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COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT POSITION AND ORIENTATION IN THE MODERN ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Procurement management is still a branch of the economy and the real sector that is still underrepresented and unrecognized. This primarily refers to its importance and the range of knowledge and skills that a person employed in the procurement sector should have. The paper focused on the research into the focus of procurement management among small, medium, and large economic entities in the Republic of Croatia. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire, and all respondents were directly contacted and motivated to participate in the research. The goal is to show the degree of development and awareness of the purchasing activity, with a focus on competitiveness, but also to point out the differences regarding certain topics, depending on the size of the company from which the respondents come. The basic conclusion is that there is no difference in the approach to procurement orientation and, in general, the quality of procurement processes related to the selection and analysis of suppliers when the size of the company is considered. The procurement sector has proven to be very active; employees analyse their own business, look for new opportunities, and participate in the growth and development of the company in which they are employed. A limiting factor for drawing a broad conclusion is the fact that the respondents are from a narrow geographical area, but valid conclusions can be drawn. Regardless of the positive conclusions, the procurement sector should always strive for improvement and development because it never functions independently and is not an end in itself.

Keywords: *procurement, competitiveness, operational and strategic management, procurement moderation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The research included company managers, procurement managers, and sales managers from the field of agricultural production. Respondents were approached directly using the author's personal contacts, social networks, and phone calls to motivate as many respondents as possible to participate in the research. The research was limited to respondents from the Republic of Croatia. Given that the mentioned country is a member of the EU and is extremely dependent on trade with other countries, it can be concluded that the research can cover the wider region of the Western Balkans and Central Europe. The research narrowly covers the specifics of the purchasing activity, ignoring general questions to which answers are offered by numerous pieces of literature on the subject of management. The scientific paper provides answers to the differences in the procurement approaches of small, medium, and large companies, but the individual results also offer general conclusions. In theory, the competitive position of procurement can act as a broad term, but the targeted survey questionnaire covered the key areas of procurement. The first part of the research refers to the evaluation of procurement competitiveness. The aforementioned assessment can be largely assessed through communication with our own employees, stakeholders, analysis of procurement statistics, consultations with external agencies, monitoring research from the media, and stock market reports. It was also possible that certain economic entities do not assess their competitive position. Along with competitiveness, the concept of the focus of procurement management has also been linked, because at the same time, focus has a direct impact on competitiveness. In terms of direction, it was investigated in more detail what this means for procurement management in practice, whether it involves finding new suppliers and customers, lowering procurement prices, concluding contracts, creating a new product, or training and developing procurement employees. Suppliers and procurement are concepts that can hardly exist without each other, which is why the final research focused on the analysis of suppliers and satisfaction with them. The basic conclusions that we wanted to assess before starting the research are the degree of development of the purchasing activity's awareness related to competitiveness, whether there are differences in the approach of large and small business entities, and the level of supplier satisfaction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Suppliers' specialization, easy access to new low-cost markets, de-regulation of financial markets, and extensive opportunities for global sourcing all together have an impact and have changed the power between buyers and suppliers. At different stages, procurement has played different roles. The maturity of procurement highly depends on the business sector, the size and age of the organization, as well as the level of integration with other business functions. However, under the influence of various internal and external factors, procurement has evidently evolved from a typical clerical function to a value-contributing integral process capable of affecting both the top and bottom lines (Rimkūnienė, 2013). The main strength of the new procurement model is the strong cooperation between the P2P and S2C phases in procurement. Old procurement models take into consideration only the P2P part of procurement. The new procurement model has a holistic approach, and P2P and S2C are strongly integrated. It covers the processes

from the initiation of need to the realization of procurement in the P2P component, which serves as input data in analyzing spend and the finalization of key performance indicators in the S2P component. Additionally, the new procurement model must provide the basic assumptions for providing robust supply-side information, metrics, and alerts that integrate with the implementation of technology applications such as Oracle BI Applications or SAP Ariba. It delivers specific insight across the organization in order to increase the company's performance in managing its customers, suppliers, and financial decisions (Manojlov and Nagy, 2014). Nowadays, businesses are learning to compete through the use of new information technologies, especially the adoption of technology in the area of procurement. As a result, there is an increased importance in examining the benefits and risks of implementing solutions and becoming successful using e-procurement technology (Siddiqui et al., 2022). A survey of procurement employees was conducted (Galić et al., 2011), with a focus on selecting key factors for the development of transport packaging. Employees with more than 15 years of work experience focused on the price and practicality of the box, while employees with fewer years of work experience focused on the appearance of the box, following modern trends rather than the price. It has become clear that new generations of procurement employees have a different perspective on a simple procurement material, such as a shipping box.

The procurement employees in crisis situations find delivery times, quality cooperation, and assistance from suppliers in finding alternative solutions more important than the lowest price and payment terms. Partners will always help each other find alternatives in any aspect of the business, especially if the situation is extremely urgent and threatens to halt production. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a number of turbulences and instabilities around the world, and it was especially challenging and unpredictable during the spring of 2020. Procurement employees were most challenged during this period by longer delivery times, logistical problems with delayed deliveries, absenteeism, and the inability to deliver the requested goods. The three biggest factors are directly related to the supplier and logistics aspects of the business (Galić et al., 2021). While procurement is now seen as strategic by our company, it is still an uphill battle to ensure early involvement. It is this early involvement that will reduce the risk to the business of inadequate contracts and satisfy the shareholders by benefiting the bottom line. (Procurement Manager, European Electronics Manufacturer.) It is the core of the business, as senior management is from procurement. Effectively, the most strategic part of the organization. If you can lower the cost of procurement, the profit is incredible. (Group Procurement Manager, FMCG Manufacturer.) The procurement professionals unanimously agreed that what they did was strategic and added value to the organization. On the whole, they were dissatisfied with the way in which the rest of the organization perceived their role and their lack of involvement. The majority raised the issue that the role demands internal recognition for it to contribute to the organization's performance. Involvement upstream via cross-functional teams appears, from respondents, to be the most effective way to get involvement at the initiation of ideas and professional effectiveness (Tassabehji and Moorhouse, 2008). While information communication technology can limit human-induced biases, it can also strip the public sector of the benefit of reduced administrative costs that result from trust-based working relationships among members of networks (McCue and Roman, 2012). Procurement planning involves the determination of

future procurement needs for works, services, supplies, or any combination required to meet the organizational needs in an efficient, cost-effective, and timely manner in accordance with agreed procedures. This skill is very important for all procurement stakeholders for the success of procurement (Komakech, 2016). Serious strategic procurement actively controls its costs, which, in the case of energy, means monitoring legal frameworks, subsidies, and energy prices in relevant markets (Galić et al., 2024).

Public and private sector managers could take advantage of the common and additional problems and challenges of the previous period and apply the following during the transition to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In the technological field: Ensure the resources for the necessary technological infrastructures. Carefully plan the interface of legacy applications with emerging technologies by combining input sources and information outputs (Mavidis and Folinas, 2022). Supply chain managers are beginning to realize that building sound relationships with suppliers fosters loyalty and secures valuable support that goes beyond the terms and conditions of an order or the contents of a contract. Supply chain managers need to create programs that aim to enhance the relationship between the organization and the supplier (Tukuta and Saruchera, 2015).

We see that the development of the service portfolio is key to the future success of subcontract manufacturing cooperation. The service portfolio makes the optional services offered by the subcontract manufacturer more visible to the market. Additionally, this is the way to show more clearly the manufacturing-related service offerings (Häkkinen, 2015). The expected benefits of cost reduction, improved efficiency, effectiveness, and absolute transparency will result from the simplified processes, the electronic support of the activities, the continuous performance measurement, and the definition of clear roles and responsibilities (Panayiotou, 2004). E-procurement is the integration of digital technologies to replace or redesign paper-based procedures throughout the procurement process. This not only increases efficiency by making it easier for suppliers to access public tenders but also improves transparency by making public authorities more accountable (Popa and Milandru, 2023). It is necessary to constantly analyze and control the expenses incurred, which is connected with ensuring transparency in decision-making, appropriate communication, and organization of the purchase process (Drobiasziewicz, 2018). Althabatah et al. (2023) concluded that one of the main benefits of I4.0 in procurement is the ability to leverage real-time data and analytics to gain insight into supplier performance, demand patterns, and market trends. This makes it possible to optimize the procurement strategy, identify potential risks, and improve relations with suppliers. The task of management is to create clear procedures, organize their teams, motivate, and guide employees through daily activities and challenges (Galić et al., 2021).

For the purpose of establishing quality research and conclusions, two basic hypotheses were set:

H1. Employees of the procurement sector are aware of the importance of maintaining a long-term partner relationship with suppliers for the development of a competitive advantage

H2. The modern economy has emphasized that the most important task of procurement is adequate and efficient management of the supply chain, not price reduction and savings.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research methods

The method of analysis as a scientific approach in this research was achieved by breaking down the concept of competitiveness into simpler parts, such as the competitive position of procurement, focus, importance and quality of procurement management, modernity of the procurement system, motivation of employees, and satisfaction with the selection and analysis of suppliers, contacts with suppliers and customers, supplier selection efforts, and cooperation with suppliers, while the mutual relations between these elements were examined. The generalization method was based on starting points from specific concepts to general ones, so individual elements were considered together as one whole. For example, elements related to the competitive position of procurement were studied together as a meaningful whole, then elements related to suppliers, motivation, and the like, all for the purpose of preserving the continuity of the continuum. The method of description of facts was achieved by describing the elements of the competitive procurement position, relations, satisfaction with suppliers, and motivation of employees, between which connections were examined for the purpose of drawing conclusions. A sample of company managers, procurement managers, and sales managers from the field of agricultural production, totaling 101 respondents. The authors independently developed the survey questionnaire based on practical experience. Respondents were contacted through the author's personal contacts (email communication) and using the LinkedIn social network. This approach resulted in a targeted approach to respondents who were relevant to the research and contributed to the confirmation of the hypotheses with their answers. The survey questions were independently created by the author, based on practical experience.

3.2 Research techniques

The following scientific research techniques were used in the study:

1. surveying – this technique was used to collect data on competitiveness through various examined aspects collected by company managers, procurement managers, and managers from the field of agricultural production. Data on the competitive position in the market of agricultural products were also collected from the buyers of agricultural products using the survey technique.
2. scaling – the study used the Likert rating scale, which is the most widely used scale in the social sciences. It was used in questionnaires for executives, managers, and buyers of agricultural products.

3.3 Statistical data processing

In order to achieve the set research tasks and the research hypotheses related to them, several statistical procedures were applied to calculate statistical values for testing the set hypotheses. The choice of statistical procedures was determined by the characteristics of the

defined research variables. Statistical processing of the collected data was carried out using the statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 20, and the following statistical procedures and measures were applied for data processing:

1. Calculation of frequencies and percentages
2. Measures of descriptive statistics - Measures of central tendency: arithmetic mean (M), Measures of variability: standard deviation (SD),
3. Analysis of variance (ANOVA),
4. Tabular presentation of research results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Competitive procurement position

The competitive position of procurement within a company is difficult to assess, given that every company is different and has its own history. It is very difficult to ask respondents questions that will result in a competitive procurement position, because all answers are based on personal thoughts and conclusions that may be influenced by organizational culture, satisfaction within the company, and the emotional state of the people answering the questions. It is a fallacy to believe that only the largest and richest companies on the market possess a competitive advantage in procurement. A company's image can often mislead the perception of procurement development within the company. A large procurement budget, stable cash flow, and extremely large procurement volumes do not necessarily mean that behind them are experts who perform their work excellently. Small and medium-sized companies that are not part of a large group must organize their procurement very well and ensure they have experts in the procurement field, because the lack of a competitive procurement advantage leads to high input prices of materials, unavailability of materials, low-quality materials, and poor business relations with suppliers. All the mentioned negative factors ultimately affect the business results of the company, and simply put, the earnings made every day. In this research, the competitive position of procurement was examined using different statements, and Table 1 shows the arithmetic means, frequencies, and percentages of responses by participant.

Table 1. *Competitive procurement position*

You evaluate your competitive procurement position on the market:	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Scale value
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1. By talking to suppliers.	3	3	2	2	13	13.9	52	51.5	30	29.6	4.03
2. Based on experience.	4	4	2	2	19	19.8	55	54.5	20	19.7	3.84
3. Based on own tests.	4	4	5	5	19	19.8	56	55.4	16	15.8	3.74

You evaluate your competitive procurement position on the market:	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Scale value
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
4. Based on external information.	3	3	6	5.9	23	23.8	50	49.5	18	17.8	3.73
5. By talking to procurement officers.	4	4	11	10.9	22	22.8	39	38.6	24	23.7	3.67
6. Analyzing procurement statistics.	4	4	11	10.9	23	23.8	47	46.5	15	14.8	3.57
7. We do not evaluate.	32	31.7	34	33.7	18	18.8	16	15.8	0	0	2.19

Source: Galic (2019)

Table 1 shows that the average values of the participants' assessments of the competitive procurement position range from 2 (rarely) to 4 (frequently). Of all the examined participants, the participants agree to the greatest extent ($M=4.03$) with the statement that they evaluate their competitive position based on conversations with suppliers. The given answers confirm hypothesis H1. Employees of the procurement sector are aware of the importance of maintaining a long-term partner relationship with suppliers for the development of a competitive advantage. It can already be seen here that the previously mentioned thesis that a competitive purchasing position can and must be achieved through negotiations with suppliers has been confirmed. The stated thesis should not be relativized, because it does not refer exclusively to relaxed conversations, but it can be concluded that quality relations with suppliers bring a competitive advantage. Quality business meetings, honest and transparent communication, respect for interlocutors, tolerance of mistakes, and quick handling of complaints are just some of the items through which a competitive advantage can be gained from suppliers. In this case, there is a great focus on the quality selection of personnel for the procurement sector, because low-quality personnel cannot achieve a competitive advantage. Communicativeness, professionalism, focus on solving problems, assertiveness, empathy, desire to learn, and the ability to receive feedback and construct feedback toward others are part of the necessary skills of a procurement employee. As the most important source of assessment, 81.1% of the participants cite conversations with suppliers and how they always and often assess their competitive position in procurement based on this source. To a slightly lesser extent ($M=3.84$), 74.2% of the participants state that they always and often evaluate their competitive position in procurement based on their experience. Experience is an important factor for all employees, including employees in the procurement sector. The limiting factor is the impossibility of measuring experience, and of segmenting employees according to experience without the results being misleading. It is a big mistake to conclude that employees with impressive years of service in procurement also have great experience. Experience in such a dynamic sector is gained through practical knowledge, encountering different problems, challenges, geopolitical situations, and responding to changes within the company. If the procurement employee throughout his working life was more administratively responsible for procurement activities, a kind of operative, and the strategic procurement sector was

in charge of direct communication with partners, such a person does not have adequate experience to create a competitive advantage. In the second case, a person who dynamically participated in the operational and strategic plans of the company, especially procurement, created long-term partner relationships and adapted to changes in the global market, can say for themselves that their experience brings a competitive advantage and can adequately assess it. Furthermore, 71.2% of the participants state that they always and often evaluate their competitive procurement position based on their own tests ($M=3.74$), 67.3% based on external information ($M=3.73$), 62.3% based on conversations with procurement officers ($M=3.67$), and 61.3% based on the analysis of procurement statistics ($M=3.57$). Analyses of procurement statistical data can be linked to the preparation of various reports at the end of the business year, which are done by many companies. A positive finding in the obtained results is that 65.4% of the participants state that they always and often make assessments of their position on the market for agricultural products, but 15.8% of participants state that they do not often make these assessments, which requires special attention.

4. 1. 1 Differences in the competitive position of procurement with regard to the size of the company

In the previous chapter, critical thinking was mentioned, which emphasizes that there should be no difference in procurement competitiveness with respect to company size. It is precisely for this reason that the results were additionally analyzed to state and prove it. The size of the company is an interesting statistical factor that brings a different culture of behavior, procedures, and rules of procurement business. The analysis aims to show exactly which differences can be seen regarding the size of the company. Table 2 shows descriptive information on the competitive procurement position.

Table 2. *Descriptive data for competitive procurement position with respect to company size*

	N	M	SD
Small companies	34	3.14	0.685
Medium companies	35	3.43	0.696
Large companies	32	3.53	0.728
In total	101	3.3653	0.715

Source: Galic (2019)

Using the analysis of variance (ANOVA), the existence of differences between the average results in the groups of small, medium, and large companies was tested. The basic conclusion is that there is no difference in the way of evaluating the competitive procurement position regarding the size of the company. The above result shows that the purchasing activity has gradually become standardized, regardless of the size of the company. It would be interesting to further analyze how this happened and what the exact reasons are for the stated procurement standardization. One of the potential reasons is the turnover of employees, especially after

the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world. Extremely high inflationary pressures, general increases in purchasing prices, and disrupted supply chains have put a lot of pressure on procurement staff, who have begun to look for alternative jobs or alternative companies. Fluctuation, where employees move from one company to another, results in the transfer of knowledge and know-how to another company, where there is a kind of mixing of current procurement processes within the company and new ones brought by a procurement employee from another company. Using the analysis of variance (ANOVA), the existence of differences between the average results in the groups of small, medium, and large companies was tested. Descriptive data for small, medium, and large companies are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Differences in the competitive position of procurement with regard to the size of the company*

	df	F	p
Between groups	2	2.719	0.07
Within groups	98		
In total	100		

Source: Galic (2019)

The results of the variance analysis between different groups show that there is no statistically significant difference ($p=0.07$) between the mean values in the three groups (table 3).

4. 2 Procurement management orientation

The further course of research focused on procurement management. The distinction between strategic and operational management was not made, primarily because, in small and medium-sized companies, these roles are often intertwined, and there are no employees specifically dedicated to operational management or those specifically dedicated to strategic management. At the outset, we conclude that this could be a potential problem because the scope of procurement employees is broad, and there is a lack of focus on any one specific segment. However, in small and medium-sized companies, the involvement of employees in both operational and strategic management is a significant advantage due to their knowledge of the company's overall purchasing strategy, supplier relations strategy, and operational implementation. The theory suggests why operational and strategic management are separated, but modern economic practices show somewhat different conclusions. For this reason, the research focused on employees in the procurement sector to obtain specific conclusions and form opinions based on them. This research examined the focus of procurement management using various statements, and Table 4 shows the arithmetic means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages of responses by item.

Table 4. Orientation of procurement management

Procurement management is most often focused on:	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Scale value
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
1. Finding new suppliers	1	1	2	2	19	19.7	43	42.6	35	34.7	4.08
2. Lowering purchase prices.	1	1	3	3	17	17.8	47	46.5	32	31.7	4.05
3. Positive business.	2	2	2	2	14	14.8	55	54.5	27	26.7	4.02
4. Creating supplier satisfaction.	1	1	11	10.9	23	23.7	42	41.6	23	22.8	3.74
5. Creation of a new product.	4	4	13	12.9	19	19.7	43	42.6	21	20.8	3.63
6. Education and development of procurement employees.	3	3	6	5.9	30	30.7	47	46.5	14	13.9	3.62

Source: Galic (2019)

The orientation of procurement management was investigated, and detailed answers can be seen in Table 3. The participants estimate that procurement management is, on average, often or sometimes focused on the aspects investigated. According to the estimates obtained, procurement management is mostly focused on finding new suppliers and customers ($M=4.08$). Seventy-seven point three percent (77.3%) of participants state that management is always or often focused on this aspect. It is understandable that procurement is always focused on finding alternatives and reducing the risk of relying on only one supplier or one supply route. However, we recognize a deeper problem here: the lack of creating and nurturing long-term partner relationships, which bring much more value than one-time, short-term savings from an alternative supplier. Inflationary pressures that occurred during the period 2020-2024 largely influenced the growth of input prices, where the fastest and simplest response was to find cheaper alternatives. In this case, it should be further investigated which groups of materials or suppliers were subject to the aforementioned decisions, and whether the outcomes ultimately brought satisfactory results or whether the haste of management and the change of suppliers led to additional costs and delays in the supply chain. Furthermore, it is always and often aimed at lowering purchase prices ($M=4.05$), as estimated by 78.2% of participants, as well as at positive business operations ($M=4.02$), as estimated by 81.2% of participants. Based on these data, we can conclude that procurement management is largely focused on important measured aspects. However, we also see that the average values of certain aspects often reach the assessment threshold, indicating opportunities for improvement in order to make procurement management even more focused on examining these aspects. Hypothesis H2 was partially confirmed; respondents' answers indicated that cost reduction and savings are, to a large extent, the main tasks of procurement operations, along with finding new suppliers and creating supplier satisfaction.

The fact that the focus on education and development of procurement employees is neglected compared to other items that could have been chosen in the research is worrying.

The research sample is sufficient to draw basic conclusions; however, a study with a larger number of respondents is needed, and the geographical area needs to be expanded in order to draw more significant conclusions. Without management's investment in the development of its own employees and without further education, the development of the procurement activity stagnates. There is often a false impression that employees are developing through practice, i.e., through everyday work. There are several educational methods for a reason, and numerous magazines and books are published, generally offering new knowledge related to procurement activity. Quality conferences that bring together procurement experts from a wider geographical area, where new trends and statistics are presented, have also been somewhat neglected. These conferences encourage procurement experts to think critically and apply new knowledge in their own companies. Due to the mixing of operational and strategic procurement, procurement in companies is increasingly burdened with administrative tasks and intervention orders. This prevents procurement employees from investing their time in connecting with partners and suppliers, going on business trips abroad, or conducting business visits or audits at supplier production sites. Dynamic modern economic operations have greatly influenced the above, with employee productivity increasing, but satisfaction, free time, and interaction with partners at formal and informal events decreasing.

4. 2. 1 Differences in procurement management orientation by company size

The interpretation of the orientation of the procurement business may vary according to the size of the company, but this is not always the case. There are frequent cases where procurement employees have worked in companies of different sizes and gained important experience that shaped them as professionals, teaching them to apply the same procurement processes regardless of the size of the company. Table 5 provides descriptive information on the focus of procurement management.

Table 5. *Descriptive data for procurement management orientation by company size*

	N	M	SD
Small companies	34	3.67	0.743
Medium companies	35	3.83	0.469
Large companies	32	3.79	0.428
In total	101	3.76	0.565

Source: Galic (2019)

Using the analysis of variance (ANOVA), differences between the average results among the small, medium, and large company groups were tested. Descriptive data for small, medium, and large companies is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Differences in the orientation of procurement management by company size

	df	F	p
Between groups	2	0.780	0.46
Within groups	98		
In total	100		

Source: Galic (2019)

5. CONCLUSIONS

The modern business environment brings numerous changes and dynamic requirements, presenting major challenges to the procurement employee. There is no room for passive procurement or reactive responses to problems that could cause significant delays in essential procurement activities. Procurement is not just sending out purchase orders or going to lunch with partners, but rather a combination of numerous sets of knowledge and skills. Research conducted among purchasing experts in the Republic of Croatia ultimately provided satisfactory conclusions. Considering the small segment of employees, the sample is satisfactory, and important conclusions could be drawn. In the first part of the research, which focused on the competitiveness of procurement, many respondents confirmed the activities through which they assess their competitiveness. Most respondents agreed that they assess their competitiveness through discussions within the procurement team, external information, and conversations with suppliers. People arrange deals and drive positive outcomes in companies, as has been stated and confirmed. Communication in procurement is key, and modern technologies cannot replace the traditional approach, specifically classic business meetings. There are no significant differences regarding company size in the first part of the research, but more prominent activities can be seen in large companies. In large companies, procurement is more structured, with larger databases, a bigger procurement team, and better knowledge management. Procurement management’s focus on finding new suppliers, lowering procurement prices, and positive business operations is the most represented activity among the respondents. It is worrying that the education and development of procurement employees occupy a secondary position and are not a major focus. The new generation of employees seeks structured and focused education, tailored to their needs, as well as investment in personal and professional development. Jaffu and Changalima (2023) indicated that HRD practices such as career development, training, and performance appraisal have positive and significant effects on public procurement effectiveness. These results align with the human capital theory, demonstrating that investment in HRD can have a significant influence on procurement outcomes.

The exposure of procurement employees to daily stressful activities greatly requires a more developed structure of motivation and rewards on the part of the company. Procurement competitiveness cannot be built without quality relations with suppliers. The conducted research confirmed that satisfaction with suppliers exists and does not depend on the size of

the company. It was additionally confirmed that not all procurement employees invest their time in developing long-term partner relationships, regardless of the turnover achieved with suppliers. The reason for this could be insufficient time and too many suppliers, as well as a lack of interest in developing relationships with suppliers who are not strategic or do not generate significant financial turnover. The analysis of suppliers is a fundamental tool for controlling purchasing operations and, by extension, procurement competitiveness. H1. The statement that employees in the procurement sector are aware of the importance of maintaining long-term partner relationships with suppliers to develop a competitive advantage was confirmed. Respondents confirmed to a significant extent that it is extremely important for them to create long-term partner relationships to increase competitive advantage. H2. The modern economy emphasizes that the most important task of procurement is the adequate and efficient management of the supply chain, not price reduction and savings. This statement was partially confirmed, as respondents still indicated that cost reduction and savings were more important to them. However, they also confirmed that it is important to invest time and knowledge into the supply chain, specifically in relationships with suppliers. Future research should cover a wider geographic area with similar geopolitical characteristics to draw broader conclusions.

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KONKURENTNA NABAVNA POZICIJA I ORIJENTACIJA U SUVREMENOM GOSPODARSKOM OKRUŽENJU S POSEBNIM NAGLASKOM NA POLJOPRIVREDNU INDUSTRIJU

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SAŽETAK

Upravljanje nabavom još je uvijek nedovoljno zastupljena, prepoznata i prihvaćena grana gospodarstva i realnog sektora. To se prije svega odnosi na njegovu važnost i skup znanja i vještina koje treba posjedovati osoba zaposlena u sektoru nabave. Rad se fokusirao na istraživanje fokusa upravljanja nabavom kod malih, srednjih i velikih gospodarskih subjekata u Republici Hrvatskoj. Podaci su prikupljeni putem upitnika, a svi su ispitanici izravno kontaktirani i motivirani za sudjelovanje u istraživanju. Cilj je pokazati stupanj razvijenosti i svijesti o kupovnoj aktivnosti, s fokusom na konkurentnost, ali i ukazati na razlike u pojedinim temama ovisno o veličini poduzeća iz kojeg ispitanici dolaze. Osnovni zaključak je da nema razlike u pristupu nabavnoj orijentaciji i općenito kvaliteti nabavnih procesa koji se odnose na izbor i analizu dobavljača kada je u pitanju veličina poduzeća. Sektor nabave se pokazao previše aktivnim, zaposlenici sami analiziraju svoje poslovanje, traže nove prilike i sudjeluju u rastu i razvoju tvrtke u kojoj su zaposleni. Ograničavajući čimbenik za donošenje šireg zaključka je činjenica da su ispitanici s uskog geografskog područja, ali se mogu izvući relevantni zaključci. Bez obzira na pozitivne zaključke, sektor nabave uvijek treba težiti unapređenju i razvoju, jer nikada ne funkcionira samostalno i nije kraj.

Ključne riječi: nabava, konkurentnost, operativno i strateško upravljanje, moderacija nabave

