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Towards a Values Based Monitoring and Evaluation of Gender Responsive Public Procurement Programs in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Gender responsive public procurement in Kenya is an ambitious promise that has yet to be met because the monitoring system currently employs a compliance-oriented approach instead of transformative one. Current indicators follow numerical outcomes such as the proportion of contracts given but cannot record whether such opportunities actually empower women or whether such opportunities will change the structural economic inequalities. This conceptual study addresses this critical vacuum by introducing a radical paradigm shift to the comprehensive values-based monitoring and evaluation system. We go beyond merely enumerating contracts granted to women owned businesses to construct a novel paradigm that builds out on feminist economics and institutional theory. This model aims to gauge deep and frequently neglected aspects of success like the expansion of actual economic independence, the systemic breaking down of structural impediments, and the attainment of the wider social change within societies. The analysis reveals a notable accountability void in which the current emphasis on participation rates utterly ignores the actual real world effects on women and the sustainability of their businesses. The suggested framework is a direct challenge to the policymakers and practitioners who are being called to bear a new meaning of evaluation as the provision of procedural compliance rather than improvement of substantive and equitable outcomes. Such fundamental reorientation requires operationalization of core values into specific indicators and including them into the current Kenyan system of public financial management. This shift is ultimately vital to the active reorganization of the procurement programs in the country, in order to turn into a real driver of gender justice and inclusive development.

Keywords: Values Based Monitoring, Gender Responsive Procurement, Kenya, Transformative Evaluation, and Women's Economic Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Public procurement is an influential but poorly leveraged strategic tool to further gender equality and economic empowerment of women in economic systems around the world, and has a huge chance to change the way economic systems operate and mitigate historical inequalities. Public procurement markets in several developing economies represent the sizeable channel of redistributing the economic opportunity to women-owned businesses because it typically accounts for 15-20% of Gross Domestic Product (National Treasury, 2025; Rathi, 2024; Kelly, Reszka &

Polychronakis, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Manta and Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016). Gender-Responsive Public Procurement (GRPP) has become a pivot intervention tool in gender mainstreaming that intentionally mobilizes procurement to understand the varied effects of contracting on women and men, as well as to develop mechanisms that minimize gender inequalities (Rathi, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Goiria & Bonachea, 2022). GRPP is more than just a technical purchasing opportunity, being a strategic way of how to shift significant portions of the economy toward economic empowerment of women and counteract structural obstacles to their active involvement in the market (Patrucco et. al. 2024; Hamilton, 2022).

In Kenya, the GRPP need is consistent with both the constitution requirements and the wider development goals, as it creates a progressive legal framework, which makes Kenya a pace setter in the action of affirmative procurement in the region. The Constitution of Kenya of 2010 confirmed the principles of equity, fairness and inclusion as central to the administration of the population and that particular Articles 227 of that Constitution enshrined the principles of fairness, equity, transparency, competitiveness and cost-effectiveness in the procurement process of the population (Government of Kenya, 2010). It is based on this constitutional ground that the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (PPADA, 2015), formalized these principles by the way of the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities (AGPO) programme that requires 30% of procurement opportunities in the public to be set aside to women, young people, and people with disabilities (Government of Kenya, 2015). This paradigm acknowledges the transformative capabilities of government spending as an initiator of inclusive economic growth and economic empowerment of women (Manyala, 2021; Stoffel, 2020; Mutangili, 2025).

Through this favorable environment, the implementation of the GRPP can be seen in Kenya to have glaring cracks between policy intent and implementation, with the latest evaluations demonstrating a difficult terrain in which legal provisions have not been translated into transformative effect. In a 2023 Gender Responsive Public Financial Management evaluation under the PEFA framework, all the gender-responsive indicators were rated as D showing significant deficiencies and making the entire system largely gender irresponsible (PFMR Secretariat, 2023; Oyugi, 2024; Kemboi, 2025). This analysis found that there were fundamental failure points in the system such as the lack of a gender analysis in the budget processes, a lack of gender-responsive guidance in budget-circulars, and little attention to gender mainstreaming in

performance contracting evaluations, where gender-responsive procurement considered only 3% of the assessment measures (KNBS, 2023). The presence of these implementation issues is further realized by the participation data that, even with the 30% reservation requirement, existing uptake of affirmative procurement allocations is about 17%, which is far below the stipulated legal required levels (PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018).

Another key reason behind the difficulties in implementation of the GRPP in Kenya is the constraints of the existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) models, which have traditionally focused on monitoring compliance and checking spending instead of measuring actual impact. Historical M&E systems of GRPP in Kenya have concentrated on measuring the percentage of contracts awarded to women-owned firms against the 30% target of AGPO without providing adequate information on the transformative capacity and substantive result of GRPP interventions (Rathi, 2024; Kelly, Reszka and Polychronakis, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Manta & Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016). This compliance-based strategy generates a considerable evaluation gap that takes place in several dimensions that include a strong data disaggregation weakness where systems cannot consistently gather and examine sex-disaggregated statistics; a qualitative assessment deficit with very few mechanisms to measure the experiential aspects of women participation; and a systemic integration deficit, in which GRPP M&E remains disconnected to the larger systems of public financial management (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025). All these limitations restrict the capacity of policymakers to know whether the GRPP programs are actually changing the gender power relationships and the economic patterns.

This research is presenting the values-based monitoring and evaluation (VBM&E) model as a paradigm shift of compliance-based models applied today, and thus a groundbreaking alternative to these antiquated and bureaucratic frameworks to achieve the stated objective (Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021). Conceptually inspired by value-based frameworks that put the emphasis on the substantive instead of procedural compliance, the given framework revolves around four key value dimensions that contribute to the transformative GRPP. These are economic empowerment that goes beyond contract figures to measure changes in the business autonomy and accumulation of assets; equity and inclusion that measures reduction of structural barriers; accountability and transparency that measures how well systems respond to the needs of women; and transformative impact that measures wider social transformations beyond

individual enterprises (Kabeer, 2020; Fraser, 2012; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Rathi, 2024; Orser et. al. 2021). This values orientation explicitly responds to the limitation of the policy coherence literature that individual technical strategies fail to capture the presence of political contestation in policy implementation, and instead, it actively addresses the presence of power struggles and normative assumptions within GRPP (Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsofa et. al. 2023; Rodríguez et. al. 2023; Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021).

In theory, this values-oriented approach unites various theoretical traditions to establish a firmer foundation to comprehend and evaluate the transformative capacity of GRPP more than technically-oriented approaches of M&E that prevail in practice. It incorporates feminist economics values that emphasize agency, recognition, and redistribution; transformative comparative analysis approaches that emphasize power analysis and participatory strategies; and institutional theory that focuses on how formal and informal regulations process gender, (Van Assche et al., 2022; Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2023; Chakraborty, 2024; Reiser, 2024). The composite collection of such views fills a crucial conceptual and practical gap in the literature and practice of gender-procurement responsiveness in Kenya, answering the call of the need to design and implement PFM changes that would facilitate successful implementation of GRPFM (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025; PFMR Secretariat, 2023; Oyugi, 2024; Kemboi, 2025).

The conceptual research design applied in this paper seeks to create a holistic framework of VBM&E of GRPP in Kenya by relying on a systematic synthesis of various literature streams, such as gender-responsive procurement, public financial management, feminist economics, and evaluation theory (Jaakkola, 2020; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Adams et al., 2017; Hulland, 2020). The methodology permits the incorporation of knowledge across the fields of discipline to come up with new theoretical frameworks and practices appropriate to the local context of Kenya that deals with the implementation paradox in which well-crafted policies fail because of the lack of attention to political economy and the institutional setting (Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsofa et. al. 2023; Rodríguez et. al. 2023; Daya, 2023; Keast et. al. 2023; Ahmadi & Vogel, 2023) This study should help the academic community and the real world application of gender-responsive procurement in Kenya by providing a novel way of looking at how the process of public procurement can be used to serve gender equality and economic empowerment of women.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Conceptual development of public procurement has been innovative because it is no longer a solely administrative endeavor, but a strategic vehicle towards the realization of larger social and economic policy goals, a change that has been hailed as an important development in the management of public finance globally (Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024; Manta & Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016). Under this paradigm shift, GRPP has become a committed gender mainstreaming instrument, characterized as the procedure of employing public procurement to advance gender equality by purchasing goods, services and works (Rathi, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Goiria & Bonachea, 2022; Patrucco et. al. 2024; Hamilton, 2022). This involves the procuring entities and suppliers understanding the difference in the effects of contracted activities on women and men and strategize the contracts in such a way as to minimize these inequalities (Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024). GRPP has its theoretical foundations in many areas, and its influence in conversations is heavily grounded in feminist economics centered on agency, recognition, and redistribution rather than only market-efficient results (Kabeer, 2020; Fraser, 2012). Moreover, the institutional theory is a lens of how formal procurement regulation and informal rules of the game can either sustain or disrupt the gendered barriers that women-owned businesses experience in entering the public market (Van Assche et al., 2022; Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2023; Chakraborty, 2024; Reiser, 2024; Brown & Green, 2019; Polzer et al. 2023).

GRPP is globally driven by the fact that it is consistent with international commitments, most notably the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Target 12.7 specifically fosters the notion of sustainable public procurement, whereas SDG 5 is focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (Sachs, 2022; Sorooshian, 2024). The European Union has been a pioneer in explicitly promoting GRPP in its wider policy regarding socially responsible public procurement which offers guidelines and illustrations of its application (European Commission, 2021). The situation is diverse in Africa, and Kenya is frequently mentioned as one of the leaders in the region, as the country has a forward-thinking legal framework. The Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (2015) created the AGPO programme that legally sets aside 30% of public contracts to enterprises owned by women, youth and persons with disabilities (Government of Kenya, 2015). This policy ambition is placed in a continental context where

national government expenditures averagely consist of up to 50-70% of inclusive public procurements giving it a significant opportunity to redistribute economic opportunities in a transformational way (World Bank, 2021; World Bank, 2025).

Although there is a strong policy framework, empirical research conducted in Kenya and similar settings depicts a disparity between policy implementation that is characterized by a significant presence of barriers that would restrict meaningful engagement of businesses owned by women. A combination of structural barriers, such as complications in bidding procedures, inability to access affordable finance and credit, lack of business capacity to match technical conditions, and difficulties in securing the bid, is repeatedly identified in research (PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018; Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021). In addition to such material obstacles, the literature underscores the influence of patriarchal norms and implicit bias in procuring organizations, which may result in the creation of an unfavorable atmosphere and level the playing field against women business owners when assessing bids (Kabeer, 2020; Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021). This is further complicated by the fact that the lack of awareness of both procurement officials and women entrepreneurs about the provisions and processes of the GRPP initiatives such as AGPO further restricts their performance (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025).

The main weakness observed in the literature is that the majority of compliance-based M&E systems lack the ability to measure the innovative capacity of GRPP. Conventional M&E models tend to be very specific on quantitative, outcome-related indicators, like percentage of contracts to women-owned businesses relative to 30% AGPO goal (PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018; Manta and Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016). The model primarily focused on compliance overlooks whether the involvement of procurement clients results in meaningful changes like greater autonomy in decision-making by women, greater business continuity and expansion, transitioning to higher-value contracts, or more widespread household and community wellbeing (Kabeer, 2020; Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsofa et. al. 2023; Rodríguez et. al. 2023). It also fails to recognize the gendered experience of the Women-Owned Businesses (WOBs) in the procurement process and fails to evaluate whether the public services being procured are delivered fairly or not. This void demonstrates a necessity to have a values-based framework that can quantify

empowerment, equity, and accountability, as opposed to procedural compliance (Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Brandt et. al. 2024; Balcom Raleigh, 2020).

The current literature shows that there are some significant research gaps that can be filled by this study, thus justifying the creation of a VBM&E framework. There is a critical gap in theory in that there were no well-developed frameworks explicitly connecting the processes and outcomes of GRPP to the underlying social values. Although the technical aspect of how it works is frequently addressed, the theoretical linkage to the transformative feminist economics and institutional analysis is not fully explored yet (Fraser, 2012; Van Assche et al., 2022; Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2023). Contextually, little research has been conducted on the impact that the unique devolved system of governance in Kenya has on GRPP implementation, making the interaction of the policy of national policy to the implementation of procurement activities at the county level a complex multi-level governance challenge that is not yet fully comprehended (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025; Manyala, 2021; Stoffel, 2020; Mutangili, 2025). The quantitative part of research is covered through case studies and descriptive analyses that dominate the field methodologically. It is necessary to implement mixed-method approaches that can triangulate the data on quantitative spending against qualitative data on the lived experience of women entrepreneurs (Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024). Lastly, there remain substantial research gaps such as a paucity of longitudinal research to trace the development of WOBs over an extended period and resulting evidence on which specific interventions, such as contract unbundling, greater transparency, or targeted capacity building, have proven most effective to promote meaningful participation (Rathi, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Goiria & Bonachea, 2022; PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018). Finally, by discussing the existing gaps in knowledge within the field and clearly outlining these gaps at the conceptual, contextual, methodological, and empirical levels, this analysis forms an interesting justification of how the current study contributes to existing theory and practice of GRPP development in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This scholarly article applies the conceptual research design to create a comprehensive VBM&E framework of GRPP in Kenya (Jaakkola, 2020; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Adams et al., 2017; Hulland, 2020). This inquiry is best addressed by conceptual research since it aims to produce new

analytical systems and theoretical constructs with the aim of comprehending complex phenomena, instead of producing new empirical information (Buse et. al. 2023; Topp et. al. 2021). The approach is particularly suitable in dissecting complex policy trajectories that have entrenched within particular historical, institutional, and political spaces to systematically analyze such abstract concepts as transformative empowerment, institutional accountability, and systemic equity in the context of procurement systems (Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsofa et. al. 2023; Rodríguez et. al. 2023; Kabeer, 2020). No primary data collection was undertaken in this study, so the main evidence behind this conceptual analysis lies on available literature and policy papers.

Conceptual approach is informed by application and consolidation of various theoretical frameworks in developing a strong analytical lens and through which Kenya GRPP system can be rigorously interrogated. A multi-theoretical approach is needed to provide a complete picture of the issue of gender-responsive procurement functioning on various governance levels and in different sectors of society (Van Assche et al., 2022; Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2023; Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021). The analytic school reflective theory of feminist economics offers the values direction, as it gives more importance to agency, recognition and redistribution than solely market-efficient results (Sent & van Staveren, 2019; Agenjo-Calderon & Gjalvaez-Muñoz, 2019; Kabeer, 2020; Fraser, 2012). It is complemented by the institutional theory, which allows analyzing the formal procurement regulations and informal rules of the game that define the relations between the procuring bodies, female-owned firms, and other interested parties (Risi et al., 2023; Kauppi, 2022; Van Assche et al., 2022; Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2023). Also, the theory of transformative evaluation guides the theory behind values-based assessment, with a heavy focus on participatory-based methodology and power analysis as a way of interpreting program effects (Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024; Mertens, 2023; Buckton et. al. 2025; Mertens, 2018).

The research design focused on a systematic review and critical analysis of secondary material in the form of scholarly publications, governmental and international organization reports. It was based on the analysis of Kenya Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (2015), AGPO implementation framework, monitoring reports of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority, and other international standards related to gender-responsible procurement (Government of Kenya, 2015; PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018; Rathi, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021).

Conceptual literature on feminist economics, transformative evaluation and institutional analysis was also used to develop the theoretical basis of the proposed values-based framework (Kabeer, 2020; Fraser, 2012; Chakraborty, 2024; Reiser, 2024; Brown and Green, 2019; Polzer et al., 2023).

The conceptual frameworks served as analytical lenses to perform the secondary data analysis based on a structured thematic synthesis. The analysis of documents was conducted in a systematic manner, revealing the emerging patterns, tensions, and themes associated with the implementation and monitoring of GRPP in Kenya (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Schick-Makaroff, et al., 2016; Borisov et al., 2024). This entailed critically examining policy documents and literature to get insight on both the technical provisions and the power structures that are within the Kenya procurement environment. The analytical procedure has been not only descriptive but also interpretative, using the synthesized theoretical framework to the Kenyan case to come up with new knowledge and propositions regarding conditions under which GRPP would yield transformative versus superficial results (Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsoya et. al. 2023; Rodríguez et. al. 2023; Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021).

The targeted policy intervention is the GRPP framework in Kenya implemented through the AGPO program, especially its application within the devolved governance system in the country (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025). This involves studying the institutional structures of national procurement bodies and county-based procurement systems, the systems used to monitor and report on AGPO compliance, and the current methodologies used to evaluate the effect of procurement set-asides on the empowerment of women in the economy (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025; Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021). The specific investigation of the research is the role of values-based indicators that may be used to supplement existing compliance-driven measures to produce a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of GRPP performance within the current context of a multi-level governance.

Data analytical process was a rigorous conceptual iterative process going back and forth between theoretical frameworks and literature-based evidence to enhance the clarity of VBM&E as applied to GRPP (Jaakkola, 2020; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025). This included mapping theoretical implications of perceived empirical problems like the mismatch between number of WOBs and contract value awarded, and investigating how conceptual frames of feminist economics or

institutional analysis might be relevant to explain those facts (PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018; Manta & Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016). The result of the adopted methodological strategy is a sophisticated, theoretically-based analysis that reveals the structural and operational determinants of transformative GRPP. This theoretical research design allows the study to make contributions to knowledge by bringing a new integrated framework to understand and evaluate GRPP in decentralized systems, and giving policymakers practical tools upon which to develop M&E systems that can actually realize the transformative potential of gender-responsive procurement (Jaakkola, 2020; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Manta & Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016).

FINDINGS

The current study utilized a conceptual research design systematically to establish a VBM&E model of GRPP in Kenya based on the crucial gaps found in the current literature. The research revealed that the existing monitoring of GRPP in Kenya is mainly focused on compliance indicators, as opposed to transformative results, with the main reports of Public Procurement Regulatory Authority in 2015-2023 focused on quantitative monitoring of the proportion of contracts to women-owned firms relative to the 30/percent reservation requirement (PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018; Hivos, 2018; ICR Facility, 2023). This legalistic method did not reflect the significant aspects of transformative change including women having greater autonomy in decision-making in their businesses, their capacity to compete to secure higher-value contracts over time and achieving greater economic resilience through their participation in procurement (Kabeer, 2020; Orser et. al. 2021; Zabala-Iturriagagoitia, 2022; Tukamuhabwa & Namagembe, 2023). The systematic review found that available M&E frameworks were always silent on the quality, value and sustainability of the contracts given out to WOBs considering quantitative measures that offered little information on substantive outcomes of empowerment results.

On the value dimensions, the analysis determined four fundamental areas that a transformative GRPP M&E framework must entail, with the economic empowerment domain necessitating indicators of business growth pathways, such as the upward progression of lower to higher-value contracts and building accumulation of assets among WOBs acquiring government contracts (Manta & Mansi, 2024; Uyarra, 2016; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Brandt et. al. 2024; Balcom Raleigh, 2020). The equity and inclusion domain required indicators that gauge the decrease in

structural obstacles, such as the evaluation of access to bidding information and representation of women-owned businesses within a variety of sectors and types of contracts (World Bank, 2018; Chiplunkar & Kleineberg, 2025; Manyala, 2021; Stoffel, 2020; Mutangili, 2025). The accountability and transparency domain necessitated indicators assessing fairness in the procurement practices such as the tracking of payment delays, and availability of grievance mechanisms (Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021; Overseas Development Institute, 2022; PEFA, 2023), whereas the transformative impact domain required measurements of more broad-based social changes, such as changes to gender norms in the business sectors and a shift in the household

The study identified critical methodological flaws in the existing system of GRPP assessment, the almost complete lack of systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data in existing procurement monitoring systems, and found the analysis of PPRA reporting formats to have inadequate mechanisms to capture sex-disaggregated business ownership or employment patterns created within the framework of procurement contracts (Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Bosco et al., 2017; PPRA, 2023a; PPRA, 2023b; EACC, 2018). Moreover, the study found a severe gap in the qualitative evidence, and little systematic data were gathered on women entrepreneurs experience in the procurement market, such as difficulties with bidding procedures or professional contacts (Rathi, 2024; Kelly, Reszka & Polychronakis, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024). The results revealed that the current M&E systems mostly involved procurement officials as key stakeholders, with minimal frameworks aimed at integrating feedback of women-owned businesses or communities impacted by procured services (Onyango et. al, 2023, Rathi, 2025, Orser et. al. 2021, Goiria et. al. 2022).

With regard to integration with the current systems, the analysis revealed opportunities and challenges to implementing a VBM&E framework to Kenya as a part of the current system of public financial management, revealing that the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) already documented significant procurement data that could be converted into gender-responsive analysis with the help of relevant adjustments to classification architecture (Onyango, & Akinyi, 2023; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025). In the same manner, the devolved form of government provided opportunity to contextualization of implementation to 47 county governments, albeit through

harmonization of indicators and reporting forms across the county governments, to ensure comparability and yet allowing some flexibility in local implementation (Office of the Controller of Budget, 2022; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Williams, 2024; Makena, 2016). The results pointed to the current monitoring infrastructure of the PPRA as a possible institutional host of values-based GRPP assessment, albeit with considerable capacity building needed to train procurement officers in gender-responsive data collection and analysis methods (Makena, 2016; Williams, 2024; Dhar, et al., 2020).

One of the more negative interpretations presented was the political economy of M&E system reform, which identified considerable institutional inertia towards the transitions between compliance-based and values-based assessment practices. The concerns raised by the procurement entities regarding the addition of reporting burdens and technical capacity limitations when conducting transformative evaluation were detected through the documentary analysis (Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Williams, 2024; World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025). Also, the study revealed a lack of awareness of both procurement officials and women entrepreneur associations regarding the potential of VBM&E to reflect the wider socioeconomic effects of GRPP beyond the figures, which is why there is an urgent necessity to sensitize and engage stakeholders in the framework building and practice (Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Odhiambo-Abuya, 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024). These institutional and awareness constraints posed critical problems to the implementation of a transformative M&E approach, although the approach could illustrate how GRPP contributes to Kenya wider gender equality and inclusive development objectives.

DISCUSSION

The results that have been presented by this conceptual study indicate that the implications, both theoretical and practical concerning the monitoring of GRPP in Kenya are considerable, and that the shift from the compliance-driven tracking towards the value-driven assessment is both a technical and a paradigmatic change of evaluation philosophy. Four initial core value dimensions, described as economic empowerment, equity and inclusion, accountability and transparency, and transformative impact, dispute the existing technocratic method of GRPP monitoring which has prevailed in Kenyan adaptation (Kabeer, 2020; PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018). Such

results are consistent with, and significantly broader, than feminist economics literature that object to the highly restrictive efficiency measures used in public finance management, but offer a tangible structure to operationalize the abstract conceptualizations of agency, recognition, and redistribution applied to procurement systems (Fraser, 2012; Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021). Given that existing M&E systems are concerned with targets to be met numerically, this trend is indicative of what the institutional theorist refers to as ‘isomorphism’, defined as duplication of the successful practices that are not localized and do not serve any meaningful purpose (Chakraborty, 2024; Reiser, 2024; Brown & Green, 2019; Williams, 2025).

The identified methodological gaps, especially the lack of systematic sex-disaggregated data and mechanisms to assess success on a qualitative level suggests a vicious mismatch of the transformative goals of GRPP and the basis of evidence applied to test its effectiveness. This observation is consistent with the literature of transformative evaluation which stresses the need to capture lived experiences and power relationships in understanding the impacts of the program (Rathi, 2024; Williams, 2024; Mertens, 2023; Buckton et. al. 2025; Mertens, 2018). The prioritization of the views of procurement officials and the marginalization of the voices of women entrepreneurs recreates the same power imbalances that GRPP is proposing to solve, confirming academic fears of tokenism in gender mainstreaming policy efforts (Kabeer, 2020; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Williams, 2024). This knowledge gap is an example of what feminist political economy terms as ‘epistemic injustice’ that is characteristic of evaluative systems that consider administrative convenience more important than meaningful insight into gendered realities.

The possibilities of integration with the current public financial management systems shows both the feasibility in terms of practice and the difficulties of an institution to implement a VBM&E framework. The correspondence of Kenya with the IFMIS implies that institutional resistance can be less limiting than technical barriers, which can support the institutional theory propositions that administrative systems are path dependent (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025; PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018). The devolved form of governance affords a special chance of implementation that is localized and accommodative, but the necessity to harmonize among counties is indicative of a larger strain of tension between localization of the devolution process in Kenya and nationalization as a norm (Office of the Controller of Budget, 2022). These complexities of governance reiterate the results of the multi-level governance

literature concerning the difficulties of implementation of policy at different administrative levels with different capacities and priorities (Manyala, 2021; Stoffel, 2020; Mutangili, 2025).

The political economy barriers enlisted in this study such as institutional resistance and the insufficient awareness of the stakeholders are critical explanatory variables of the continuation of inappropriate M&E methods despite the identified constraints. This observation echoes political economy studies of public sector reform that infer how the interests of bureaucracy, resource limitations and misunderstandings of concepts have the potential to hinder innovation (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025; Daya, 2023; Keast et. al. 2023; Ahmadi and Vogel, 2023). The knowledge gap in diverse forms between the implementers and beneficiaries indicates what policy transfer theory denotes the ‘knowing-doing gap’, which implies that technical knowledge cannot be translated into practice because of institutional constraints and cognitive capture (Rathi, 2024; Kelly et al., 2025; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024). Such difficulties in implementation underscore the idea that the technical framework is just but a first step in a more comprehensive process of change that must include an institutional buy-in and capacity building.

Several limitations apply to this conceptual study and should be considered in the interpretation and use of its findings. This use of documentary evidence and available literature implies that the framework has not been empirically tested by implementation yet and thus this may fail to capture practical difficulties that may arise during the operationalization process. Despite its intellectual richness, the conceptual underpinning of the analysis is not able to give the subtle nature of views and experiences lived by procurement officers, female entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders who would be the end-users or directly impacted by the M&E system. Also, the national-level policy emphasis could have understated county-specific differences in implementation capacity and political goodwill that might play a major role in the framework applicability to the devolved Kenya governance system.

Drawing on the results and limitations, some policy and future research recommendations can be made. A pilot program can be conducted by policymakers in a few counties and sectors to test indicators and implementation strategies prior to going national (Jaakkola, 2020; Adams et al., 2017; Hullah, 2020). Capacity-building initiatives, such as training of officials to collect and

analyze quantitative and qualitative gender-responsive data, should be developed by the authorities in the sphere of procurement. To improve validity among researchers, further research ought to adopt mixed-methodological strategies to empirically confirm the proposed framework and create context-specific indicators of various fields and county backgrounds (Orser et. al. 2021; Rubin & Bartle, 2022). A longitudinal study of the adoption and effects of VBM&E would offer valuable data on how it can be used to reflect the transformative nature of GRPP. Lastly, existing comparative studies of related frameworks in other industries or nations have the potential to offer useful lessons to customize and enrich the strategy in the context of the unique procurement environment in Kenya.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed at fulfilling an urgent void in the research and practice by posing the question how a VBM&E model could be used to revolutionize the evaluation of GRPP in Kenya, and shift the focus on compliance measures to reflect transformative achievement in empowering women economically in Kenya. The conceptual research design was used in the study, where the theoretical literature was systematically synthesized, comprising feminist economics, institutional analysis, and transformative evaluation literature, as well as policy documents, such as the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act (2015), AGPO implementation reports, and international GRPP benchmarks (Kabeer, 2020; PPRA, 2023a; PPRA; 2023b; EACC; 2018; Manta and Mansi, 2024). The overall goal was to create an extensive framework that would moderate the identified deficiencies of existing M&E systems and deliver a theoretically sound mechanism of evaluating whether GRPP is in fact altering gender power relations and economic order but not simply generating superficial participation.

The most important finding that can be drawn by this conceptual discussion is that the current tracking mechanisms of GRPP in Kenya are inherently misaligned with the transformational power of procurement as a gender equality-enhancing instrument. The study established that the available frameworks are too much obsessed with monitoring numerical adherence to the 30 percent AGPO reservation threshold whereas there is systemic ignorance of four key value dimensions specified above (Kabeer, 2020; Fraser, 2012; Rathi, 2024; Onyango & Akinyi, 2023; Orser et. al. 2021). The critique also identified methodological deficiencies and notably the lack of organized gender

disaggregated data collection and qualitative assessment processes which leave a knowledge gap with no insight into the substantive effects of GRPP on the lives and businesses of women (Rathi, 2024; Orser et. al. 2021; Williams, 2024; World Bank, 2018; Chiplunkar & Kleineberg, 2025).

There are a number of limitations in this conceptual study that qualify its results and offer recommendations to further studies. Being a theoretical analysis that uses documentary evidence, it was not able to reflect the primary experience of procurement officers and other stakeholders and women entrepreneurs who would adopt or be impacted by the suggested framework. The use of existing literature and policy documents can indicate institutional bias and it may not entirely capture the heterogeneous implementation challenges among 47 counties of Kenya. Moreover, it is a conceptual study, which implies that the suggested framework must be empirically confirmed by practical use to discover the operating difficulties and adjust the implementation guidelines to fit various settings and industries.

On the basis of these results, some particular recommendations are offered to policy makers, practitioners, and researchers. To the policymakers, the study suggests testing the values-based framework in selected counties and sectors to streamline indicators and methodologies of implementation prior to its implementation on a national scale (Jaakkola, 2020; Adams et al., 2017; Hulland, 2020). In addition, capacity-building programs ought to be designed by procurement regulatory authorities to provide officials with skills in collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative gender-responsive data, instead of concentrating on compliance-driven reporting (PPRA, 2023a; Makena, 2016). To overcome the specified issues of integration, the study suggests altering the current financial management systems, especially the IFMIS, to systematically record the gendered-disaggregated data and values-based measures without establishing parallel systems of reporting (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020; National Treasury, 2025). To attract women entrepreneurs and civil society, the framework suggests the development of systematic feedback systems that periodically include their experience in the process of M&E, where the system should be sensitive to ground-level realities (Patrucco et. al. 2024; Hamilton, 2022).

The paper finds various potential areas of research in the future to advance this conceptual framework. The proposed framework should be validated through empirical studies using mixed methods (Orser et. al. 2021; Rubin & Bartle, 2022). A longitudinal study investigating the

execution and effect of VBM&E would furnish valuable evidence regarding the viability of this technique in measuring the transformative potential of GRPP in the long term. Competitive studies of related frameworks in other nations or industries might also yield information that would improve the fitment and reinforcement of this strategy in the Kenyan context of procurement. The political economy of M&E reform remains a subject of further study, with the literature still needed to find out how institutional interests, political dynamics, and resource constraints enable or prevent the introduction of values-based assessment systems (Daya, 2023; Keast et. al. 2023; Ahmadi & Vogel, 2023; Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsofa et. al. 2023; Rodríguez et. al. 2023).

In a more general sense, the present study adds to the theoretical and practical debates regarding the assessments of transformative gender initiatives within the multidimensional economies. It shows that M&E cannot be efficiently implemented unless it focuses on the governing relations, institutional structure, and power forms through which monitoring happens (Van Assche et al., 2022; Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2023; Sparkes et. al. 2019; Tsofa et. al. 2023; Rodriguez et. al. 2023). Kenyan case presents lessons that can be transferred to other low- and middle-income nations adopting the gender-responsive procurement policies through the decentralized governance models. To facilitate a practical use, the research not only outlines a diagnostic framework to be used to examine the weaknesses in the existing systems of GRPP assessment but also offers practical recommendations that can be applied to create M&E methods that will be capable of capturing whether procurement is truly achieving substantive gender equality and economic empowerment of women. This study promotes a more politically conscious and institutionally savvy understanding of gender-responsive procurement evaluation by showing that doing so means signaling a meaningful policy assessment, which is not projected in architectural sophistication but instead, it is projected in capturing coherent, responsive, and equitable outcomes (Mertens, 2023; Buckton et. al. 2025; Mertens, 2018).

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