectively. Empowerment was explained in this study as enhancing the capacity to take individual or collective actions to address inequalities and unequal power relations. Empowered women, either through individual or collective efforts with external support, have been able to overcome their limitations and develop their skills, engage in businesses, take care

of their families, make independent decisions and choices, gain an awareness of their rights, and participate politically.

Rowland (1997) contended that understanding the four dimensions of the concept of power, that is, power within, the enhanced consciousness of individuals; power to, the change to the existing hierarchy; power with, the enhanced power from collective action; and power over, the capability to influence and coerce, is important in designing interventions and assessing the impact of empowerment programs. While focusing on women, Longwe (1990) developed a women's empowerment framework to conceptualize the sequential but reinforcing process of empowerment, that is, addressing basic welfare needs, increasing access to resources, recognizing structural forces of discrimination against women with the collective aim of addressing them, taking collective action, and gaining equality in the control over means of production.

The UN High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment recognized female-owned enterprises among the four sectors (informal work, formal sector employees, agriculture, and female-owned enterprises) that requires critical attention (UN, 2016b). In addition, improving public sector practices in employment and procurement is one of the seven drivers of women's economic empowerment. The remaining six are the following: strengthening visibility, collective voice, and representation; tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models; ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations; recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid work and care; building assets in the areas of digital, financial and property; and changing business culture and practice.

Female Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is one of the most important contributing factors to poverty reduction, economic growth, and inclusive development (Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015). Smith-Hunter and Boyd (2004) cited and summarized Schumpeter and Cole's theory of enterprise, Knight's theory of risk, and the theory of labor economics to hypothesize that entrepreneurs are investors who are focused on maximizing their returns on the ventures that they invest in. Entrepreneurships bring about female empowerment in diverse areas: enhancing access to social and economic opportunities such as property rights; facilitating political representation; and improving personal and family rights, including development of the market, the community, and the nation (Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015).

According to an OECD (2014) report, female entrepreneurs are increasing in numbers in developed and developing countries. In a study of small business owners' motivations across three countries (i.e., Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya), Benzing and Chu (2009) found that the strongest motivator across all countries was the opportunity to increase income. In a similar vein, people's motivation to embark on entrepreneurships or businesses has been categorized as either necessity ("push factor") entrepreneurship or opportunity ("pull factor") entrepreneurship. Push factors such as loss of job resulting from the restrictive nature of the labor market or glass ceiling barriers to career advancement can compel women and men to venture into their own businesses, whereas pull factors such as independence, challenges, and ideas can keep men and women motivated to succeed (Baughn, Chua, & Neupert, 2006; Lock & Smith, 2016). However,

women's socialization can influence their perceptions of new opportunities differently from those of men. Their social roles might exclude them from social networks, thus preventing them from accessing information and opportunities critical to their empowerment.

There has been general agreement that business creation is broadly organized around the three basic constructs (3Ms) of market, money, and management, all of which are considered foundational to the viability of businesses (Bates, Jackson, & Johnson, 2007). Market entails opportunities, management refers to human and organizational capital, and money involves financial capital. Given that small businesses mostly dominated by women have other barriers when accessing the 3M building blocks, a new theoretical development in women's entrepreneurship offered an engendered framework comprising "5Ms" that emphasized that entrepreneurship is socially and institutionally embedded (Brush, Carter, Gatewood, Greene, & Hart, 2006). This engendered framework added the fourth "M" of motherhood to metaphorically represent the household/family context that impacts female entrepreneurs more than male entrepreneurs and the fifth "M" of the environment. Meso refers to intermediate structures and institutions, and macro refers to policies, laws, society expectations, and cultural norms. The framework is relevant in analyzing female enterprises in a contextual manner and helps to address the uniqueness of female entrepreneurs relative to their male counterparts.

The World Bank (2017) noted that countries with greater gender equality are more prosperous and competitive, making it critical to address the barriers to gender equality in all sectors, including microenterprises. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 50% of SMBs

recorded deteriorating performance 5 months after the businesses were started, largely because of the lack of requisite skills and resources (Thomson, Shepherd, & Welch, 2017). The business theory expects all entrepreneurs to possess business management skills as a precondition for success. Some of these skills include management, production, marketing, financial management, risk management, human resource management, corporate communication, and industrial relations (Fournier & Grey, 1999). Given the low literacy of women, they lack most of these relevant business skills.

Small-scale businesses face enormous challenges. Among Sub-Saharan African countries, female entrepreneurs not only face challenges in accessing credit but also have low levels of education and lack entrepreneurial training and experience to manage enterprises effectively (International Labour Organization, as cited in Gichuki, Mulu-Mutuku, & Kinuthia, 2014). Business development training and ease of access to markets are important in promoting microenterprises and empowering women (Paramanandam & Packirisamy, 2015). Public procurement opportunities can enhance market access and boost female entrepreneurship.

Gichuki et al. (2014) used a cross-sectional survey to sample 225 female entrepreneurs who were participating in Village Saving and Credit Associations in Nakuru Town, Kenya. Analyzing the data via ordinal logit regression model revealed that factors such as the income, credit, and educational levels of the respondents influenced positive changes in the net profits and capital of SMEs. Gichuki et al. recommended Village Savings and Credit Association (VSLA) as the most effective strategy to provide affordable credit access to female entrepreneurs. Considering the role that market access

plays in boosting entrepreneurial development, it was surprising that the researchers did not identify it as a critical enabling factor to promote enterprise development. According to Baughn et al. (2006), some women in Kenya are leaving stable jobs in the public and private sectors to establish their own small enterprises because the environment for microenterprises is favorable.

There are two schools of thought regarding the use of PPDR as a tool to empower women. One view is that the policies are not useful in empowering female entrepreneurs (Amadi, 2015; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013). The results of Chiloane-Tsoka's (2013) study indicated that only respondents who operated medium-sized businesses in certain geographical locations reported that they received tenders to expand their business. Amadi (2015) argued that neopatrimonialism in Kenya's political system has undermined the empowerment of women in public procurement opportunities, especially in the telecommunication sector.

The second view is that PPDA can empower women. Duflo (2012) studied the relationship between female empowerment and economic development using secondary data. Results showed that PPDA that favors women relative to men over a long period can lead to equity between men and women. However, Duflo failed to look at certain categories of women who were relatively empowered when compared to their male counterparts. In some communities, girls' education was prioritized relative to boys. A good example highlighted the pastoralist communities in South Sudan that preferred to leave boys out of school to help to raise cattle. The study made an important contribution

to understanding the link between female empowerment and economic development and the need to focus on empowering women in order to have the desired outcome.

Danjuma, Malami, and Gatawa (2011) examined the effect of vocational skills training and capacity building on the economic empowerment of women, focusing on the women's education centre in Birnin Kebbi in Nigeria. The researchers selected 225 respondents from 452 graduates of the institution to participate in the study. Danjuma et al. found a low positive correlation between vocational skills training and economic empowerment but a high positive correlation between capacity building and economic empowerment. They did, however, fail to define the key terms of skills acquisition and capacity development. In addition, sampling 225 respondents from 452 graduates of the same institution limited the generalizability of the results. Perhaps the results might have been different if some participants had come from other training institutions. Danjuma et al. recommended that government invest more on the development of human capital and capacity of women to enhance their economic empowerment. Danjuma et al. provided more insight into the theories of human capital.

Hills (2015) studied the gender quotas in South Africa using secondary data and found that the country has made progress in promoting gender equality in the public sphere but less progress in the private sector. Hills encouraged the government to continue to pursue the policy to achieve the set target by 2017. Because access to finance is an important component in facilitating the empowerment of female entrepreneurs to be self-sufficient, Karanja et al. (2014) found that a complicated lending procedure, particularly the collateral requirement, prohibited female entrepreneurs from accessing

credit. However, access to markets, especially public procurement opportunities, had strong potential to empower female entrepreneurs. Presented in Chapter 3 is the methodology of the study.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature was organized into topics that aligned with the research problem, purpose, and RQ. These topics were the affirmative public procurement law, affirmative action policies and laws, the UN gender responsive procurement, specific gender responsive programs, and the empowerment of female entrepreneurs through public procurement. Exploring the literature enabled me to identify known and missing information about access to public procurement contracts and the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs.

Affirmative action refers to preferential measures to redress systemic disadvantages faced by individuals who are underrepresented in socially esteemed and economically influential positions (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). Women have suffered the historical injustices and continuing discrimination and inequalities the most often; hence, affirmative public procurement policy has become one of the innovative approaches used to correct this historical injustice (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015). The affirmative policy is being used in Kenya, South Africa, and other developed countries to empower women (ITC, 2014). According to the ITC (2014), public procurement spending constitutes approximately 15% to 30% of global GDP, accounting for more than 30% of GDP in developing countries and some 10% to 15% of GDP in developed countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa,

public procurements constitute 50% of national expenditures (Mariz et al., 2014), yet the promotion of gender equality has not been a consideration in the public procurement policies of most African countries (Nyeck, 2015).

Women continue to be underrepresented as procuring agents (buyers) and as business owners (suppliers) in the public procurement arena. As buyers, women are typically involved at the transactional level, but they are underrepresented at the strategic and decision-making levels. On the supplier side, the access of female-owned businesses to public procurement contracts has been limited to only about 1% globally (ITC, 2015). Limited information on public procurement opportunities, complex tendering procedures, cumbersome technical and financial qualification requirements, and so on, have accounted for the low participation of female-owned businesses in public procurement contracts (Amadi, 2015; ITC, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, Kenya's PPDR (2013) reserves 30% of annual government procurement opportunities for exclusive competition by firms owned by women, youth, and people with disabilities to bridge the inequality gap in accessing public tenders. However, the policy often has been considered a double-edged sword. Some researchers have suggested that the policy facilitates access to public procurement contracts; others have disagreed (Amadi, 2015; Nyeck, 2015). Since enactment of the PPDR in 2013 and the amendments established for special groups, access to 30% of public procurement contracts has been slow, mainly because of limited access to loans and credit, along with complex bidding and government registration requirements (Institute of Social Accountability, 2017; UN Women, 2016). Despite an extensive literature search, no

qualitative research to determine the progress, or lack thereof, and obstacles of the affirmative policy in promoting women's economic empowerment in Kenya was found.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 included peer-reviewed journals, books, government research and websites and research conducted by private organizations and international institutions. Chapter 3 comprises details about the research design and rationale for use of the phenomenological approach, trustworthiness, informed consent, ethical consideration, and data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to obtain the perspectives of female entrepreneurs in Kenya regarding progress of the 30% preferential public procurement policy on female empowerment. Two theories served as the theoretical framework. The policy feedback theory was used to explore, understand, and describe the lived experiences and perceptions of female entrepreneurs within the framework of empowerment. Although the 30% of PPDR targets entrepreneurs who are women, youth, and PWD, female entrepreneurs can fall under all three categories. In addition, I conducted semistructured interviews of purposively selected 20 female entrepreneurs who had been awarded public procurement contracts to obtain information on the lived experiences, progress on empowerment, and challenges as a result of the preferential public procurement policy. Chapter 3 provides information about the rationale for the research design, researcher's role, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness. It concludes with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

This section includes the research question and rationale for the implemented research design. In particular, the concepts of phenomenology and its approach are discussed.

Research Question

RQ: What are the participants' experiences of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya?

Rationale for the Research Design

I conducted a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994) to understand the female entrepreneurs' lived experiences of the PPDR and its contribution to their empowerment. Phenomenology entails making meaning of participants' lived experiences (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). The sciences of experience are the sciences of fact, but phenomenology is concerned with the essences, that is, the meanings and the implications of the experiences (Husserl, 2017). Social scientists are interested in the topic of essence because phenomenologists attach more importance to ideas and insights rather than facts and fact finding (Husserl, 2017; Park, 1935). Patton (2015) contended that a phenomenon under investigation can be an emotion like loneliness or anger, an experience like being pregnant or surviving cancer, or a program or a policy. Researchers have used phenomenology as a framework to evaluate programs to understand the essence of the experience of program beneficiaries.

The purpose of using phenomenology was to collect the lived experiences of individual female entrepreneurs on the PPDR, not abstract interpretations of the experiences (see Creswell, 2013; Van Manen, 1990, 2016). According to Sayre (2001), phenomenology consists of multiple descriptions, not explanations, of experiences in order to retain the original nature of the experiences to highlight the underlying meanings. Through analysis of the female entrepreneurs' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Sayre, 2001), themes were used to prepare textual descriptions of what they experienced after winning procurement contracts and structural descriptions of how they felt after winning public procurement contracts in relation to empowerment. The

participants were selected carefully to ensure that they had experienced the phenomenon, namely, access to public procurement, so that a common meaning could be established from their lived experiences.

The choice of phenomenology, a qualitative approach, was based on exploring and weighing the benefits against quantitative and mixed methods approaches. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is conducted to explore a problem, study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be measured easily, or listen to voiceless persons. I found the phenomenological approach to be more appropriate than case study, narrative, ethnographic, and grounded theory approaches.

A quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study because the intent was not to understand the relationship between or among variables or determine if one group performed better than another on an outcome; instead, the intent of the study was to understand the impact of a policy intervention on female entrepreneurs only (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). Using a quantitative method might not have made me sensitive to gender differences, socioeconomic status, and empowerment issues pertinent to this study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010). I did not consider a mixed methods approach suitable due to the belief that one method alone would be sufficient to generate the data required to produce the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2010).

There are five qualitative approaches, and the purpose of the research determines the type of approach to use (Creswell, 2013). The ethnographic approach focuses on understanding and describing a culture-sharing group, where the unit of analysis often is more than 20 individuals (Creswell, 2013). It was not appropriate for this study. Narrative

research was not suitable because it involves the study of one or two individuals by collecting their stories and reporting their experiences chronologically. The stories could emerge from the participants, be coconstructed collaboratively by researchers and their study participants or could be used as a performance to convey important messages (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Case study also was not an option for this study because that approach is appropriate only when there are clearly identifiable cases. Similarly, I did not select grounded theory, which entails the discovery or generation of a theory, because the policy feedback theory under the lens of empowerment underpinned the study (Creswell, 2013).

I found phenomenology to be the most suitable approach to explore, understand, and describe the common experiences of female entrepreneurs as they accessed public procurement contracts. Phenomenology is used to assess the meaning of lived experiences, personal actions, and decisions and “seem[s] to empower subjectivity to radicalize itself” to examine unquestioned personal, cultural, and political beliefs and theories (van Manen, 2016, p.13). Phenomenology facilitates the understanding of how social, cultural, political, and existential factors shape the lives of individuals and how those beliefs can be constructed and replaced with “reflective portrayals” (Van Manen, 2016, p. 13).

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological researchers gather data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being investigated; in this study, I collected the data from a sample of female entrepreneurs in Kenya who had won public procurement contracts. The phenomenological method encapsulates many characteristics

and cannot simply be captured by a simplistic definition (Van Mann, 2016).

Phenomenology is more of an approach for questioning than a method of answering, and through the process it can facilitate understanding and provide insights into the phenomenon (Van Mann, 2016).

Instead of making abstract interpretations of the participants' experiences, phenomenologists probe the lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Van Manen, 1990). This phenomenological study ended with a descriptive passage of what the participants experienced (textural description) and how they experienced access to public procurement contracts (structural description) and the meaning or essence of those experiences (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 2017; Moustakas, 2016).

Role of the Researcher

My role was that of participant observer. Data were collected by conducting semistructured interviews. Rapport, respect, and trust were established with the participants to let them feel important and give them the opportunity to provide credible information during the interviews. I acted professionally throughout the process to ensure that important data relevant to the study was provided.

I worked with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) in South Sudan as the women's economic empowerment specialist from October 2015 to August 2018. Having suffered from intermittent conflicts for 2 years after it gained independence in 2011, South Sudan, Africa's newest nation, signed a peace agreement in August 2015. The peace agreement called for, among other things, the creation of a Public Procurement and Assets Disposal

Act (PPADA). Part of my job was to support new and existing policies responsive to women's economic empowerment in South Sudan and, by extension, support the government to make the PPADA gender-responsive by advocating for a public procurement quota for female entrepreneurs and strengthen the capacity of female entrepreneurs to compete for public tenders. Because Kenya is implementing a similar policy, I had a special interest in assessing the progress of the 30% PPDR in Kenya on female empowerment to share lessons with the government of South Sudan and other developing countries interested in developing their own PPDR.

My background did not influence the participants' responses to the interview questions because it was made clear that I was conducting the study as a student of Walden University in fulfillment of a doctoral degree. No conflict of interest was anticipated; I did not work in Kenya at the time of the study and had no links with either the government implementing the policy or the female entrepreneurs.

Ethical issues have serious consequences for future research and could even lead to the deaths of research participants, a situation that could undermine the ultimate goal of promoting positive social change (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). When participants are not properly informed about the purpose, potential benefits, and risks associated with being in any research endeavors, they might find themselves in studies that could be potentially harmful to them. I ensured that the participants understood that the findings might help the public procurement authority in Kenya to enhance the implementation of the 30% PPDR and empower female entrepreneurs. Participants also were assured that the information that they provided about public procurement authorities and service

providers in the course of the policy implementation would remain confidential and that I would keep their identities anonymous.

Respecting the participants was important to ensuring that they would provide honest and credible responses to the interview questions. If they felt that I was not respecting them, they might have given untruthful responses or responses that they thought that I wanted to hear. Such an event could have affected the trustworthiness of the study. Selecting participants fairly and not based on their vulnerability or availability promoted ethical standards and enhanced the credibility of the study.

I completed the application to conduct the study and submitted it to Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval (IRB approval #03-14-19-0534724). The potential participants were given adequate information about the study so that they could make an informed decision to join or decline to join the study. All participation was voluntary.

As a person brought up with strong values, I value, respect, and treat people fairly. I tried to assure the participants that their input in the study would yield positive social benefits. These values were my guiding principles throughout the data collection process. I transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted the interview responses to eliminate bias and maintain objectivity. Bracketing helped me to be cognizant of bias throughout the research process (Creswell, 2013).

Methodology

This section includes information related to sampling and recruitment of participants.

Recruitment of Participants

Twenty female participants from the database of female entrepreneurs who had won public procurement contracts in Kenya were selected from the government database and also through snowball sampling from female entrepreneurs. I contacted the participants by phone to explain the purpose of the study and invite them to participate. For women who could not be reached by phone, I made in-person visits with them to explain the nature and purpose of the study and to seek their consent to participate. Once Walden University's IRB requirements and ethical guidelines were explained to all potential participants, women who were interested in joining the study were asked to sign the informed consent.

A prescreening was completed to ensure that their businesses were registered and had won their first public procurement contracts a year or more ago in Nairobi . Mutually agreeable dates and times for the interviews were scheduled. Each semistructured interview lasted for 45 minutes, and data collection took 1 month. The aim of the interviews was to listen to the participants' stories or lived experiences of the phenomenon (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Probing follow-up questions were asked to seek clarity and understand the lived experiences.

I recorded the interviews using a tape recorder and made handwritten notes of key points at the same time. Participants were reminded at the beginning of their interviews that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants also had the opportunity to ask questions or make comments at the end of their interviews. I concluded the interviews by expressing appreciation to the women for their participation and by

ensuring them that a summary of the findings would be shared with them once the study is approved.

Sampling

Large samples are not required to generate in-depth qualitative data; individual participants can generate huge quantities of data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). What are required in phenomenological research are common features of the lived experiences to filter the essence of the phenomenon being studied. Sampling individuals who had experiences of the phenomenon and who shared in-depth information about their lived experiences was sufficient to understand the core commonalities (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

The participants were 20 female entrepreneurs in Kenya who had registered businesses, had enrolled in AGPO, and had won public procurement contracts. The secondary source of obtaining the 20 female participants was from business development service providers, who provided business development services to enhance the competitiveness of female entrepreneurs. Kenya's Public Procurement Directorate, under the Ministry of Finance, launched the AGPO initiative in 2013 to give women as well as youth and PWD (inclusive of women) access to 30% of government tenders. This affirmative action initiative was meant to empower the women in these groups who owned enterprises by giving them enhanced access to government contracts.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure the collection of unbiased and transparent data (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Web Centre for Social Methods, 2006). In purposeful sampling, individuals and sites are selected because they can provide in-depth

information about phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2015). Purposeful sampling ensured that the data were manageable. It was not intended to make generalizations or ensure representativeness.

In this study, purposive sampling was used to obtain 20 female entrepreneurs who had won public procurement contracts. The participants were from a government database (primary source), and also, I used the snowball sampling method to identify the 20 female entrepreneurs (secondary source) through quota sampling, a type of purposive sampling process where female entrepreneurs who had accessed contracts were selected nonrandomly based on a fixed quota (Web Centre for Social Methods, 2006). Quota sampling was an appropriate technique for the study because female entrepreneurs can fall under the three preferential categories of women, youth, and PWD. Taking a quota of each category would generate data to describe the subcategories of female entrepreneurs and how the program is empowering them economically (Web Centre for Social Methods, 2006). A random sampling was used after selecting those who met the purposive quota sampling criterion to give each woman an equal chance of being selected to join the study.

A sample of 20 female entrepreneurs was used because, in this qualitative phenomenological study, gaining in-depth knowledge of what the participants experienced, not the number of people who experienced the phenomenon, clarified the meaning of the phenomenon (Englander, 2012). Heterogeneous samples of three to four or 10 to 15 participants are suitable for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2013). Polkinghorne (as cited in Creswell, 2013) recommended using a sample of between five

and 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Based on the literature, a sample of 20 participants was considered large enough to obtain sufficient data.

Data Collection

Semistructured interviews guided by open-ended questions were used to collect the data. Using an interview guide ensured consistency in the order of the interview questions and established a link to the research problem, RQ, and relevant literature (Pedersen, Delmar, Falkmer, & Grønkjær, 2016). The interview questions were pilot tested, and minor adjustments were made to ensure that the questions were worded clearly enough to generate the data required to answer the RQ. Data obtained from the pilot testing were used in the study because the modifications were minor. All participants went through the same recruitment and informed consent procedures. The interview questions were based on policy feedback theory within the framework of empowerment (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; Sabatier & Weible, 2014).

To determine the content validity of the process, efforts were made to ensure that all the attributes of the concept to be measured were covered sufficiently and that the transcribed responses, along with the interpretations of their responses, had been reviewed by the participants. The pilot testing of the instrument testified to the sufficiency of the instrument to obtain the relevant responses to answer the RQ. Observation allows researchers to experience the phenomena being investigated as directly as possible to better understand what the participants experienced (Patton, 2015). The environment and businesses of women entrepreneurs were observed.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read of the data, coding and arranging the themes, and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological text is an effort to reflect and describe the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied (Van Manen, 2016). Phenomenological analysis results in rich thematic descriptions that give meaning to the essence of the lived experiences (Starks & Trinidad 2007). A blended story is created from thematic stories comprising elements from different participants.

The phenomenological process has been categorized as epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche, also known as bracketing, entails setting aside knowledge, biases, and previous ideas about an experience. Phenomenological Epoche sets aside everyday knowledge that is learned in advanced as the empirical fact and focuses on what is experienced internally to make new ideas and meanings (Husserl, 2017). With phenomenological reduction, a researcher describes texturally what is seen both externally and internally, with the focus on the quality and the meaning of the experience. The process requires competency, clear reflection and ability to describe with clarity. Imaginative variation is the process of seeking possible meanings through imagination and viewing the phenomenon from different perspectives to arrive at the structural descriptions of the phenomenon, the underlying factors of the experience. Synthesis of meaning and essences, the final step of the phenomenological process is the integration of the textural and structural descriptions into unified statements of essence of the lived experience as whole.

The interview questions aligned with the RQ. After completing the interviews, responses were transcribed, coded, and arranged as themes using NVivo v.12. Patterns and discrepancies were identified as part of the analysis. The process described by Moustakas (1994) and the following process, as suggested by Creswell (2013), further guided the data analysis. First, personal experiences pertaining to the phenomenon were described to set aside personal experiences and to focus on the experiences of the participants. A list of significant statements from the interviews and other sources of data on the participants' experiences of the topic were developed, and all statements were treated as having equal value. Another list of nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping statements also was developed.

Next, the responses were grouped into themes and written as textural descriptions, that is, the participants' verbatim explanations of their experiences of the phenomenon, followed by structural descriptions of the context in which the participants experienced the phenomenon. To complete this part of the study, I compiled a composite description of the phenomenon by combining the textural and structural descriptions of the essence of the experiences.

Issues of Trustworthiness

This section discusses issues relevant to validity and reliability, informed consent, and ethical considerations. These issues are important for the effectiveness of the study especially in a qualitative study where the trustworthiness of the study depends on the ability of the researcher.

Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Data

Diverse strategies were used to enhance the validity of the research. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation during data collection helped to build trust with the participants, enhance understanding of the culture of the participants, and facilitate checking for misinformation (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation, which involves the use of multiple sources, methods, theories, and investigators to substantiate the evidence was used. My own biases were clarified by elaborating on past experiences and prejudices toward women's access to public procurement contracts. In addition, member checking gave the participants the opportunity to read summaries of their own transcriptions for accuracy and possible changes to judge the credibility of the study.

Diverse strategies were used to ensure the reliability of the study. A quality tape was used to record the interview responses and key points were written. An employee of a transcription company who signed Walden University's approved confidentiality agreement transcribed the data. Validity and reliability are enhanced when participants review and validate the transcriptions of their responses (Creswell, 2013). All the participants reviewed their individual summarized transcriptions and confirmed their accuracy via e-mail.

Transferability helps to determine the generalizability of the study to another group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). The criteria used to identify female entrepreneurs who participated in the study and the description of their experiences in the analysis were ways to address transferability. Regarding dependability, all the documentation of the research procedure both hard and electronic copies will be kept in a secured and locked

cabinet for 5 years as required by Walden IRB. The pilot study resulted in no major revision which was an indication of the appropriateness of the interview questions and protocol. Confirmability was maintained as there was no deviation in the approved design and implementation of the research procedures. Confirmability makes it possible for interested researchers to duplicate the procedure further validation of the findings.

Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues surfaced during data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation and dissemination of the results. Numeric identifiers (P1, P2, etc.) were assigned to the participants to protect their anonymity. As mentioned earlier, the purpose, benefits, and potential risks of being in the study were explained clearly to the participants. The participants also were reminded of the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw at any time (Creswell, 2013). If the participants shared any unofficial or informal information with me during the interviews, it was deleted from the transcriptions and not used in the analysis.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to obtain the perspectives of female entrepreneurs in Kenya regarding progress of the 30% preferential public procurement policy on female empowerment. Two theories served as the theoretical framework. The study focused on semistructured interviews of purposively selected 20 female entrepreneurs who had won public procurement contracts to obtain information on the lived experiences, progress on empowerment, and challenges as a result of the preferential public procurement policy. The participants were selected primarily from a

government database as well as through the snowball method, as a secondary approach.

The interview questions were pilot tested and adjusted as necessary. Rapport, respect, and trust were established with the participants. All participation was voluntary. With no prior link to Kenya, the government implementing the policy, or the female entrepreneurs, I did not anticipate that any conflicts of interest would arise. Data were coded and analyzed using NVivo v.12. Chapter 4 contains information about the rationale for selecting the research design, the researcher's role, and the data collection and analysis protocols.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to obtain the perspectives of 20 female entrepreneurs in Kenya regarding progress of the 30% preferential public procurement policy on economic empowerment. I used the policy feedback theory to explore, understand, and describe the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants. Although the 30% PPDR targets entrepreneurs comprising of women, youth, and PWD, female entrepreneurs may fall under all three categories.

To obtain information on the participants' lived experiences regarding progress on economic empowerment, challenges, and recommendations on the preferential public procurement policy, I conducted semistructured interviews with the women. One RQ guided the study: What are the participants' perceptions of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya? The data were analyzed using the Van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). I used NVivo 12 to organize the data into codes and themes for analysis.

Pilot Study

In compliance with the original research design described in Chapter 3, I conducted a pilot study with the first two participants using the interview guide (Appendix A). The only revisions made were the inclusion of educational background of the participants and the merging of Question 15 on recommendation for AGPO and Question 16 on recommendation for business development services because both yielded

the same responses. The two participants were included in the main study because the revisions that they suggested were minor and did not affect the quality of the responses. The average length of each interview was 45 minutes.

Setting

Data were collected from 20 female entrepreneurs comprising women, youth, and PWD from Nairobi County, the capital and largest city in Kenya with vibrant economic activities. Nairobi has more female entrepreneurs participating in AGPO (Nganga, 2017) than the rest of the counties in Kenya. Most procurement opportunities are found in Nairobi because all government ministries, departments, and agencies are located there. Similarly, most providers from the private sector have their head offices in Nairobi as well including banks and savings and credit business development service cooperative organizations (SACCOs), nongovernmental organizations; and government organizations (i.e., Funds for Persons with Disabilities; Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF); Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), and have their head offices in Nairobi.

All interviews were conducted indoors in a quiet place. Discussions between me and the participants could not be heard, thus ensuring privacy and maintaining confidentiality. I had the opportunity to observe directly the business locations of some entrepreneurs to understand the nature of businesses and triangulate with the responses provided during the interview. The deteriorating economic situation in Kenya that the participants cited that was caused by the two rounds of elections in 2017 affected the responses of the participants; most of them mentioned that delayed and lack of payments

by government entities affected their business performance. Meanwhile, the program was largely reported to be doing well prior to the 2017 election.

Demographics

Of the 20 female entrepreneurs in the study, 12 were women older than 35 years of age, seven were youth under the age of 36 years, and one had a disability (see Table 3 for participant demographics). Notably, all participants had a minimum of a high school education. Specifically, three women had a master's degree, four women earned a bachelor's degree, nine women received diplomas, two achieved Ordinary level, and two had a high school degree. Businesses were more likely to be a sole proprietorship ($n = 11$) or a limited company ($n = 9$), with only one woman identifying her business as a partnership (see Table 4 for business characteristics). Percentage of business shares ranged from 70% to 100%, and all participants were involved in the leadership and management of their business. The participants had been engaged in their current businesses from 2 to 9 years. The total number of employees ranged from 1 to 88, and the annual valuation ranged from 50,630 to 50,000,000 KSh. Eight participants were engaged in general supplies, which comprised food, stationery, branded uniforms, computer accessories, and furniture. Eight were engaged in construction, three were engaged in branding, communication, media monitoring, and visibility, and one participant was engaged in sustainable commercial printing services (see Table 4).

Table 3

Demographics of the Participants

P	Age	Education
1	42	Diploma in sales and marketing
2	34	Diploma in public relations and advertising
3	36	Masters in business administration
4	36	Diploma
5	35	Diploma
6	46	Masters degree
7	37	Diploma in social work and community development
8	36	Degree in procurement
9	36	MBA in communications
10	33	Diploma
11	45	Certificate in entrepreneurship
12	47	Ordinary level certificate
13	30	Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Communications
14	35	Bachelor of Arts in Education and Psychology
15	52	Ordinary level certificate
16	28	High school
17	37	Diploma in human resources
18	56	Bachelor's in education
19	28	Diploma in business administration
20	42	Diploma in business administration

Table 4

Participants' Business Characteristics

P	Business registration	Business area	Begin year	Years of operation	Share of business	Annual valuation (KSh)	Annual valuation (\$ US)	Employee gender		
								Women	Men	Total
1	Partnership	Professional services & consultancy	2007	12	70%	50.0 M	481.2 K	6	24	30
2	Sole proprietor	General supplies & small works & engineering	2016	3	100%	5.0 M	48.1 K	3	1	4
3	Limited company	General supplies & small works & engineering	2008	11	100%	2.0 M	19.2 K	2	3	5
4	Sole proprietor	General supplies	2017	2	100%	50.6 K	487	1	0	1
5	Sole proprietor	General supplies	2013	6	100%	2.0 M	19.2 K	1	4	5
6	Sole proprietor	General supplies	2017	2	100%	500 K	4.8 K	1	0	1
7	Sole proprietor	General supplies	2017	2	100%	1.50 M	14.4 K	1	2	3
8	Sole proprietor	General supplies	2008	11	100%	20.0 M	192.5 K	1	2	3
9	Limited company	Professional services & consultancy	2010	9	70%	48.0 M	462.0 K	11	7	18
10	Limited company	General supplies & small works & engineering	2014	5	90%	10.0 M	96.2 K	2	1	3
11	Limited company	Professional services & consultancy	2010	9	100%	25.0 M	240.6 K	49	39	88
12	Sole proprietor	General supplies & small works & engineering	2014	5	100%	10.13 M	97.5 K	1	1	2
13	Limited company	professional Services & consultancy	2016	3	100%	Not Reported	Not Reported	1	2	3
14	Limited company	General supplies	2015	4	70%	400 K	3.8 K	1	1	2
15	Sole proprietor	General supplies & small works & engineering	2010	9	100%	10.0 M	96.2 K	2	2	4
16	Limited company	General supplies & small works & engineering	2013	6	80%	50.0 M	481.2 K	2	4	6
17	Sole proprietor	General supplies & small works & engineering	2012	7	100%	3.0 M	28.9 K	1	0	1
18	Limited company	General supplies	2014	5	75%	1.0 M	9.6 K	2	1	3
19	Sole proprietor	General supplies	2015	4	100%	4.0 M	38.5 K	3	2	5
20	Limited company	General supplies & professional services & consultancy	2016	3	80%	12.0 M	115.5 K	1	2	3

The figure below represents a cross-section of the female entrepreneurs' demographic and business characteristics (see Figure 4). In particular, the relationships between participants' age and educational background along with their business registration type, estimated annual valuation (both Kenyan Shillings and U.S. Dollars), and history of business operation are illustrated. Although in the context of a small sample size, most participants registered their business as either a limited company or sole proprietorship; in fact, only one participant registered as a partnership business, and notably had one of the higher estimated annual valuations and length of operation.

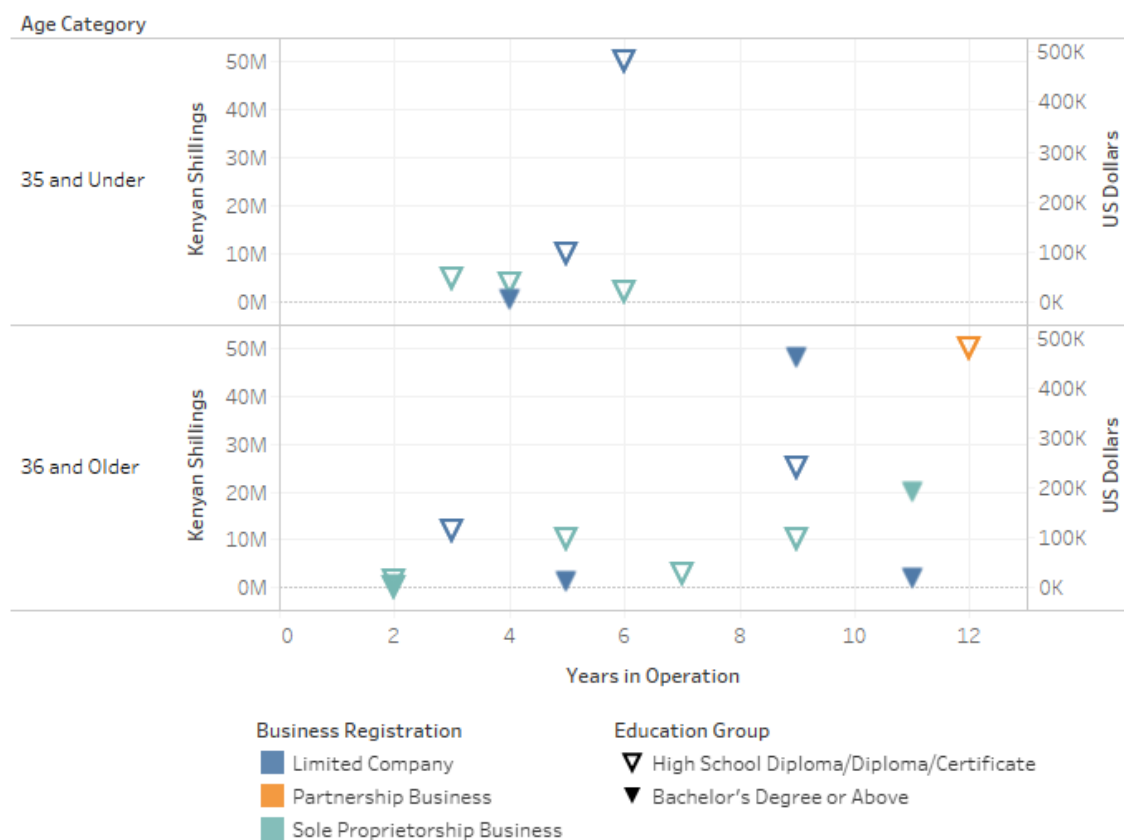


Figure 4. This figure collectively displays each participant's age group and educational background along with her business registration type, estimated annual valuation (both in Kenya Shillings and U.S. Dollars), and current years in operation.

Data Collection

I recruited participants using a combination of the snowball sampling method and random selection of participants from the database of women, youth, and PWD who participated in the AGPO with the National Treasury of Kenya. Both approaches were approved by Walden University's IRB. As part of snowballing, a female entrepreneur in Nairobi Kenya who was known to be doing business with different government ministries and parastatals was introduced to me. I held a face-to-face meeting with her to explain the purpose of the study, its voluntary and confidential nature, and the possibility of any

anticipated risk. I explained how the interview transcriptions would be shared for validation and how the final report also would be shared with all participants. I described that the interviews would last for an average of 45 minutes and that the participants had the right to stop the interviews at any point. When this first participant agreed to participate and indicated the time, I e-mailed the invitation letter. She also provided the names of two other women who had participated in the AGPO program. At the same time, I obtained the letter of cooperation from the National Treasury of Kenya, along with a database of 35 female entrepreneurs whose first contracts with the National Treasury were for at least 1 year ago or more. Only one female youth on the list agreed to participate in the study. The majority of the telephone numbers in the database were out of reach, some reported that they were out of Nairobi, and others promised to call back, which they never did.

Against this background, I used snowball sampling to obtain the contacts of other potential participants until 20 participants had been recruited and interviewed. During the recruitment process, two potential participants inquired if they would be given compensation for being in the study; they were advised that their participation was voluntary and that there would be no monetary incentives. These two women declined to join the study. Following the interview protocols, including the signing of the consent form, the interviews were conducted in a public meeting place. All interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and later downloaded into a laptop using the identifiers of P1 to P20. The first two interviews that were part of the pilot test were included in the study because the revision to the interview questions were minor and did not impact the

findings. Data were collected in Nairobi, Kenya, between mid-April and early May of 2019.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read of the data, coding and arranging the themes, and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2013). The analytical method used for the study was Moustaka's (1994) modified Van Kaam method because it was relevant to the analysis and descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. Four steps of data analysis were used: (a) preliminary grouping; (b) reduction and elimination; (c) clustering; and (d) thematic identification. Each step is described in the following text.

Preliminary Grouping

This first step, known as horizontalization, required listing and carrying out a preliminary grouping of the live experiences of the female entrepreneurs regarding access to government procurement opportunities and economic empowerment. The participants were grouped based on their AGPO registration classification as women ($n = 12$), youth ($n = 7$), and PWD ($n = 1$). Results indicated that the participants had no structurally different experiences regarding access to procurement opportunities, so grouping based on AGPO category was not relevant.

Reduction and Elimination

As part of this process, the participants were categorized based on the types of registration and the goods and services that they rendered. Their responses were similar, so this categorization also was not relevant for analysis. The next step involved the

elimination and reduction of information that was not relevant to the experiences of the female entrepreneurs who participated in AGPO. All discrepant and repetitive reports were eliminated, leaving only the invariant constituents of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). By listening to and reviewing the interviews and transcriptions, I identified 18 parent codes using NVivo v.12. Reviewing and tagging the participants' experiences were done based on the codes to group them or establish the key lived experiences of the sample of 20 female entrepreneurs who had participated in government tenders.

Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents

At this stage, important information was sorted out for clustering and developing themes of the participants that have been grouped. This process involved synthesizing the participants' responses to the different interview questions. NVivo v.12 was used to relate codes to different parent codes. The descriptions of the lived experiences of the female entrepreneurs who participated in AGPO provided substantial understanding of the themes; however, only the common lived experiences of three or more participants are discussed in the detailed analysis.

Thematic Identification

At this stage, the invariant constituent and themes were checked against the participants' transcribed responses to the interview questions. To ascertain the phenomenological experience entailed the following questions: "Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the participant's experience and should be deleted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Five themes emerged from the female

entrepreneurs' experiences: (a) enhanced economic empowerment; (b) improved potential to earn new government contracts motivated enrollment in the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO); (c) access to business development services enhanced competitiveness to obtain government tenders; (d) negative financial impact due to government-delayed payments for goods and services; and (e) success impeded by procurement officers' incompetence, corruption and harassment.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Throughout this qualitative phenomenological research, from the study design to implementation, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed. Credibility was ensured by thoroughly listening and reviewing, the audiotaped interview responses against the transcriptions to ensure their accuracy. All participants reviewed the edited versions of their own transcriptions and confirmed via e-mail with me that the transcriptions were true reflections of the interview responses. Transcript review is an effective method to establish credibility. None of the participants requested that any information in their transcriptions be deleted, but a few participants did request removal of some minor edits made by me. The data also were triangulated from multiple sources, that is, secondary data from the government, the pilot study and the review of transcripts all ensured validity and trustworthiness of the study.

Transferability helps to determine whether the results can be generalized to another group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The criteria used to identify female entrepreneurs who participated in AGPO in Nairobi and the detail descriptions of their experiences in the analysis were ways to address transferability. During the interviews, the participants

were encouraged to provide extensive demographic information: age, number of employees, annual turnover, when business started, and type of business. These data helped to define the study boundaries and determine if it can be transferred to another group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2013). It was also understood that the transferability may have limitation since female entrepreneurs in different locations engaged in different enterprises may have different lived experience with the phenomenon.

With dependability, the documentation of the research procedure which included copies of the consent form, transcripts of interviews, tape recording, confidentiality agreement, invitation to participate in the study, both in hard copies and electronic copies will enhance dependability. I will keep all study documents in a secured and locked cabinet for 5 years, as required by Walden University's IRB. The setting, the conditions under which the study was conducted, was documented. The pilot test resulted in no further major revisions, an indication that the interview questions and protocol were appropriate.

Confirmability was maintained as there was no deviation in the approved design and implementation of the research procedures. Consistent coding was used for the categorization. Confirmability is an important characteristic of research as it makes it possible for interested subsequent researchers to duplicate the procedure for further validation and expansion of the findings.

Results

This Results section covers the remaining three stages of the modified Van Kaam method, which entails individual textural descriptions of the participants' experiences,

individual structural descriptions of the lived experiences, and textural-structural descriptions as a composite of the meaning and essence of experiences of the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). One RQ guided the study: What are the participants' perceptions of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya? To determine the progress, the motivation of the female entrepreneurs to enroll in AGPO; business ownership, leadership, and management; steps in enrolling and bidding; access to procurement opportunities; business development services; economic empowerment; and challenges and recommendations examined. This section is organized by theme. Table 5 below provides an overview of the major theme and the groupings of participants within each theme.

Table 5

Summary of Major Themes and Groupings of Participants within Themes

Major themes	Groupings	<i>N</i>
1 Enhanced economic empowerment	1 Enhanced confidence, leadership, and networking skills	13
	2 Build productive assets-financial, social, and physical	7
	3 Enhanced social transformation	6
	4 Created job opportunities	5
	5 Improved market access	7
	6 Political and civic engagement	3
2 Improved potential to earn new government contracts motivated enrollment in the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO)	1 Ease of accessing government procurement contracts	12
	2 Need to earn income, career change to support family, create jobs	3
	3 Inspiration from women enrolled in AGPO	5
3 Access to business development services enhanced competitiveness to obtain government tenders	1 Training, sensitization, and mentorship on AGPO	13
	2 Access to financing	7
4 Negative financial impact due to government-delayed payments for goods and services	-	19
5 Success impeded by procurement officers' incompetence, corruption, and harassment	-	5

Theme 1: Enhanced Economic Empowerment

AGPO, despite the challenges, had impacted women's leadership, management, and decision-making skills; facilitated assets creation; created more jobs for women and men; and contributed to social transformation and political and civic engagement, all of which are prerequisites to economic empowerment. However, the majority of the participants believed that AGPO is not empowering.

P18 said,

Unless it has policies that it keeps not policies on paper. 2017, 2018 and 2019 are worst years in business because there is no money in circulation. The 2017 presidential election and the run-off also consumed most of the country's resources. People, including me don't trust doing business with the government as they promise heaven and deliver hell.

Table 6

Economic Empowerment

Group	Theme 1 groupings of participants	<i>n</i>
1	Enhanced confidence, leadership and networking skills	13
2	Build productive assets-financial, social and physical	7
3	Enhanced social transformation	6
4	Created job opportunities	5
5	Improved market access	7
6	Political and civic engagement	3

Group 1: Enhanced confidence, leadership and networking skills. All 20 female entrepreneurs interviewed led their respective companies as chief executive directors, managing directors, and founders having major shares in the businesses ranging from 70% to 100%. They were involved in the day-to-day running of the companies,

marketing, and client engagement. These responsibilities had strengthened the leadership and decision-making skills of the 20 female business owners.

P2 explained, “participation in AGPO has strengthen my ability to make decisions, to lead a team, to train, network and make friends to promote my business.” In terms of self-development, “I was able to raise the fees for my master’s program through AGPO and I believe wouldn’t have happened if it was not for AGPO. My exposure, my confidence, my network has all increased because of AGPO.” Through AGPO training participants have learned how to make decisions and have understood their rights and are now able to question wrongdoings. P10 “because I know the rights governing the special category, I can confidently go to the procurement offices to question why I was given a letter of award and later the contract was diverted to someone else with no official communication”.

For P19, the one youth entrepreneur in the study, AGPO had empowered her to be able to lead a team and ensured that everyone is given a role to participate and contribute to the growth of the organization (p19).

The impact of AGPO on mental and professional development was noted by P17, who said, “When I started, I could not even think that one day I would even be in the construction industry.” Mentoring on AGPO certification, business registration and tendering targeting employees, friend and family and community members, principally women is a common practice among the participant. P17 commented:

I teach women in my village business and AGPO registration process and tendering and about 9 of them have won contract at the county level. Lizy was

one of my employees that I mentored to register her own company. Now she is doing printing and banners for government entities and private sector.

P13 commented:

Now I have the confidence to approach the private sector for contracts because I deliver quality and my quality is unquestionable. I have become very aggressive and honestly, I don't look at myself as a woman, I am a human being, an entrepreneur.

According to P11, AGPO had empowered her to be able to solve social, economic, and environmental challenges through her company that provides cleaning services. Participant 1 also mentioned that her daughter-in-law was managing the company.

Group 2. Build productive assets: financial, social and physical. Most of the participants reported an increase in financial, social, and physical assets that they attributed to AGPO participation. In terms of physical assets, P3 reported acquiring a truck, construction equipment, office equipment, and large office space as the result of participating in AGPO. P20 was in the processing of acquiring land and purchasing a vehicle. P17 said, "I was able to buy a piece of land and a house through AGPO." P16 shared, "I have bought a car, and I bought land for my mom and all these would not have happened if I did not get the opportunity to do business with the government." P14 noted, "I built and rented and also bought a plot of land. We bought a family car and are able to build our own house." P13 invested in land, stating that "the beauty about land is that it appreciates and I can always dispose [of] it." P10 remarked, "I have moved from a small

house to a bigger one and from bad estate to good one.”

To further consolidate their economic assets, P15, together with 100 women suppliers, had started a joint investment venture called Comrade Investment. The women used this registered company to buy and rent properties that earned income for the group. They also used the company as collateral to secure funding from the bank. P15 said, “We are united as women and through investment.” P11 supported her employees to form SACCO, which is extra miles beyond employment to building saving culture to uplift the living standard of her employees. The SACCO is helping them save money for their children’s school fees, save money to buy land, acquire affordable housing and meet emergency expenses. Participant 6 had bought a house and a motorbike due to AGPO.

In terms of social assets, P13 indicated that “we have created a WhatsApp group where we support each other as women and youth entrepreneurs, we also have men, we cry about our frustrations and we strategize on solutions.” P2 came together purposely with other interested women, youth, and PWD to form SACCO, which had more than 150 registered members, to save money to provide loans to members to be able to supply goods and services to government. The current savings were around 800,000 KSh. P2 explained, “We think if we move together, we can source external funding for members using SACCO as collateral.” P2 and others initiated a WhatsApp group of more than 800 tenderers. P2 said, “We basically post procurement advertisement and then we help each other. This has made me a better person and I am more famous.”

Group 3. Enhanced social transformation. AGPO had helped to change perceptions about the roles of women and men. According to P20, most construction jobs

were given to women, “like we undertake the work better than men.” Because AGPO was nationwide, it had created opportunities for the free movement of women throughout the country to do business. P15 stated:

Nowadays, we have the freedom to move from one county to another to look for contracts and these has given us a lot of exposure to learn what is happening in other parts of the country not only economically but also socially.

Participant 2, who started very small from supplies to construction, noted:

Not many women are into construction of buildings and road works because it is a male dominated field but through AGPO, they have given us toilets, they have given us classrooms to construct. I started with National Construction Certificate (NCA) 7 and now I have NCA6 which is an improvement.

For P1, her husband now respected her due to AGPO because “when a woman has nothing, the men tend to walk on us, but when you are empowered, he also respects you.”

Sixteen of the participants did not operate their businesses with a gender lens. The desire for profit and economic gain supplanted the need to promote gender equality and female empowerment in their businesses. P17 said, “Honestly. I don’t care about gender. I will give you a job because you can deliver and handle pressure.”

P3 had created favorable working condition for women. The company provided 3 months of paid maternity leave and an additional 3 months of half-day work. Work started at 8 a.m. and finished at 4 p.m. so that staff could get home early. The older men who had been in the procurement business for long now felt challenged to see women doing well. P16 said:

They ask for advise on how I am doing this or that, they say we want to change the way we used to do because times have changed. More efforts are needed to change the perception among women and girls, boys and men that “I can’t do construction; it’s for men” and “I belong to the kitchen.”

P8 always preferred to recruit qualified women as a way of empowering them. P6 had this to say: “My business scope is not very big so if I am buying from wholesalers, I will honestly go to the person who give me a better price regardless of the gender.” P3 contributed that:

Women are encouraged to be engaged in male dominated sectors- during our last construction project, we were happy to see women engaged in plastering work on the walls which we used not to consciously encouraged in the past and our construction sites which used to be only men now has women. I also ensure that the person who supplies food at the site is a woman.

Group 4. Created job opportunities. Some participants preferred to recruit more girls, whereas others were indifferent to gender and hired staff based on competencies. P18 recruited more females and believed that “money in the hands of a woman will have a greater impact within the community. They will support their little sisters and brothers in school and their ailing parents, but men will, of course, just go after more girls.” When P16 won contracts for roadwork she hired local people to do the casual work, noting “that’s for me good because I have given someone a job opportunity to be able to feed the family.” P16 shared, “I just signed a contract for cleaning services that will be creating jobs for at least 10 people.” P13, who helped to create jobs for young men and women

from the slums, said, “When I look at their lives when they came to my office and now, they are living a better life now. They support their families and they pay tax, so they are contributing to the economy.” P9, who had created job for young women and men, stated, “Women in my workforce are very young; the average age is 26.”

For some participants, AGPO was a good source of self-employment. P7 commented:

I have been able to empower people who think being employed is the only option. I have not been employed for the last 2 years, and I am doing well through AGPO. I tell them not to focus on looking for employment, which is not even there, focus on registering your businesses.

Group 5. Improved market access. AGPO had helped to build the reputations of female-owned businesses so that they could be trusted enough to do business with other government entities and the private sector. The participants also become more aggressive in terms of marketing and looking for business opportunities. Notably, some participants consciously sourced their goods and services from female-owned companies. P3 remarked, “When we are sourcing our products, I tend to insist that we must also source some segments from women owned companies even though the bigger and male own companies give better prices.”

Market scope for P18 and P20 had widened to supply to three private companies as well as government. P16 said, “I also bought from women farmers when I got contracts for food items.” P16’s reputation in doing business with the government had

helped her to win contracts with such private sector contractors as Interbuild and Magic contractor.

AGPO had given female entrepreneurs exposure and the opportunity to network with other female entrepreneurs outside the country. P7 “Export Promotion Council has been training us on how to export. We have also been invited to participate in 2020 Dubai Expo and Kenya has been given a pavilion.” This exposure will help female suppliers to showcase their businesses and give them the opportunity to network and learn business best practices.

Group 6. Political and civic engagement. P6 through AGPO, “I have been following up keenly on what is happening in the current policies that are coming up regarding businesses and procurement.” P3 hoped to run for a seat in the upcoming 2022 election. P2 talked to people about AGPO and tell them that it is their rights so ‘women, youth, and PWD even at the county level are holding their county government accountable for access to procurement opportunities’. P1 reported that her mentor ran for parliamentary seat in 2017 election which she believed she mobilized the resources from her participation in AGPO.

Theme 2: Improved Potential to Earn New Government Contracts Motivated Enrollment in the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities

The in-depth analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of Theme 2. Participants under this theme fell into three groups, with a large number of them reporting that the desire to take advantage of public procurement opportunities motivated them to enroll in AGPO (see Table 7).

Table 7

Grouping of Participants for Theme 2

Group	Theme 2 groupings of participants	<i>n</i>
1	Ease of accessing government procurement contracts	12
2	Need to earn income, career change to support family, create job	3
3	Inspiration from women enrolled in AGPO	5

Group 1. Ease of accessing government procurement contracts. Twelve participants reported that even though it had been difficult to do business with the government in the past, the introduction of AGPO motivated them to enroll because the requirements were minimal when compared to open tenders. P1 stated,

Without experience, it was hard for startups to get contracts with the government, but now, government mandated 30% of the procurement opportunities to be given to women, youth, and PWD. If you tender as a woman, your chance is higher as long as you do your paperwork correctly.

P2 said,

Prior to AGPO, without years of experience, recommendation letters from people you worked for, it was hard to get contract with the government. The beauty with AGPO is that as a female, you can register your company today, obtain AGPO certificate and start tendering because most requirements are waived. When you have AGPO certificate, you can do business nationwide.

P3 explained,

Prior to AGPO, we used to compete with the established companies, which I thought was unfair because government is not giving me a job and when I try doing business with it, it is also judging me based on people who are qualified.

Back them every document used to be bought. We used to buy tender documents for 5,000 KSh, prequalification document for 3,000 KSh. So, if you want to pre-qualify for 20 categories, you have to pay 60,000 KSh and as a young woman who is not assured of winning the procurement contract, it was very difficult.

AGPO made all documents free. I keep wondering why anybody won't go for this life changing opportunity if it is ran the way it should be ran.

P7 commented, "We are exempted from business permit, bill bonds, performance bonds that are required in an open tender." Building reputation and exposure to more procurement opportunities is a motivation to do business with the government. P5 shared, "If I tell you that I do business with the government, you will trust me to give me more procurement opportunities."

Group 2. Need to earn income, career change to support the family and create job. Three participants belonged to this group under theme 2. A participant reported that their motivation was driven by necessity as they had to earn income to support their families. P1 said, "You have to get bread for your children, so you have to go out there to enroll in AGPO." For P10,

AGPO was a turning point to my career life as I used to be frustrated with the liquor bar business I used to do. Even my parents did not like that business because I was a young woman and those men would get drunk and beat me up and the policemen will come and blame me for disrespecting them. I immediately registered my company to supply goods and services to the government.

P11 remarked, “I enroll in AGPO to be empowered to change the world. In Kenya, we have huge poverty, unemployment and under employment.”

Group 3. Inspiration from women enrolled in AGPO. Four participants were in this group. P6 indicated that “my friends are doing well in their business. They have a mentorship program to encourage people to participate. I attended one of the mentorship workshops and I decided to enroll.” P13 said, “It was an opportunity that I had seen other women benefit from and at that time, I was looking to advance in my life and to be honest, I had advanced.” I realized it is a good policy aimed at empowering women, youth, and PWD to achieve their goals in life.” P14 commented, “AGPO gives all the special group a fair chance to compete, and if we are aggressive enough, there is the opportunity to be empowered economically.” P18 stated, “I was very passionate to enroll because the opportunity for economic empowerment of disenfranchised women.”

Theme 3: Access to Business Development Services Enhanced Competitiveness to Obtain Government Tenders

Participants’ ability to participate effectively in AGPO also depended on training, sensitization, and mentorship in AGPO, and access to financing.

Table 8

Grouping of Participants for Theme 3

Group	Theme 3 groupings of participants	<i>n</i>
1	Training, sensitization, and mentorship on AGPO	13
2	Access to financing	7

Group 1: Training, sensitization, and mentorship on AGPO. Participants reported that government (8), UN Women (three), banks (eight), and women’s groups

(one) had been providing capacity building training, including business management and tendering processes. P1 said, “Kenya Commercial Bank provided training on management and growth strategy of which the accounting and taxation was found most useful. As our businesses expand, we don’t know what decision to take hence the training showed us the way.” Regarding sensitization, P1 noted that “a lot of female entrepreneurs don’t have information on AGPO.” Participant 2 commented:

The government also train us on how to do our paperwork to apply for procurement contracts. The trainings are really helpful, they give you a chance to ask questions. However, more trainings are needed in the rural areas because the women out there don’t know how to register a business to participate in public tenders. The training is mostly in Nairobi, a woman in Embue County doesn’t get that information. A woman in Eldoret doesn’t get that information.

P3 believed that because government had no business experience, entrepreneurs should be consulted to do the training. She explained that “government training only focuses on documentations required for the tender application, they don’t train us on pricing, where to access capital, I think the training is not enough.” P6 remarked:

I attended a training organized by a group of women; it is called WIPAC School of Entrepreneurs. You pay something, and they take you through the AGPO certification, prequalification and tendering processes. I find WIPAC training the most useful because we are in a chat group where we update each other on changes in AGPO, upcoming procurement and training opportunities to keep us informed and motivated.

According to P8, the government train APGO on how to use the procurement portal. UN Women, in collaboration with the national treasury organized training for heads of procurement and Women entrepreneurs to be able to do business with each other.

P9 revealed that the United States International University - Africa (USIU) has a program called 10,000 Women, a global initiative by the Goldman Sachs Foundation that provides women entrepreneurs with practical business education, business advising and networking. The skills learned can immediately be put in action and they provide assistance in accessing capital. P10, who attended entrepreneurship mentorship sessions organized by individuals, said that “the session was very helpful in assisting me to run my business. I run [a] mentorship program because I never want anybody to find themselves where I am. P3 lamented:

If somebody had warned me to stay away from the government, I would not have been in debt today. If you supply and they don't pay, you don't supply again, but we kept supplying on the assumption that government always pays, and now I am in debt.

P11 said, “As a member of the Global Compact, I receive training from the UN on how to apply the women empowerment principles [WEPs] in my company. The Capital Market Authority and KLPC also organize sensitization programs for us on AGPO.” P13 said, “We have created a WhatsApp group, where we support each other on tendering and cry about our frustrations.”

P14 had been in a training organized by Kenya Women Finance Trust Bank on financial literacy and how to access business and to tender with the government. P16

believed that “we need more training because that is where we learn a lot. For instance, the KICC training I participated made me to understand the common mistakes we make and offered the opportunity to ask questions.” P17 said, “I participated in a training on AGPO at Egerton University.”

P18 shared, “Kenya Association of Women Business Owners organized training on tendering, mentorship, and networking for women.” P5 suggested that “awareness about AGPO should be extended to the villages for people to understand and participate because only civilized persons get to know about it.” P10 said, “Mentorship has been instrumental in helping female entrepreneurs access government tenders. I attended an entrepreneurial mentorship session organized by an individual which has helped me run my business effectively.”

Apart from AGPO-specific training, the female entrepreneurs in the study expressed the need to have targeted and strategic training on how to manage growth, business transition, and conducting business in other continents. As P13 noted, “How do I move from being a trader to being a producer? I think that training will be the most valuable.”

Group 2: Access to financing. Results showed that financial services were provided by banks; government agencies; and informal lenders, including friends and families. P4 attend a training on how to access credit facilities organized by the Gulf African Bank. Participant 5 received financing from SACCO but mentioned training in accessing government financing such as WEF, YEF, and Fund for Persons with Disabilities would be relevant. These three funding streams established by the

government to enable women, youth, and PWD access funding to be able to supply goods and services to procuring entities were not easily obtained by the target groups. P1 said, “WEF is difficult to access, and we don’t know where the funds are going.” P3 said that “I never benefited from the [WEF] because they had run out of resources by the time I turned 36.”

Other participants preferred to take from private lenders like SACCO with high interest because the process of applying for the WEF took time. P5 stated, “We have tried several times, but it is not easy to get government loan in 2 weeks to deliver goods or services, so we prefer the private lenders.” P6 noted, “The banks also have demanding requirement as they ask for vehicle logbook and bank account with active transaction which is difficult for starters like us.” P7 asserted:

If my account is not consistently active and I get a tender of 5 million, and I need the bank to fund me, they will tell me, my account has been dormant for a long time, meaning I have not been trading and they will not give me the loan.

Participant 20 preferred to take loans from friends and family members because of the amount of time that it took the government or the bank to give loans. The participants thought that other criteria should be used because dormant account could have been the reason for it taking so long to win tenders. P8 thought that accessing loans from private lenders like SACCO was easy. As she explained, “Once I was issued a local purchase order [LPO], I used it to apply for loan from SACCO and I was given 70% of the amount, the interest is also low, 10% and the repayment days is 90.”

Theme 4: Negative Financial Impact due to Government Delayed Payments for Goods and Services

Delayed payments were a widespread concern raised by 19 of the 20 participants. P3 commented:

Business has really slowed down from 2017 because government is holding the payment after delivery of goods or services and the banks don't trust us because we have not paid back the loan given to us. If AGPO was executed as it had been envisioned, it would have provided economic empowerment, but unfortunately, with the delayed payment, it is not achieving that particular goal.

P4 said, "Payment can be delayed for 3 months, 9 months, and even 1 year and beyond."

P11 noted,

The delay in payment is really harming our companies and infringing on the rights of our workers because we can't pay them salary on time. I have been following up on payment since October 2018. We now survive on bank overdraft to pay employees and overdrafts are so expensive. We have not paid our suppliers, too.

P4 stated,

Payments for the supply of items like newspapers and airtime should be done promptly because the profit margin is low. Our Procurement Oversight Authority should give instructions that the 30% that has been set aside should be given payment promptly.

The lending institutions put defaulting women and youth at the Credit Reference Bureau (CRB), instead of dealing with the procuring entity who caused the default due to delayed payment (P3, P2). P5 suggested, “CRB should investigate the reason for default which is caused by government delayed payment before listing defaulters because once you are listed, no lending institution will give you money again.”

Participants also reported that the county governments did not pay suppliers. According to P6, “Most county governments take long to pay or don’t pay at all for the goods and services they procure, thus putting female business owners in a difficult condition.” P9 never had any issues with payment since she started doing business with government, and she had won four different contracts with an average contract value of 10,000,000 KSh. The need to put in place a mechanism to ensure timely payment was widely because delayed payments were crippling the women’s businesses and undermining their economic empowerment.

Theme 5: Success Impeded by Procurement Officers’ Incompetence, Corruption and Harassment

Participants lamented about their experiences with incompetence, corruption as well as sexual harassment on the part of government procurement officers as a challenge hampering the progress of AGPO. The use of proxies prevents qualified persons from benefiting from AGPO. Most participants reported that the procurement officers were not competent and professional. P7 explained:

Some female procurement officers are envious, and they talk bad when you visit them. Some male procurement officers want to establish a relationship with you

as a lady before giving you contract while others want money before they select for contract award. There is also too much focus on the lowest bidder instead of quality.

P11 noted:

The lowest awarded bidder approach is not working because companies that bid lowest and are awarded contracts pay workers poorly and have bad working conditions which also affect the very businesses that the government is empowering and infringe on the rights of workers. We are disadvantaged when we thrive to do business in a responsible manner, ethically, pay taxes, while other not doing the right things are awarded businesses and we are left out.

The participants believed that procurement opportunities should be fair based on merit, not relationship. P18 stated, “You end up not getting any business because you didn’t corrupt your way into getting the business. That’s a big challenge too. You may have qualified just because you didn’t corrupt your way around, then you’re disqualified.” P10 argued that “the government should come up with a certain group that come and make sure that you are paid on time and address the corruption scandals associated with AGPO. Meanwhile, P17 was training people to change what she believed was a misconception about AGPO. P17 explained:

Most people, including myself, had a misconception that AGPO is only for the people who know someone in government. When I started tendering, I did not know anyone when I got my first contract at LAPSET. I decided to conduct training to change that misconception.

Textural Description

In this third stage of the modified Van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994), I used the main themes and grouped the 20 women in the sample to develop individual textural descriptions of the lived experiences regarding participation in AGPO.

P1. P1's business involved the transportation of cargo and construction. She owned the business with her husband, but she had the maximum share of 70%. P1 had been in this business since 2007, and her motivation to enroll in AGPO was the opportunity to do business with the government, something that had not existed in the past. AGPO empowered her by helping her to create a job for herself and other people who otherwise would have been jobless. As she explained:

It has really boosted my self-esteem as a person. I am independent, and I take major decisions regarding the business, and I am able to provide for my children. And my husband respects me now because he feels that I am also contributing to the family.

P1 raised a concern about using fake companies to secure contracts under AGPO. She urged the government to establish measures to curb the issue by eradicating all proxies. Late payment issues, collateral security requirements for accessing funding "If they will give us LPO financing without security" and lack of information on AGPO especially for women in remote locations are some of the challenges that require remedy for the program to have maximum impact.

P2. P2's business dealt with the general supply of stationary, hardware stuff and recently engaged in construction. After being in business for 3 years, P2's motivation for

enrolling in AGPO was that “it is very easy to tender document under AGPO because they minimized the requirements compared to the open category.” P2 won her first AGPO contract in 2015 and has won more than 10 contracts so far. P2 described her empowerment under AGPO:

I’m growing, initially at a very small but now I have started doing construction.

Yes! Ability to make decisions, ability to even train, ability to even make new friends. I’ll tell you what, we started up a WhatsApp group, and right now we have a network of 800 people that we post procurement opportunities and support each other. We have also formed SACCO to help finance LPOs of members.

P2 noted that AGPO was very competitive because many people were enrolled. “You go to one tender opening and you find that AGPO will be 72 to 100 bids and now you see from the 72 to 100, only 8 to 10 people will get the business. Still the higher percentage of people will not get business.” The 30% should be increased to 50%. Secondly, AGPO are given simple things to bid. “We are not being given room for challenges, for growth you need to challenge yourself. I strongly believe that for every category, they should give AGPO group a chance”. Timely payment, accessible financing and reaching out to more people on AGPO will help make more impact, P2 noted.

P3. P3’s business focus was on the provision of general supplies: office stationery, office equipment, computers and accessories, among others. P3’s passion to be “employment generator and not employee” motivated her to enroll in AGPO because she saw it as “even bigger opportunity for women, youth, and PWD.” For P3, AGPO had given her a job, allowed her to create jobs for employees, boosted her self-confidence,

and broadened her network. P3 stated, “I think if it was executed as it had been envisioned, it would have provided economic empowerment, but unfortunately, with the delayed payments, it is not achieving that particular goal.” P3 recommended that AGPO pay suppliers on time, provide training to enlighten people about AGPO, and reduce bureaucratic red tape.

P4. P4’s business supplied general goods and services, including data services, network service, and cleaning services to mostly government agencies and the private sector. P4 registered her business in 2017. Her motivation for joining AGPO was to be able to do business with the government sector. AGPO had helped her to be able to make decisions about her household, provide for herself and her family, build her self-confidence, and gain more friends and acquaintances to promote her business. She thought that late payments and high tax issues should be addressed.

P5. P5 was engaged in the general supply of furniture, stationery, and so on. The need to earn more profits and gain exposure motivated her to join AGPO; however, her business has been faltering because of government delays in making payments. She won her first AGPO contract in September 2013 and has won more than 20 contracts since then. According to P5, AGPO helped her to build her reputation and improve her standard of living. She explained, “If I told you now I have worked for government, you win my trust, right? So, I’ll be able to get other jobs.” More awareness raising on AGPO is needed. She said, “Most people out there they don’t know about AGPO, [so] they just assume it’s difficult.” She believed that the government should pay suppliers on time and that favoritism should be stopped.

P6. P6's business dealt in general supplies. P6 enrolled in AGPO because "I saw women doing well in it, and I decided I also want to join in and participate." P6 won her first AGPO contract in March 2018 and won another contract in June 2018. AGPO had boosted P6's confidence and had made her more organized in terms of decision making and more efficient in managing her time and being able to pay her children's school fees and live in a decent home. However, she mentioned the major challenges of too much competition, limited financial support, and payment delays. She believed that the government should improve the implementation of the funding modality as even the WEF is being disbursed through banks which impose their conditions.

P7. P7's business provided general supplies: food items stationery, printing materials, and so on. The business had been operating since 2017. P7 enrolled in AGPO because AGPO offered opportunities to women and the requirements for participating under AGPO are easier than in open tender or open competition. She had won only one procurement contract since enrolling in AGPO, but she had been doing other business with the private sector. She lamented her frustration with AGPO: procurement officers taking bribes, harassing and talking harshly to members, late payments, and difficulty accessing bank loans. She did mention, however, that AGPO had empowered her by enabling her to employ few people and improve her decision making. She recommended that "they should distribute jobs evenly. Not one person getting a job five times" and that "they should also pay on time" and that the banks should assist customers who need financial support without complicating the processes for them.

P8. P8 enrolled in AGPO under the category of PWD, P8's business dealt in providing such general supplies as stationery, Information, Communication Technology (ICT) materials, and car parts, as well as printing services. P8's motivation was to be able to do business with the government, an opportunity that did not exist when she registered her business in 2008. P8 won her first AGPO contract in 2014 and has won more than 20 contracts since. Her business turnover has increased. These results would not have been possible in an open tender. AGPO had empowered P8 by raising her status. Before AGPO started,

I would not be able to raise myself. That time I used to live in a very small house. Right now, I have a baby, I can be able to care for my baby, I bought a car, I'm able to do my investments.

However, P8 lamented that some of the procurement opportunities under AGPO were very low in monetary value which does not challenge them to grow. She also mentioned that delays in payment for goods and services rendered hampered the growth of her business. P8 urged Kenya's National Treasury to ensure that the procuring institutions pay suppliers on time if AGPO were to meet its objective of empowering women, youth, and PWD.

P9. P9's business dealt in media and communication work that entailed media monitoring and PR communication strategies. The business was registered in 2010, and at the time of the study, she had 18 employees (11 women and 7 men). Her motivation for enrolling in AGPO was the opportunity it created:

I think, the opportunity is amazing for women youth and the persons with disabilities in this country. It gives me an opportunity to actually compete and give me a head start to compete in business. Through AGPO, I have created job for young women and men. Women in my workforce are very young; the average age is 26.

P9 won her first AGPO contract in 2016 and had obtained four contracts in all.

However,

There are lots of clueless and unqualified people at the government procurement offices that should be replaced with qualified and informed people for the program to achieve its intended purpose. I never had issues with late payment and I am proud of the government for the initiative.

P10. P10 was a general supplier of goods and services, including constructing roads and building for government ministries and parastatals. The business was registered in 2014. P10 saw AGPO as an opportunity to stop a vulnerable and abusive liquor business that put my life at a risk”. P10 won her first AGPO contract in September 2014 and had won about 25 more contracts in all. AGPO had empowered P10 economically. She said, “I’ve been able to change my status. That is what I can say. Networking and living in a better place, driving also. If I didn’t participate, I think I couldn’t be driving.”

The lack of payment by government and the cumbersome paperwork requirements made tendering very expensive for young entrepreneurs under AGPO. P10 recommended that the government establish a body responsible to ensure that the procuring entities paid female entrepreneurs on time and address the corruption scandals

associated with AGPO. As she explained, “I’ll just say the government should be strict on the payments. They should continue working on it and giving it a lot of time. Giving it a lot of energy. Supporting the program.”

P11. P11’s business provided commercial cleaning services for offices and buildings. The business was registered in 2010. P11’s motivation to enroll in AGPO was “to be empowered so that I can be able to change the world.” She won her first AGPO contract in 2014 and had won about eight from different institutions, with some contracts lasting 1 or 2 years. One significant change in joining AGPO was that it allowed her to find her purpose in life, which was to employ more youth to eradicate poverty. AGPO had empowered P11 to be able to solve social, economic, and environmental challenges through her company. “Its good initiative from the government however, more needs to be done to engage SMEs for collaborations for greater impact” and to create awareness to educate people who don't know about AGPO.

Delayed receipt of payment was her major challenge.

Some of these government, instead of paying within 30 days, they are paying us on quarterly basis, which is unacceptable, because even when they say the quarterly basis, they don’t pay as promised. According to P11, the government need to engage people. They need to engage us, listen to the challenges we have, how we can solve, how we can walk together, how we can partner as a public-private partnership.

P12. P12’s business engaged in branding uniforms, stationery, building renovations, and so on. Although the business was registered in 2007, some financial

setbacks did not allow it to become fully operational until 2014. Her motivation to enroll in AGPO was “because I am a woman, it was an advantage that the government gave women entrepreneur and since I was jobless and I have already registered a company, that's a good move and we are given 30% by the government.” She won her first AGPO contract in 2015 and has won other contracts since. AGPO has empowered her through self-employment and time management. She explained her challenge with AGPO:

We were told that with AGPO certificate, we could get LPO financing but now the banks or [WEF] or [YEF] are asking for security, like logbook but we have no car, and nobody will sign for you because people have violated the rules. We end up going to informal money lenders where the interest rate is very high, and you end up working without good results. Government should regulate rules for [WEF] and [YEF] for female entrepreneurs with LPO to access funding easily. I think if the government will be able to register all the companies and centralize the list so that the ministries can access it instead of the entrepreneurs registering from one company to the other. This will enable the government to regulate to make sure that one supplier does not get job in all the ministries.

P13. P13’s business focused on branding, communication, and visibility. It began operating in 2016. Enrolled under the Youth category, P13’s motivation to join AGPO was the benefit of the 30% procurement opportunities reserved for women, youth, and PWD. She won her first AGPO contract in January 2017 and has won about 50 more contracts since then. What empowered her in AGPO was “It's boosted my confidence, to be honest, so my business was doing well. And even now, I feel confident. I have

experienced, I have done big business, and I feel good about it. I created employment.” She has also acquired some economic assets, that is, she had invested in some land. She described some of the challenges. “Delayed payments, lack of information and maybe access to capital because if you are a young woman, you don't have security, you don't have collateral especially for youth who are women. That means you'll be locked out of opportunities.” This challenge can be addressed by paying them on time and providing financial assistance to women who are financially incapacitated. As for the most significant change of AGPO, “I will say the money, my accounts, the money in and money out. I get loans against my statement.” She recommended that AGPO should give equal opportunity to everybody devoid of favoritism.

P14. P14 supplied private businesses and government institutions with computers and food. The business was registered in March 2015 and it's been having it good and bad moments. What motivated her to enroll in AGPO was that “I realized it's a good project that's aimed at empowering women.” She won her first AGPO contract in June 2015 and has received more than 20 contracts since. AGPO had empowered her by enabling her to do business and care for her family, as well as meet a lot of women in business, interact with them, and gain information to improve her business.

You find people in the positions someone who knows I do not fit there to do that job because it's specifically for this person a clear case of square pegs in round holes and the best way to address these challenges are putting qualified people in places and continue empowering people. If AGPO was to be implemented and

done as envisioned, the program will engage more women and many people to do business.

She concluded by adding:

It's an awesome program if we just continue encouraging especially women and persons with disabilities to participate and the aggressiveness just to make sure that they are aware that this thing is there, it works. We'll be able to do reach out big numbers than what we have currently. Thank you.

P15. P15's business dealt in general supplies. It was registered in 2010. Her motivation to join AGPO was to benefit from the 30% reservation of procurement opportunities. She won her first contract in 2014 and has won about 25 contracts since. AGPO had empowered her by boosting her confidence to move from one place to the other in the country in search of jobs. Her challenges were late payments and "the personal interests from the procurement officers. " She believed that some of these challenges could be addressed through transparency. "The government institutions should know the details of their officers very well to determine whether they are awarding contracts to their family members only, their daughters, or their sons we have seen that." Government should monitor bid evaluations to ensure that those who are qualified, who are competent, and who cannot fall on side are awarded contracts. The most significant change is being able to care for some orphans, pay their fees, provide food to the needy ones in the orphanages, educate your children and own properties.

I would rather say AGPO it can really help a community as a whole as long as it is used in the right way, through transparency, and all the procedures according to the Act of the government can really help the women to grow.

P16. P16 is engaged in general supplies including computers and foodstuff to hospitals as well as construction work. The business was 6 years old and had been active for 4 of those years. She explained her motivation for enrolling in AGPO:

I wanted to be able to empower myself, to be able to achieve something that I can do it on my own self so that in the future, I can be able to stand and do amazing things, something mine, not to rely on hangouts, give outs, I like to be independent and AGPO gives me that opportunity.

She won her first AGPO contract in 2014 and has had about 40 AGPO contracts since. AGPO had empowered her to make decisions on her own. She had gained the confidence to go anywhere in the country to seek job opportunities so that she could provide for herself and her family. Despite the impact, P16 felt that the WEF was too restrictive.

Ninety percent of us have not benefited from the [WEF] simple because they ask for collateral security. More of a bank, so I prefer to go to the bank since the bank interest is 12-13% while the [WEF] charges 10% administrative fees. It has a lot of paperwork, and at the end of the day, you don't get it. The [WEF] providers should accept [LPO] as a security for loan disbursement and AGPO certificate holders should be taxed less.

P17. P17's business provided stationery, construction materials, and furniture.

Her sole proprietorship business began in 2012. She used to have six employees, but she had to let them go due to lower profits and her inability to compensate employees. P17's motivation for joining AGPO was her passion to see women engaged in businesses. She also commented, "Despite AGPO's late payments, it's something that is workable." She won her first AGPO contract in November 2013 and was tasked to supply printers, which motivated her to tender for more and more. She later upgraded to construction.

Ultimately, she had won 21 contracts from AGPO. AGPO helped her to grow mentally:

Because when I started, I could not even think that one day I would even be in the construction industry. So, I will say it has opened up my mind, I have done things that I couldn't even imagine I would do.

However, the lack of qualified personnel at the National Treasury and the late payment of contracts awarded to AGPO beneficiaries were stumbling blocks to the success of AGPO in empowering women. P17 offered ways to address these challenges:

The right people should be recruited and put in the offices and the need for early payment of contracts. Yeah, I would say AGPO is a very good initiative, and I wouldn't say that I would quit tomorrow, we're not quitters, because I know with time, it's going to work, if the right people are placed to do the right job, and people to do their jobs. AGPO is a brilliant initiative.

P18. P18's business provided goods and services to government institutions. The business was registered in 2014. P18 was motivated to join AGPO because "I was very excited to see that 30% of the procurement budget was quite a lot of money and it was so

much enough to go around to the disadvantaged group.” She won her first AGPO contract in June 2016 and later won about 15 to 20 more contracts. P18 explained,

Business was expanding very fast in 2015, 2016, 2017. It was an upward trend until we suffered from lack of payments, late payments, ...then too much corruption that affected even the way we were getting the business. The Treasury was not committed to releasing money to give priority payment to that special group.

In terms of empowerment, P18 said, “Yes I’ve learnt a lot of course you have to make the decision. Do your best bid, to make sure that you give or submit competitive bids. Again, she educated the community to participate in AGPO.

The challenged of AGPO “Yes, as I said the whole documentation process is tedious and long. Then the fact that you end up not getting any business because you didn’t corrupt your way into getting the business. That’s a big challenge too. You may have qualified just because you didn’t corrupt your way around, then you’re disqualified”. There is the need to enforce the procurement rules and regulations so that those who go against the rules would be named and shamed to serve as a deterrent to others. There is the need to empower and train procurement entities and punish those who fail to abide by the rules.

P19. P19’s business supplied information technology materials, lubricants, food, uniforms, and so on. Wanting to benefit from the huge procurement opportunity for women, P19 enrolled in AGPO and won her first AGPO contract in 2017. “That was the first contract I had. Since then, I won three of them.” AGPO had empowered her by

making her see life in different ways, noting “It has helped me create a job for myself and for others, so it has empowered me as a youth. It has really helped me.” She added that, it has helped her to make decisions not based on age, sex, religion or one's background but to give everyone an opportunity to unearth their talent regardless. P19 however stressed that AGPO members, especially youth, are not offered big contracts to supply and their capabilities are being underrated because they are seen not to be qualified for that contract. There is delay in payment and the best way to address these challenges are “The government giving us an opportunity to prove that we can work and we are ready to” The most significant change AGPO has given her was “I would say, it has really transformed me. It has really changed me. It has really given me the strength, the courage to go and look for jobs in those big organizations and not give up. More sensitization and training on AGPO is needed. The issue of delay payment needs to be addressed. AGPO is a real opportunity for the empowerment of we the youth, she concluded.”

P20. P20's business focused on printing, branding and general supplies. P20 started her business in June 2016 with three employees. She noted that AGPO gave women, youth, and PWD 30% of government contracts. P20 thought that the major beneficiaries of AGPO were people with disabilities because they did not pay taxes.

According to P20, “my first LPO came in May and I was doing branding for an institution. After one opening, it gives you more openings because the moment you show in your profile that you've done a job for a certain institution, a government entity, then it opens up your opportunities.”

She stated some of the challenges of AGPO “Like when it comes to payment, they are supposed to pay within 30 days, that is one area where they are failing because, that's our biggest challenge" and also diversion of contracts. Some of the recommendations Participant 20 gave were; timely payment of AGPO beneficiaries, avoid diverting contracts to other people after its been awarded already and finally, the government should increase the AGPO percentage from 30% to 50% for AGPO beneficiaries.

Structural Description

In this fourth stage of the modified Van Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994), I summarized the verbatim descriptions of the participants’ experiences with AGPO.

P1. P1 had a 70% share of the business that she owned with her husband. She enrolled in AGPO as an opportunity to do business with the government, something that had not existed previously. Her company, which dealt with the transportation of cargo and construction services, won AGPO contracts twice, each with an average value of 7,500,000 KSh. However, when late payments; the use of fake companies; the demand for security before accessing government tenders; and limited information on AGPO for women, youth, and PWD in rural areas are addressed, then the program can be more impactful. P1 noted that participation in AGPO had given her and other people jobs, enhanced her self-esteem, and made her more respected.

P2. P2 started by providing general supplies and then branched into construction. As a young businesswoman, she was registered under the Youth category of AGPO. Open tenders always demand more documents and experience that young people lacked,

so when the documentation requirements were reduced, she became motivated to enroll in AGPO. As a sole proprietor, P2 had won more than 10 contracts, with each having an average value of 1,500,000 KSh. P2 felt empowered being part of the construction sector, a previously male-dominated sector.

Participation in AGPO had enhanced P2's ability to manage a team; make decisions; and train and mentor women, youth, and PWD. P2, in conjunction with others, had a WhatsApp Group of more than 800 tenderers to share relevant procurement opportunities, support each other in the application process, and address the challenge of accessing funding. P2 and friends had formed SACCO; its 150 members mobilized social capital to finance members and can also be used as collateral security to source external funding support. P2 believed that once the issues of late payments, limited information, and less challenging procurement opportunities under AGPO were addressed, the program would be more impactful.

P3. P3 started her business of providing office supplies and later expanded to include construction after recognizing a gender gap in the industry. She enrolled in AGPO in 2013 to take advantage of the 30% construction opportunities that AGPO offered because few women wanted to go into the construction business at the time. Having won more than 40 contracts, each with an average value of 10,250,000 KSh, P3's business began to falter because of the lack of payment for services. P3 acknowledged that AGPO was a laudable initiative that had helped her to create jobs, enhance her confidence, and expand her networks. However, she commented that unless the issues of

late payments, too much bureaucracy, and insufficient training were addressed, AGPO would not contribute to the empowerment that it was meant to promote.

P4. As a general supplier, P4's passion to benefit from doing business with the government motivated her to join AGPO. Since enrolling in AGPO 2017, P4 had won more than 10 contracts, each with an average value of 1,500,000 KSh. P4 shared, "I can say that the money that I have gotten has empowered me to invest in the Nairobi Stock Exchange." She also noted that the government should have a mechanism to ensure that payments to AGPO suppliers were made promptly and that those who delayed should be penalized.

P5. P5's business provided general supplies. P5 enrolled in AGPO in 2013 to obtain higher profits, more exposure, and a broader reputation that would help her to secure more contracts from the public and private sectors. However, delays in payment resulted in the deterioration of P5's business, even after she had won more than 20 contracts. She believed that when the right measures are put in place to ensure timely payments and sensitization for more people to participate, the program will contribute significantly to female economic empowerment. For her perspective, AGPO had given her more exposure and improved her standard of living, regardless of the challenges.

P6. P6's business dealt in general supply. The business performance of women participating in AGPO motivated P6 to enroll in the program. P6 had won two contracts, each with average value of 106,000.00 KSh. AGPO had improved P6's standard of living and had helped her to make better household and business decisions. However, P6 wanted to see a mechanism to ensure that the government paid suppliers in a timely

fashion and facilitated access to financing that would enhance the impact of AGPO as a tool to empower women.

P7. P7 was a general supplier who started her business in 2017. The fewer requirements needed to participate in government tenders motivated P7 to enroll in AGPO. At the time of the study, she had won only one contract. She identified bribery, harassment, late payments, and difficulty accessing funding as major obstacles under AGPO. She wanted to see the fair distribution of procurement opportunities, mechanisms to ensure timely payments, and a less cumbersome financing mechanism.

P8. The desire to do business with the government, an opportunity that had not existed when P8 registered her business in 2008, motivated her to enroll in AGPO. Despite winning more than 20 contracts, each with an average value of 4,000,000 KSh and an annual turnover of 20,000,000 KSh, the procurement opportunities classified under AGPO were small and basic, and they did not challenge female entrepreneurs to grow to the next level or to expand their businesses. Delays in paying for goods and services delivered crippled P8's business, preventing AGPO from achieving its objectives of female economic empowerment. Despite the payment issues, P8 had experienced an increase in income, an improved standard of living, the ability to take care of family members, and make enhanced investments. P8 believed that measures to ensure timely payments and offer more procurement opportunities would enhance the effectiveness of AGPO.

P9. P9's desire to compete in doing business with the government motivated her to enroll in AGPO. P9 had won four contracts, each with an average value of 10,000,000

KSh (approximately U.S. \$96,245), and had created job opportunities for 18 staff (11 women), most of whom were young people. P9 suggested that for AGPO to run more effectively, more qualified procurement personnel should be recruited.

P10. For P10, AGPO offered the opportunity to switch from vulnerable and abusive liquor business to government supplier business. P10 found the tendering process expensive and government delays in payment undermining the very empowerment objective of AGPO. Notwithstanding, P10 had won about 25 more contracts, each with an average value of 700,000 KSh. P10 acknowledged that her status had improved and her ability to network to promote her business had been enhanced by AGPO. P10 believed that measures to address late payments and corruption scandals in procurement would advance AGPO's intended objective of empowering disadvantaged groups (i.e., women, youth, and PWD).

P11. P11's passion for empowerment to change the world through her commercial cleaning services motivated her to enroll in AGPO in 2014. P11 had won eight contracts, each with an average value of 1,100,000 KSh. P11 had created jobs for 88 employees (49 women and 39 men), the majority of whom were youth. P11 had made a significant contribution to solving youth unemployment and expanding economic growth because both the business and the employees paid taxes. P11 called for government to address delays in payment and collaborate with entrepreneurs to ensure greater impact of AGPO.

P12. P12's motivation to enroll in AGPO was to change her status from being jobless to being self-employed. She wanted to take advantage of the opportunities that

AGPO offered to women. After receiving her AGPO certificate, P12 thought that she could access the WEF and YEF, but she was surprised to note that even with LPO as proof of winning a government tender, government fund providers required security, such as vehicle logbook, which she did not have. Private lenders who charged high interest rates were the last option to seek funding for procurement contracts.

With the opportunity to win more than 20 contracts, each with an average value of 1,370,000 KSh, P12 noted that her financial situation and time management skills had improved through AGPO. She believed that having a centralized database of all registered AGPO for all ministries to access and do business with would prevent just one person from getting all of the procurement opportunities. She also mentioned the need to have flexibility in the WEF and YEF to enable new entrepreneurs with no security to access the funds to finance their LPOs.

P13. P13 enrolled in AGPO to take advantage of the 30% procurement opportunities. Winning more than 50 government procurement opportunities since 2017, each with an average value of 506,500 KSh and an annual turnover of 10,000,000 KSh, P13 felt empowered to invest in land, create employment opportunities, and become more aggressive in searching for business opportunities for her branding and communication company. P13 believed that AGPO could be very effective in empowering women if the government paid suppliers in a timely fashion; facilitated access to loans without collateral security; and provided equal access to procurement opportunities devoid of favoritism for businesses owned by women, youth, and PWD.

P14. P14's quest for empowerment motivated her to enroll in AGPO. With business turnover of 400,000 KSh, P14 had won more than 20 contracts, each with an average value of 300,000 KSh. Participation in AGPO had helped P14 to improve her standard of living and enhance her ability to support her family. It also had given her networking opportunities to learn from other businesswomen. P14 believed that having qualified procurement officers who could implement AGPO's objectives would contribute immensely to ensuring that the right people could benefit from the program.

P15. P15's motivation to join AGPO was its focus on helping women, youth, and people with disabilities. P15 had won her first contract in 2014, and since then, she had won about 25 contracts in all, each with average contract value of 10,000,000 KSh. As a nationwide program, AGPO had boosted her confidence and had given her the opportunity to travel across the country in search of procurement opportunities. P15 believed that late payments and the diversion of contracts by procurement officers to friends and relatives should be addressed by recruiting qualified people and monitoring AGPO implementation to ensure full compliance.

P16. P16, whose parents could not afford to pay for her college education, enrolled in AGPO as an opportunity to gain self-empowerment. As a young female business owner, P16 had travelled all over the country to supply national ministries, parastatals, and county governments with computers, food items, and construction services. AGPO had offered her the opportunity to run a company independently, make decisions, travel and network with people, and create employment opportunities for others. P16 wanted to devote her free time to do voluntary work with charitable

organizations, but her limited educational level made her unqualified for such jobs. P16 urged the government to reduce the amount of paperwork and the number of security requirements to access the funds as Local Purchase Order (LPO) should be enough for accessing the funds. She believed that as an added incentive to AGPO enrollment, participants should pay less in taxes.

P17. P17, who was previously engaged in supplying stationery, furniture, and construction services with her six employees, enrolled in AGPO because of her passion to see women engaged in business. Though she had won more than 21 contracts since 2013, each with an average value of 2,542,500 KSh, P17 had begun to operate the business alone because of the lack of payment. AGPO had helped P17 to become confident enough to venture into the male-dominated construction sector, change people's misconceptions about the program, and create past employment opportunities for six other people. P17 believed that the recruitment of qualified procurement personnel and timely payments to female suppliers would help AGPO to achieve its objectives of empowering disadvantaged groups.

P18. P18 provided goods and services to government institutions. The opportunity for disenfranchised women to gain economic empowerment motivated her to enroll in AGPO. When the business environment was favorable between 2015 and 2017, P8 had won more than 20 contracts, each with an average value of 2,009,000 KSh. However, delayed payments or nonpayment for goods and services delivered, along with corruption issues, had affected the overall performance of her business. P18 believed that the

government should introduce mechanisms to train procurement officers, ensure the enforcement of procurement rules, and address payment issues.

P19. P19, whose general supply business was registered under the Youth category of AGPO, was motivated to enroll to take advantage of the huge procurement opportunities that the government reserved for businesses owned by women, youth, and PWD. She had won more than three contracts, each with an average value of 1,000,000 KSh, and annual turnover of 4,000,000 KSh. P19 believed that her business was progressing. As a youth entrepreneur, P19 believed that AGPO had created employment opportunities for her and four other staff (three women). Her perception of life had improved, as had her decision-making skills. P19 believed that addressing delayed payment issues and entrusting the AGPO group with bigger contracts would enhance the impact of AGPO on empowering youth.

P20. P20 dealt in printing and branding including general supply enrolled in AGPO to benefit from the affirmative action benefits. P20 believed that after completing her first AGPO contracts successfully, the program had opened doors to other market opportunities. She began to conduct business with the private sector, thus expanding her market access. P20 believed that issues relevant to delayed payments and contract diversions issues should be addressed and that the 30% provision should be raised to 50%.

Combine Textural-Structural Description

Integrating the textural and structural experiences of the participants to determine the meaning and essence of their lived experiences is the final stage of the modified Van

Kaam method (Moustakas, 1994). As mentioned earlier, five themes emerged from the analysis of the interview responses from the female entrepreneurs:

1. enhanced economic empowerment;
2. improved potential to earn new government contracts motivated enrollment in the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO);
3. access to business development services enhanced competitiveness to obtain government tenders;
4. negative financial impact due to government-delayed payments for goods and services; and
5. success impeded by procurement officers' incompetence, corruption and harassment.

In support of Theme 1, all of the participants spoke about improvements in their leadership, management, and decision-making skills; the acquisition of land, housing, and savings; their ability to create more jobs for women and men; and their contributions to social transformation and political and civic engagement that were prerequisites to economic empowerment

In support of Theme 2, the participants confirmed that based on their lived experiences (i.e., the opportunity to do business with government as suppliers, the ease of enrollment and certification, the need to earn income, change careers, ability to create jobs, support families, and the inspiration of well-performing women under AGPO) motivated them to enroll in the program because it promoted inclusivity in accessing public tenders by historically neglected groups (i.e., women, youth, and PWD).

In support of theme 3 having access to business development services enhanced the women's participation in government tenders. They also found that training, sensitization, and mentorship on AGPO; access to financing; and the timely receipt of payment were vital to ensure the positive impact of the program. Although the majority of the women agreed that participation in AGPO was enhanced through the training and mentoring on tendering that they received from the government and private sector, 90% still experienced challenges in accessing government and private sector financing because of the lack of collateral, with more than 50% of the women turning to private lenders.

In support of Theme 4, 19 of 20 participants mentioned that government institutions did not respect the 30-day payment duration, as stipulated in the procurement contracts. It took more than 3 months up to 1 year for some payments to be made; in some cases, especially the county government, no payment at all was received. Some of the female entrepreneurs had to default on their loan repayments, subjecting them to additional penalties, including auctioning off their properties and having lending institutions blacklist them with the Credit Reference Bureau (CRB).

In support of Theme 5, the women mentioned that addressing the issues of corruption, delayed payments, restricted funding, and limited access for those in rural areas to information on AGPO would help to accelerate AGPO's objective of giving female entrepreneurs economic empowerment.

Discrepant cases were identified by responses that digressed from the policy feedback theory and empowerment concept. Most of the participants mentioned that the WEF sent the names of loan defaulters to the CFB, which would blacklist them, even

though the government actually was at fault for refusing to pay for the goods and services delivered. This outcome undermined the whole concept of empowerment.

Summary

Results showed that female entrepreneurs were motivated to enroll in AGPO to benefit from the 30% procurement opportunities reserved for women, youth, and people with disabilities to do business with the government. Even though 40% of the participants reported that the process of acquiring AGPO certification was cumbersome and expensive, all of them were excited about the policy and their efforts to navigate the enrollment process to be able to participate in AGPO. Figure 5 captures the main themes and groupings of participants' experiences and opinions. All of the participants expressed their appreciation to the government for establishing such a policy and program to promote their inclusion in the mainstream procurement process.

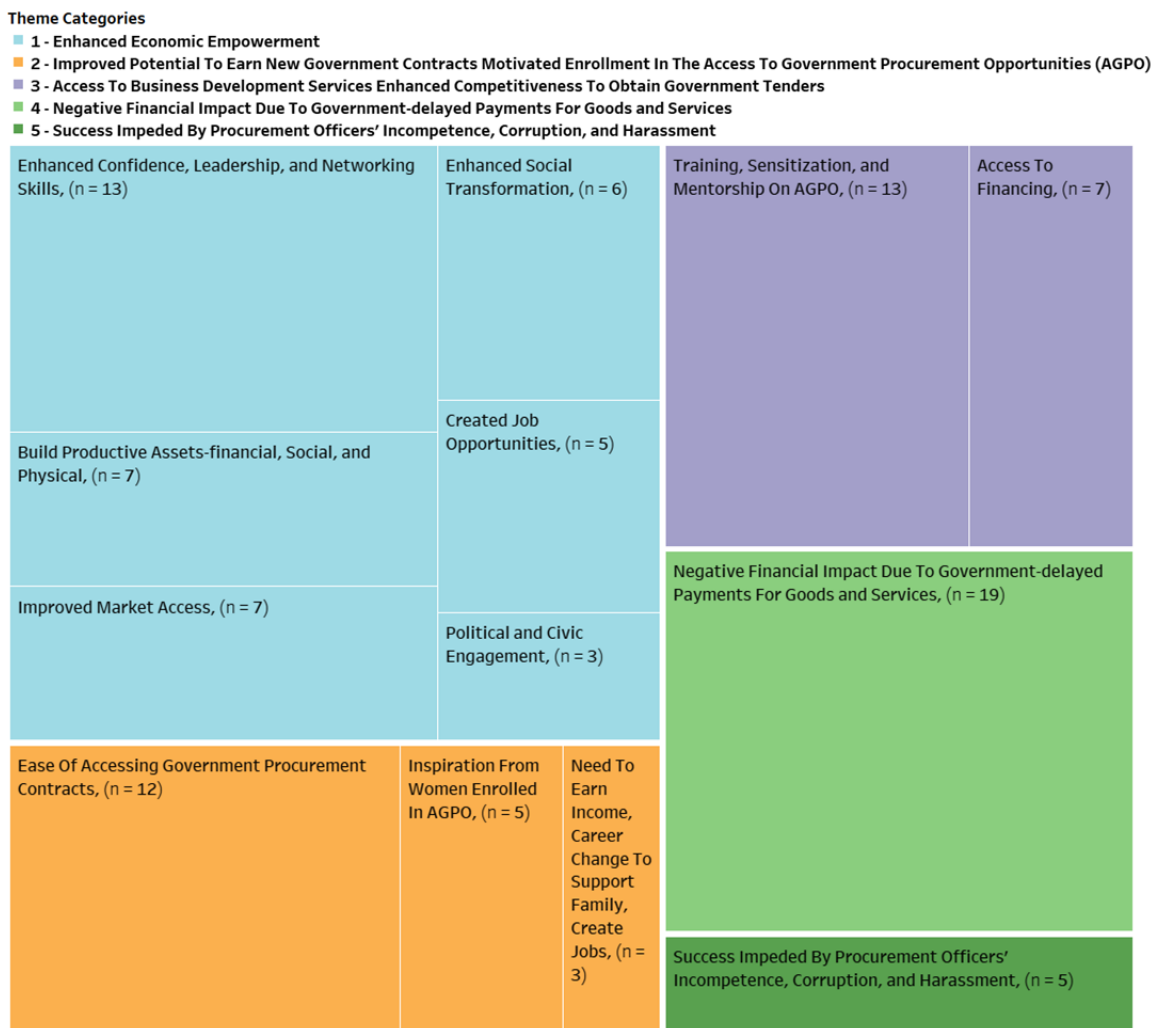


Figure 5. This figure provides a summary view of the different groupings of participants' experiences within the five overall themes.

Because of the competitiveness of the program, participants' lived experience of accessing training, mentorship, awareness raising, access to financing and timely payment received when the program was running well, helped them to compete better to enhance their businesses. The program gave them self-confidence, increased their access to productive resources, changed some gender stereotypes, promoted political and civic engagement, and created job opportunities for women and men. Most of the participants

indicated AGPO groups are not given big projects which does not challenge them to move to the next level of business growth. Alternative and flexible financing mechanisms, transparency, and fairness in awarding contracts, coupled with a mechanism to ensure timely payments, could contribute to achieving AGPO's goal of empowering the disadvantaged group.

In Chapter 4, the analysis of the interview responses and the findings were presented. I followed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore and describe the lived experiences and perceptions of female entrepreneurs within the framework of economic empowerment and policy feedback theory. One RQ guided the study: What are the participants' perceptions of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya? Analysis of the data led to the emergence of five themes:

1. enhanced economic empowerment;
2. improved potential to earn new government contracts motivated enrollment in the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO);
3. access to business development services enhanced competitiveness to obtain government tenders;
4. negative financial impact due to government-delayed payments for goods and services; and
5. success impeded by procurement officers' incompetence, corruption and harassment.

Ten interview questions on motivation, leadership and management, ease of enrollment and certification and access to procurement opportunities, fairness in accessing procurement and progress to empowerment were developed through the lens of policy feedback theory and the empowerment framework. Chapter 5 includes my interpretation of the findings, the study limitations, recommendations for future studies, implications, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore, understand, and describe the meaning and essence of the progress of the 30% preferential public procurement policy on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs. Under the policy feedback theoretical lens, the focus was on exploring and understanding the perceptions of female business owners about AGPO under the framework of empowerment. Twenty female entrepreneurs who had enrolled in AGPO and had won public procurement opportunities were selected purposively through snowball sampling and a database of female entrepreneurs obtained from the National Treasury of Kenya. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and direct observation. Interview time averaged 45 minutes.

No previous research has examined the effectiveness of PPDR in promoting women's economic empowerment from the perspectives of the women who had won the contracts. Literature on public procurement and empowerment has confirmed that public procurement has been used by women to gain economic empowerment (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2013; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Kinoti, 2015); however, some literature has not confirmed it because of the manner of implementation (Amandi, 2016; Nganga, 2017). By exploring the experiences of the actual beneficiaries of the 30% preferential policy, this phenomenological study has contributed to the extant literature on public procurement.

All 20 female entrepreneurs in the study were based in Nairobi and had been conducting business with the national and county governments because AGPO is a

nationwide program. All participants had 1 year or more of experience participating in AGPO and had won one or more procurement contracts. Moustaka's (1994) modified Van Kaam analytical method was used to identify five themes:

1. enhanced economic empowerment;
2. improved potential to earn new government contracts motivated enrollment in the AGPO;
3. access to business development services enhanced competitiveness to obtain government tenders;
4. negative financial impact due to government-delayed payments for goods and services; and
5. success impeded by procurement officers' incompetence, corruption, and harassment.

Interpretation of the Findings

This phenomenological study used one RQ to explore, understand, and describe the lived experiences of 20 female business owners on the progress of AGPO on women's economic empowerment.

Research Question

The study was guided by one RQ: What are the participants' perceptions of the progress of the 30% PPDR on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya? Based on the analysis of the data, most of the women confirmed that AGPO had empowered them greatly, particularly between 2014 and the early part of 2017, which was the time that the program was well executed. Participants described their lived

experiences of empowerment as raising their standards of living, boosting their self-confidence and decision-making skills, enhancing their leadership and business management skills, creating job opportunities for themselves and other women, changing gender stereotypes, broadening networks, and acquiring assets. This empowerment of women confirmed Duflo (2012) found that procurement policy that favors women relative to men over a long period can lead to equity between men and women. The results also were consistent with Rowland's (1997) four dimensions of the concept of power and Longwe's (1990) empowerment framework. AGPO also contributed to five of the seven drivers of female economic empowerment as contained in the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2017) report. These five are elaborated in the following text.

On improving public sector practices in employment and procurement, AGPO has led to the enrollment of 101,834 women, youth, and PWD of which approximately 78,686 (77%) are women. The value of contracts awarded to female entrepreneurs has totaled 88,907,296,587.50 KSh. The opportunity to conduct business with the government through the 30% procurement reservation had motivated the participants to enroll in AGPO. According to Baughn et al. (2006), women in Kenya were leaving stable jobs in the public and private sectors to establish their own small enterprises because the environment for microenterprises was favorable.

On tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models, the women reported that being enrolled in AGPO enhanced their confidence and leadership and decision-making skills. Four participants had even ventured into the construction sector

and were doing well. P13 reported beating men when competing in several open tenders. P3 had never imagined delving into the construction industry, but AGPO had given her the opportunity because there were so few women in that area to benefit from the 30% reserved in the construction sector. P11 described herself as a role model and champion of promoting employment, social justice, and environmental sustainability through her cleaning service company.

On recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid work (i.e., paid maternity leave, flexible working hours, and early closure of work), P3 and P9 reported providing their female employees with paid maternity leave of 3 months and 3 additional months of half-day work, along with additional flexible work hours to enable them care for their newborn babies while earning income. On building assets (i.e., digital, financial, and property), the majority of the participants had acquired land, bought and constructed their houses for private use and for rental, and had invested money in stocks and accumulated savings to use as collateral to obtain loans.

On strengthening their visibility, collective voice, and representation, the participants reported becoming more aggressive in marketing their companies and pursuing procurement opportunities. They have formed SACCO groups to mobilize savings and support financing members' LPO and also serving as collateral security to access loans from lending institutions. They formed WhatsApp groups to share procurement opportunities, share successes and frustrations, and to support each other.

Although the 30% of procurement opportunities were reserved as an affirmative action policy to empower the disadvantaged group, feedback from the participants

identified payment delays, limited training and sensitization, ineffective procurement officers, favoritism, harassment, difficulty accessing government financing mechanisms (e.g., WEF, YEF, and Funds for PWDs), as well as a huge and costly application process as needing urgent attention to maximize AGPO benefits.

Analyzing the policy through the lens of the policy feedback theory shed light on the ways that the policy affected governance, and the feedback on implementation shed light on democracy and revealed unintended impacts that may be used to shape the policy (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Results revealed that policy alone was not sufficient without addressing the implementation challenges. Having a mechanism in place to ensure timely payments by government would enable the participants to make profits and expand their businesses to support themselves and their families. Because AGPO is perceived by many as an urban-centric program, sensitization and training targeting those in rural areas were reported as ways to promote inclusivity.

The female entrepreneurs in the study expressed the need for training on such business management issues as costing and pricing, growth and business transition management, and participation in regional and international trade. The need for training confirmed the business theory, which is based on all entrepreneurs possessing business management skills as a precondition for success (Fournier & Grey, 1999; International Labor Organization, as cited in Gichuki et al., 2014). All participants expressed the concern that only minor procurement opportunities were available under AGPO, which did not give the group the opportunity for challenge and business growth. According to the participants, the minor contracts under AGPO to supply food, flowers, stationery,

minor construction work, and very little consultancy work reinforced the stereotype that women, youth, and PWD were incapable of doing major procurement work.

There was widespread concern that procurement officers implementing the program were incompetent and corrupt, favoring friends and family members. Some even registered their own companies, using family members and diverting procurement opportunities meant for the AGPO group to themselves. Some procurement officers were reported as having demanded bribes and sexual favors as conditions to obtain contracts. Hiring procurement officers with high integrity, providing regular training to understand the rationale for AGPO, and knowing how to diversify procurement opportunities under AGPO were important to the women. They argued that officers who violated procurement rules and regulation should be punished to serve as a deterrent to others.

The financing mechanism put in place for AGPO, especially WEF and YEF, were reported as being inaccessible because of the cumbersome security requirements that the AGPO group could not meet. This result mirrored that of Karanja et al. (2014), who found that complicated lending procedures, especially collateral requirements, prohibited female entrepreneurs from accessing credit. Identifying alternatives to collateral, such as women's records of using informal money lenders, could be considered a measure of credit worthiness. Participants also complained about the copious and costly documentation required to apply for, but not necessarily win, AGPO contracts. Simplifying the documentation would encourage more AGPO starters to participate in tendering.

Limitations of the Study

As indicated in Chapter 1, the study had some limitations. The sample was drawn from 20 female entrepreneurs, regardless of business type, who had won public procurement contracts in the previous year or longer. Translating the study findings to other contexts would be a challenge. The sample was drawn solely from Nairobi County and, given the small number of participants, the sample was not representative of the target population, which creates difficulty in generalizing the results. Researcher bias also could have influenced the quality of the study, given my knowledge and understanding of the situation of female entrepreneurs; however, bracketing (Creswell, 2013) was used to set aside personal biases and focus on the experiences of the female entrepreneurs. The lack of quantitative data from the National Treasury of Kenya on annual procurement spending, the limited reporting on AGPO by some public institutions, and the lack of gender disaggregated data on the number of male and female youth and PWDs who have access public tenders since the beginning of AGPO in 2013 compelled me to calculate based on assumptions which might not be accurate. The dissertation committee members reviewed the study to ensure that it adhered to all required standards.

Recommendations

As an initiative that is evolving, it requires further study to refine the policy and its implementation to promote the economic empowerment of women and contribute to job creation and broader economic growth. Following are recommendations for future researchers:

1. Broaden the sample size to conduct a nationwide study to reach a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of AGPO and the empowerment of female entrepreneurs.
2. Conduct a comparative study on female entrepreneurs who are or are not the beneficiaries of AGPO to gain insight into the contribution or noncontribution of AGPO to women's economic empowerment.
3. Conduct a comprehensive study of the enablers of AGPO, that is, business development service and credit providers, to understand their approach, their coverage and use feedback from service providers and female entrepreneurs to make policy and operational recommendations will ensure that service delivery are designed to suit the needs of women entrepreneurs.

Implications

Of paramount important in the study was the need to promote social change through public procurement. As found in the results, AGPO has empowered some female entrepreneurs economically; however, the policy's benefits do not trickle down to some disadvantaged groups (women, youth and PWDs) own businesses, especially in other counties, due to implementation constraints of access to information, training, and financing as well as some incompetent and corrupt procurement officers. These gaps call for AGPO policies to focus not only on reserving the 30% procurement opportunities but also operationalizing the policies to ensure that an enabling environment and mechanisms are put in place for complete benefit of the policy to empower women entrepreneurs.

Most of the participants believed that there was no fairness in accessing procurement opportunities, which, in combination with delayed payments, resulted in a lack of trust in doing business with the government. At the policy level, legislators need to ensure that government institutions disburse funds to ensure their timely payment and implementation of training and sensitization as well as women and youth enterprise fund are done with flexible lending modalities to facilitate access and economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

Other countries whose governments are interested in developing affirmative public procurement policies might benefit from studying the Kenyan experience. Individual female entrepreneurs will benefit if the recommendation is used to revise the policy to ensure inclusive access by target group. These actions will enhance inclusive economic growth, promote gender equality, and empower women while accelerating achievement of the SDGs of gender equality and women's economic empowerment (UN, 2015a). It is worth noting that although AGPO aims to empower disadvantaged groups, the majority of female entrepreneurs did not make conscious efforts to trickle down the economic benefits and empowerment opportunity to other females through actions such as sourcing from female wholesalers, recruiting more female employees and short-term contractors, or making their working conditions more gender friendly.

Conclusion

Women, youth, and PWD have been identified as disadvantaged groups as per the 2010 constitution of Kenya. Female owned businesses have been historically marginalized from accessing public procurement opportunities due to cumbersome

application process, limited access to information, lack of flexible credit facilities, lack of transparency in procurement practices and gender-based discrimination among other barriers. The limited access to procurement opportunities inhibit the progress and competitiveness of female entrepreneurs thus impacting negatively on their economic empowerment and their overall contribution to the economy.

The presidential directive that reserved 30% procurement opportunities for these disadvantaged groups in Kenya is contributing to economic empowerment of female-owned businesses through building self-confidence, leadership, and decision-making skills, strengthening women's collective voice and action, building assets, improving employment, especially for other women; tackling gender stereotypes and promoting positive role models. However, most female entrepreneurs are not pursuing this opportunity. Between the 2017 and 2018 financial years, women, youth, and PWD (inclusive of women) accessed only 5.3% of the annual procurement spending in Kenya. Challenges related to nonpayment or delayed payment and issues of transparency, access to funding or credit, cumbersome application process, limited awareness raising and capacity development programs on AGPO, especially for female entrepreneurs who live in remote areas in Kenya, affect access to the program. Both the lack of sex disaggregation of data on youth and PWD and the underreporting of AGPO performance by procuring entities presents difficulty in reporting the exact amount sourced from female entrepreneurs.

Policymakers should revise the policy and process to ensure prompt payment for goods and services received. Participants voiced optimism, despite their experiences, that

“if AGPO was executed as it had been envisioned, it would have provided economic empowerment, but unfortunately, with the delayed payment, it is not achieving that particular goal.” Therefore, if the government and financial institutions make enterprise funds more accessible and provide timely payment to women and youth, then empowerment and business growth may be achieved. Further, the reliance on private financiers and banks cause unnecessary strain and inhibit business growth. For example, one participants captured the struggle by indicating, “We have tried several times, but it is not easy to get [a] government loan such as Women Enterprise Fund in two weeks to deliver goods or services, so we prefer the private lenders with high interest rates and the banks [which] also have demanding requirements as they ask for vehicle log book and bank account with active transaction which is difficult for starters like us.”

Beyond these recommended programmatic changes, another critical issue remains. The knowledge and awareness of the AGPO opportunity may be centered around more urban areas. For example, in an effort to raise awareness related to AGPO, one female entrepreneur suggested, “more trainings are needed in the rural areas, because the women out there don’t know how to register a business to participate in public tenders. The training is mostly in Nairobi [the capital]. A woman in Embue County doesn’t get that information.” An additional area for improvement is to simplify the AGPO certification and bidding processes to attract more female entrepreneurs. Particularly, one participant indicated that “the AGPO certificate expires every two years which of course is another challenge because why do I need to renew an AGPO certificate if I’m a woman? At no point do I intend to change my gender,” and that “A lot

of time is being wasted in those processes and the paperwork for bidding is ... expensive.” Related, female entrepreneurs called for a more simplified, centralized, and streamlined procurement portal to “reduce the cost and time of moving from one procuring entity to another to drop copies of their AGPO certificates to be pre-qualified” and to interact with procurement officers that were adequately trained to regulate this process.

Still, given all the challenges and complexities, female entrepreneurs are ambitious and motivated. They want to grow their business and want to diversify the products sourced under AGPO to challenge women entrepreneurs to accomplish that business growth. One entrepreneur stated, “30% is very small compared to a whole 100%. Only minor procurement such as printing, stationery, call cards etc are placed under AGPO, which does not challenge us and give us room for growth. We need more consultancies and construction work.” Enhancing female entrepreneurs’ access to public procurement opportunities will not only empower them economically but will create employment opportunities and contribute to the national economy for generations to come.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

- Welcome research participants and self-introduction
- Clarify the study purpose and reason for selecting participant
- Explain the research tools and purpose of using them
- Explain the ground rules and interview guidelines to ensure all the topics can be covered within the allotted time of 45mins to 1hr
- Address the importance of confidentiality
- Clarify that information collected will be analyzed as a whole and participant names will not be disclosed in the analysis of the interview data

Interview Purpose:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the progress of the 30% preferential public procurement policy on the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in Kenya

Interviewer will explain:

You can withdraw your participation at any time and your confidentiality remains my ethical responsibility. Before we begin, please provide the following

Demographic information:

Please briefly describe the type of business that your organization is engaged in.

Who owns the business? Is it a joint ownership, what is the percentage of your share?

Since when have you been engaged in this business? Has the business changed over the years? Annual turnover? Number of employees? #F #M

Explain how you are involved in the leadership and management of the business

What is your age?

What is your educational level?

General Instructions:

It is important that you answer each question and if you do not understand a question, I will explain. I may ask you to offer additional clarification, if the need arises; if you are ready, we may begin.

Interview Questions

1. What is your motivation for enrolling in the Access to Government Procurement?

Opportunity Program?

2. When did you win the procurement contract?
 - a. How many times have you won the contract?
 - b. What is the average contract amount?
3. What is your understanding of the 30% preferential procurement policy of the government of Kenya (Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO))?
 - a. Briefly explain the application process to be eligible under AGPOstep by step? On a scale of 1-5, how easy was the process?
 - b. Briefly explain the process of bidding for procurement opportunities. On a scale of 1-5, how easy was the process?
4. What are your perceptions concerning the fair distribution of procurement opportunities within:

- a. the target groups (women, youth, and persons with disabilities)?
 - b. between women and men entrepreneurs?
5. Do you think that AGPO programme is meeting its objectives of providing public procurement opportunities to economically empower female entrepreneurs?

Why/Why not?
6. Can you specify any challenges you face with the 30% affirmative public procurement policy (AGPO)?
7. What are your perceptions on how the challenges can be addressed?
8. What are your perceptions on the procurement contracts being awarded and its effects on the following:
 - a. Your personal empowerment and agency (participation in decision making within your household, community, organizational and governmental levels, participation in civic and political processes)? Rate your responses from 1-5.
 - b. Influencing the creation of enabling environment within or outside your organizations (probe: Governance, legal framework, structural barriers /systems, organizational culture)? Rate your responses from 1-5.
 - c. Economic opportunities (probe: business expansion and income, job creation, especially for women, assets creation, access to markets, credits and other business development services, training and skills, etc.)? Rate your responses from 1-5.

- d. Social transformation (probe: gender discriminations and norms, redistribution of care work, etc.)? Rate your responses from 1-5.
9. What are your perceptions regarding your business/enterprise contribution to women's economic empowerment ? (probe: a. Equal pay; b. work force balance; c. application of gender lens in aspects including gender targets and quota)
10. What do you perceive as the "Most Significant Change" since you were awarded public procurement contracts? (probe: in your life, business, family and community)
11. Do you receive business development support from other organizations to make your business/enterprise competitive? If yes,
 - a. List the organizations that provided the support (probe: government, United Nations, nongovernmental organization, private sector, academia, others , etc.),
 - b. Explain the type of support you received (How often do you receive the support? The impact of the support on your business?)
 - c. Which of the services did you find most useful? Why?
 - d. Which of the services did you find less helpful? Why?
12. What other support do you perceive would contribute to progress of women entrepreneurs?
13. What recommendation to you have for the improvement of the 30% preferential procurement policy?

14. What recommendations do you have for business development service providers to assist you in a) accessing the procurement contract? b) developing and expanding your business?

Conclusion

That was the last and final question, which concludes the interview. Do you have any questions? I would like to remind you that once the interview recording has been transcribed, I will contact you so you can review the transcription for accuracy. If any changes are needed, you can let me know at that time. I thank you for your participation in this very important research study.