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Supply Chain Contractual Governance and Organizational Performance of Public Universities in Kenya: A Structured Narrative Review

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Abstract

This study reviews and synthesizes existing literature on the effect of supply chain contract governance on organizational performance especially in the public universities in Kenya. The evaluation was prompted by the growing importance of contractual governance in enhancing procurement efficiency, supplier collaboration, accountability and overall organizational effectiveness and the absence of synthesized evidence in Kenya's higher education sector. The research adopted a systematic narrative literature review methodology, using peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, theses and policy documents published between 2022 and 2026. The references were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, Emerald Insight, Springer Link, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. We proceeded with a deductive thematic content analysis, based on four established dimensions of contractual governance: enforcement of contracts, monitoring of contracts, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and sharing of information. The results reveal that the good contractual governance has positive association with procurement performance, operational effectiveness, supplier relationship, organizational resilience and accountability. However, considerable differences can be observed in the governance structures, theoretical perspectives, methodologies and performance indicators in the reviewed studies. The analysis also reveals that existing studies have focused mainly on sectors such as manufacturing, construction, agro-processing, county administrations and other public entities, while public universities in Kenya have been largely ignored. Major deficiencies still exist in context, concept, theory, method and empirics. The analysis contributes to the literature by identifying these gaps and laying the foundation for future empirical work on contractual governance and organizational effectiveness in Kenyan public universities.

***Key Words*:** Supply chain contractual governance; Organizational performance; Contract enforcement; Contract monitoring; Dispute resolution; Public universities; Structured narrative literature review; Kenya

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1. Introduction

Companies throughout the world use the principle of contractual governance to govern their supply chains and enhance organizational performance amidst ever more turbulent conditions of doing business. Escalating globalization, fast-changing technologies, fierce competition in markets, and regular disruptions in supply chains are some of the factors that have made necessary to formalize the relationships between partners through clear contracts that will outline the rights, obligations, and expectations of supply chain participants (Wieland, 2021; Queiroz et al., 2022). In supply chain management, the concept of contractual governance refers to agreements, the ways of enforcing contracts, monitoring and compliance procedures, dispute resolution procedures, and evaluation of performance in the relationships between buyers and suppliers. The implementation of these governance mechanisms helps to address such issues as information asymmetry, opportunistic behavior, enhances coordination and resource and knowledge sharing, leading to improved efficiency and organizational performance. Therefore, the issue of contractual governance is becoming an important strategic tool to foster resilience, sustainability, accountability, and competitive advantage of companies.

1.1 Background of the Study

The existing empirical evidence generally suggests that supply chain contractual governance enhances organizational performance. However, the extent of its influence and the means by which it works differ between industries and national settings. For instance, Li et al. (2026) found that contractual governance did not have a direct impact on improving green supply chain management practices in the construction industry in China. Its influence was not directly but indirectly through relational governance, which played a more important role in the promotion of green supply chain initiatives. On the other hand, Ominde et al. (2022) found a direct and statistically significant relationship between contractual governance and organizational performance of agro-processing firms in Kenya. Their results indicate that well-structured contractual arrangements can improve productivity and profitability even without high relational governance. These contrasting findings imply that the effectiveness of contractual governance is shaped by factors such as industry characteristics, organizational context, and the quality of collaboration among supply chain partners.

Other studies provide additional evidence that contractual governance rarely operates in isolation. However, it is often bolstered by complementary governance practices that enhance organizational performance. Wu et al. (2023) found that cross-organizational governance could enhance supply chain resilience by facilitating coordination, collaboration, and information exchange among supply chain partners. Although their research focused on resilience rather than contractual governance, it points to the wider role of governance structures in organizational effectiveness. Likewise, Al-Rawashdeh et al. (2023) revealed that strategic supplier partnership, quality information, information sharing, and postponement strategies significantly enhance organizational performance in the Jordan tourism sector. However, customer relationship management was not significant. This suggests that governance mechanisms do not equally contribute to organizational outcomes. Compared with Li et al. (2026), these findings suggest that contractual governance is more effective when supported by collaborative governance practices that encourage information sharing and strategic partnerships.

The importance of contract management as a tangible representation of contractual governance is also evident in procurement and manufacturing. As shown by Jyoti & Akter (2022), data-centric vendor assessment, electronic contract management systems, compliance oversight, and performance-oriented contracting improve the efficacy of the supply chain and organizational competitiveness in retail supply chains. Mugecha and Ndeto (2024) also found that the effective management of contract records and vendors enhances procurement performance in Kenya's urban county administrations by increasing accountability, transparency and operational efficiency. Similar findings were observed by Kamau and Mburu (2023) that each of the stages of contract management, namely pre-contract planning and solicitation, contract execution, and post-award management, has a positive effect on the performance of the supply chain in the manufacturing enterprises in Nairobi County. Unlike Li et al. (2026), who reported limited direct effects of contractual governance, these studies consistently

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show that sound contract administration and enforcement contribute significantly to organizational performance, particularly in environments where contractual compliance directly affects operational outcomes.

The literature review confirms the importance of contractual governance, but also reveals important differences. Contractual governance is identified as a unique driver of organizational performance (Ominde et al., 2022; Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024). Others claim that its effectiveness depends on other governance mechanisms such as relational governance (Li et al., 2026), supply chain resilience (Wu et al., 2023), strategic supplier alliances and information sharing (Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2023). Moreover, academic research has assessed organizational performance with various measures such as environmental performance, procurement performance, operational efficiency, profitability, productivity and supply chain robustness. Such differences suggest that the relationship between contractual governance and organizational performance is complex and is affected by organizational characteristics, institutional conditions, and industry forces. Consequently, further empirical investigation is needed to clarify how contractual governance affects organizational performance across different organizational settings.

Organizations globally are increasingly relying on supply chain contractual governance to improve operational efficiency, resilience, sustainability, and overall organizational performance in a more complex business environment. Evidence from China and Jordan demonstrates that strong contractual governance improves coordination, accountability and performance, but organizations still encounter barriers related to governance that hinder realizing these benefits. African organizations' competitiveness continues to be hampered by poor contract enforcement, inefficient supplier management, low value addition and weak supply chain practices. In Kenya, even with the reforms in procurement and increasing focus on contract management, a lot of organisations suffer from delays in procurement, poor contract execution, inadequate vendor supervision and poor contract administration which has negative impact on organizational performance. Previous research has investigated the effect of contractual governance in specific sectors such as construction, agro-processing, manufacturing and local government, yet there is a dearth of empirical evidence on its general impact on organisational performance across different contexts. This paper reviews and synthesizes existing research on the effect of contractual governance of supply chain on organizational performance, with special reference to public universities in Kenya. The analysis identifies points of agreement, disagreement and knowledge gaps to inform future research, policy development and management practice.

1.2 Problem Statement

Contractual governance in the supply chain has emerged as an important mechanism for improving organizational performance by increasing accountability, contract compliance, supplier collaboration, and efficient use of organizational resources. In spite of procurement reforms and establishment of formal contract management systems, inadequate contractual governance remains a huge challenge for a considerable number of public institutions in Kenya. The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA, 2022) has repeatedly identified problems with contract management, procurement compliance, record monitoring, supplier performance assessment and contract supervision in periodic reports. These deficiencies result in delays in contract execution, cost escalations, ineffective service delivery and reduced value for public spending, thus weakening organizational effectiveness.

In particular, Kenya's public universities are vulnerable to these problems because they rely on procurement contracts to meet their teaching, research, infrastructure development, information and communication technology, maintenance services and other institutional needs. However, the Auditor-General's Office reports have repeatedly highlighted weaknesses in procurement and contract management in a number of public universities. These include delays in project implementation, inadequate supervision of contracts, unsupported procurement costs, weak monitoring of contracts and contraventions of the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act. These deficiencies have resulted in poor resource allocation, stalled development projects, disputes with suppliers, and increased operational costs, which have also affected institutional effectiveness and accountability (OAG, 2024).

As demonstrated in previous studies, contractual governance has been shown to enhance organizational performance (Ominde et al., 2022; Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024). Nevertheless, other studies contend that contractual governance alone might not suffice without the backing of other governance frameworks, such as relational governance (Li et al., 2026). Moreover, most of the extant literature has focused on sectors such as construction, manufacturing, agro-processing, retail and local governments (Li et al., 2026; Ominde et al., 2022; Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024). This has led to limited synthesized evidence on the effect of contractual governance on organizational performance in the context of Kenya's public universities.

The paper reviews and synthesizes existing literature on supply chain contractual governance and organizational performance to identify consensus, inconsistencies and knowledge gaps pertinent to public universities in Kenya. The review synthesizes evidence from different organizational contexts thus providing a foundation for future empirical research and guidance for procurement policy, contract management and governance of institutions of higher education.

1.3 Study Objectives

General Objective

To review and synthesize existing literature on the effects of supply chain contractual governance on organizational performance, with particular emphasis on public universities in Kenya

Specific Objectives

- To review existing evidence on the effect of contract enforcement on organizational performance.
- To review the influence of contract monitoring on organizational performance as reported in the literature.
- To synthesize evidence on the effect of dispute resolution mechanisms on organizational performance.
- To evaluate the role of information sharing in enhancing organizational performance based on existing literature.

1.4 Research Questions

- What does existing literature reveal about the effect of contract enforcement on organizational performance?

- What evidence exists regarding the influence of contract monitoring on organizational performance?
- What does the literature indicate about the contribution of dispute resolution mechanisms to organizational performance?
- How does information sharing influence organizational performance according to existing studies?

1.5 Significance of the Review

This analysis contributes to the growing body of knowledge on supply chain contractual governance by combining empirical and theoretical insights from different organizational contexts. It identifies areas of agreement, mixed results and areas where understanding of the link between contractual governance and organizational performance is lacking. The evaluation will be useful to policy makers, procurement practitioners, university administrators and researchers by providing evidence that can inform procurement policy, improve contract management practices and inform future research particularly within the public university sector in Kenya.

1.6 Scope of the Review

This analysis focuses on academic research on the relationship between supply chain contractual governance and organizational effectiveness. It places a premium on research into contract enforcement, contract monitoring, dispute resolution mechanisms and information transmission as key features of contractual governance. The analysis is based on empirical and theoretical literature, both global and Kenyan, specifically focusing on evidence relevant to public sector procurement and public universities.

2. Methodology

The study used the systematic narrative review of literature to critically evaluate and synthesize contemporary empirical and theoretical understanding on the association between supply chain contractual governance and organizational performance. The justification for this method was that the research was not to statistically synthesize results through meta-analysis, but to generate and rigorously evaluate evidence from different organizational and sectoral contexts. A systematic narrative literature review provides a systematic and transparent framework for the identification, selection and synthesis of relevant literature and facilitates the critical analysis of similarities, differences, contextual variations and emerging knowledge gaps. The reviewed research was structured around the four known dimensions of contractual governance; contract enforcement, contract monitoring, dispute resolution mechanisms and information sharing. This was to give a complete understanding of how they influence organizational performance and to identify areas that need further empirical investigation especially in public universities in Kenya.

The analysis was conducted mainly on peer-reviewed scholarly articles published between 2022 and 2026. This is because the study aimed to capture the latest developments in supply chain governance, contract management, and organizational effectiveness, especially in the face of increased digitalization, procurement reforms, and evolving supply chain vulnerabilities. As needed, selective foundational studies were included to provide theoretical and conceptual underpinnings. In 2026, studies included only finalized, peer-reviewed publications to ensure the integrity and dependability

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of the synthesized evidence, while preprints, working papers, opinion pieces, editorials, and unpublished manuscripts were excluded.

A thorough search of relevant literature was conducted in reputable academic databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, JSTOR and Google Scholar. Additional materials included doctoral theses, conference presentations, and government and policy documents, which provided relevant theoretical and contextual perspectives. The search method used keywords such as supply chain contractual governance, contractual governance, supply chain governance, contract management, contract enforcement, contract monitoring, dispute resolution, information sharing, procurement performance, organizational performance and supply chain performance, and was combined with the Boolean operators (AND, OR) to expand the search.

The database inquiry returned 23 entries from the selected databases. After removal of duplicate records registered in different databases, 17 unique studies were evaluated. All 17 studies were identified as directly relevant to the review aims and met the inclusion criteria. Thus, 17 studies were assessed and included in the final analysis and none were excluded after the eligibility review. The selected studies provided the basis for the deductive thematic analysis of the four aspects of supply chain contractual governance and their impact on organizational performance.

Studies were included if they examined supply chain governance, contractual governance, contract management or similar governance mechanisms and assessed organizational, procurement or supply chain performance. Studies included needed to provide sufficient methodological information and empirical data to allow for thorough analysis and synthesis. Studies that focused on irrelevant topics of governance, duplicated previous published research or did not provide sufficient methodological details were excluded.

For each chosen study, a standard evidence extraction framework was used to summarize the study. The framework included author(s), year of publication, country, sector, research design, governance constructs studied, organizational performance measures, main findings and limitations of the study. This uniform methodology offered uniformity in the evaluation of research conducted in different geographical and organizational environments.

The literature that was obtained was analysed using deductive thematic content analysis. The themes were pre-determined based on the four dimensions of contractual governance that are the basis for this review: enforcement of contracts, monitoring of contracts, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and sharing of information. Evidence within each thematic domain was reviewed in detail to identify similarities, differences, methodological differences, contextual factors, and emerging knowledge gaps. Particular attention was paid to differences in research settings, sectors, governance structures and performance indicators used by previous scholars.

Each study was critically assessed to enhance analytical accuracy by assessing the appropriateness of its study design, clarity of methodology, methods of data collection, methods of analysis, and credibility of findings. More attention was paid to results from rigorous empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals. The evidence gathered formed the basis for the empirical analysis, the literature review, the identification of research gaps, and the conclusions and recommendations in this paper.

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Table 1 presents the evidence extraction framework used to summarize and compare the reviewed studies.

Author(s)	Country	Sector	Research Design	Governance Construct(s)	Performance Measure	Key Findings	Study Limitations / Research Gap
Li et al. (2026)	China	Construction	Quantitative	Contractual Governance; Relational Governance	Green Supply Chain Management Performance	Contractual governance had an indirect effect through relational governance.	Focused on construction sector; did not examine public institutions or higher education.
Ominde et al. (2022)	Kenya	Agro-processing	Quantitative Survey	Contractual Governance	Organizational Performance	Contractual governance positively influenced organizational performance.	Limited to agro-processing firms; cross-sectional design.
Ominde (2024)	Kenya	Agro-processing	Quantitative	Contractual, Relational, Transactional and Transformational Governance	Organizational Performance	Multiple governance mechanisms jointly improved organizational performance.	Sector-specific evidence; public universities not examined.
Kamau & Mburu (2023)	Kenya	Manufacturing	Quantitative Survey	Contract Management Phases	Supply Chain Performance	All contract management phases significantly improved performance.	Limited to manufacturing firms; cross-sectional approach.
Mugecha & Ndeto (2024)	Kenya	County Governments	Quantitative Survey	Contract Records Management; Vendor Management	Procurement Performance	Effective contract management enhanced procurement performance.	Focused on county governments rather than higher education institutions.
Changalima et al. (2023)	Tanzania	Public Procurement	Quantitative	Supplier Monitoring	Procurement Performance	Supplier monitoring improved procurement performance, moderated by contract management difficulty.	Conducted outside Kenya; limited generalizability.
Lagat (2026)	Kenya	Road Construction	Quantitative	Contract Monitoring; Relationship Management	Project Performance	Post-award contract management significantly improved project performance.	Focused on road projects only.
Benmehaia et al. (2024)	Algeria	Agriculture	Quantitative	Contract Enforcement; Fairness	Contractual Performance	Fair contractual arrangements improved performance under uncertainty.	Agricultural context limits applicability to other sectors.
Rehman & Nadeem (2026)	Pakistan	Public–Private Partnerships	Quantitative	Relational Governance	Sustainability Performance	Relational governance enhanced sustainability through cooperative behaviour.	Focused on PPP projects rather than public procurement institutions.
Al-Rawashdeh et al. (2023)	Jordan	Tourism	Quantitative	Strategic Supplier Partnerships; Information Sharing	Organizational Performance	Information sharing and strategic partnerships significantly enhanced performance.	Tourism sector context may not generalize to public universities.
Wu et al. (2023)	China	Multi-sector Supply Chains	Quantitative	Cross-organizational Governance	Supply Chain Resilience	Governance mechanisms strengthened supply chain resilience.	Focused on resilience rather than contractual governance specifically.
Ibrahim (2025)	Egypt	FMCG	Quantitative	Digital Governance; Information Sharing	Supply Chain Performance	Digital governance facilitated information sharing and improved collaboration.	Examined private FMCG sector only.
Jyoti &	Retail	Retail	Quantitative	Digital Contract	Supply Chain	Digital contract	Limited to retail supply

Akter (2022)	Supply Chains			Management; Vendor Performance Evaluation	Efficiency	management improved organizational competitiveness.	chains.
Oluwagbemigun (2024)	United States	Business Contracts	Conceptual / Legal Analysis	Compliance Clauses; Governance Oversight	Corporate Risk Management	Compliance clauses strengthened governance and risk management.	Conceptual study without empirical validation.
Cafaggi & Pistelli (2026)	Europe	Global Supply Chains	Legal Analysis	Due Diligence; Digital Governance	Supply Chain Governance	Digital governance and due diligence strengthened contractual compliance.	Legal perspective with limited empirical evidence.
Argyres et al. (2024)	United States	Cross-sector	Conceptual	Relational Contracts	Governance Effectiveness	Relational contracts complemented formal contractual governance.	Conceptual analysis; lacks sector-specific empirical testing.
Nguyen & Zuidwijk (2025)	Global	Multiple Sectors	Systematic Literature Review	Sustainable Supply Chain Governance	Supply Chain Sustainability	Synthesized evidence on governance and sustainability.	Did not specifically examine contractual governance in public universities.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the foundation upon which this study is anchored (Mittal, 2022). It explains the effect of the supply chain contractual governance practices on the performance of public universities. This research is grounded on four interrelated theories namely, Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), Agency Theory, Relational Exchange Theory and Social Exchange Theory. Together these theories explain the effects of contractual governance of the supply chain on the organizational performance. Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and Agency Theory underscore the importance of formal governance mechanisms, asserting that explicit contracts, rigorous enforcement, periodic monitoring, and dispute resolution mechanisms reduce transaction costs, inhibit opportunistic behaviour, reduce information asymmetries, and assure compliance to contractual obligations. In contrast, Relational Exchange Theory and Social Exchange Theory highlight the importance of relational governance, noting that trust, reciprocity, collaboration, commitment, and information sharing improve long-term relationships with supply chain partners and enable coordination beyond formal agreements (Mugamba, 2026). Whereas Transaction Cost Economics and Agency Theory regard contractual control as the main instrument for risk management, Relational Exchange Theory and Social Exchange Theory focus on trust, cooperation, and relational transactions. Although the theoretical perspectives are based on different assumptions, they are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are mutually reinforcing, illustrating that effective management of supply chain contracts requires an appropriate balance between formal regulation of contracts and cooperative management of relationships. The present study characterizes contract enforcement, contract monitoring, dispute resolution strategies and information exchange as synergistic governance mechanisms which work in tandem to improve organizational efficiency.

Transaction Cost Economics

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) originated in the seminal work of Ronald Coase (1937) who argued that firms exist because they are better suited than markets to perform certain economic transactions, thus lowering transaction costs. This idea was further developed by Oliver E.

Williamson (1975, 1985). He proposed that firms choose a governance structure that minimizes the costs of coordinating and controlling economic exchange. Williamson noted that decision-makers have limited rationality and cannot predict all future contingencies, and that some trading partners may behave opportunistically by placing self-interest above contractual commitments. In these circumstances, the firms set up governance mechanisms like clear contracts, monitoring systems and enforcement procedures to reduce the impact of uncertainty, protect transaction-specific investments and increase the efficiency of exchange relationships (Williamson, 1985). Therefore, effective contractual governance improves cooperation among supply chain partners, reduces opportunistic behavior, lowers transaction costs and ultimately, improves organizational effectiveness.

The main theory of this study is the theory of transaction cost economics because it explains how formal contractual governance structures reduce procurement risks and improve organizational performance in public universities. The theory supports the research objective of examining the effect of contract enforcement on organizational performance. The theory suggests that strong enforcement improves the compliance of contracts, discourages opportunistic behavior, and protects the organization's assets. It also supports the purpose of examining the influence of contract oversight on organizational efficiency; through constant oversight, contractual inconsistencies are quickly identified, vagueness is reduced and accountability is fostered within the procurement process. Strengthening enforcement and oversight measures can enhance supplier efficacy, improve procurement efficiency, optimize resource allocation and ultimately achieve better organizational outcomes for public universities.

Agency Theory

Agency Theory was developed by Michael C. Jensen and William H. Meckling in 1976. The theory describes the relationship whereby one entity, the principal, delegate responsibilities or decision-making authority to another entity, the agent, who performs tasks for the principal. Agency problems such as opportunistic behavior and information asymmetry can emerge from the divergence of goals and information between the principal and the agent. Thus, the use of governance arrangements such as contractual agreements, monitoring mechanisms, motivational incentives and accountability structures to align the interests of both parties, reduce agency costs and improve organizational effectiveness. Agency Theory states that conflict arises as principals and agents often have conflicting objectives. Agents may have better information than principals. This information asymmetry can cause moral hazard, adverse selection and opportunistic behaviour. Consequently, principals implemented governance mechanisms such as contracts, performance monitoring, reporting mechanisms and enforcement procedures to align the interests of agents with the interests of the organization. These systems reduce agency costs and enhance accountability.

Agency Theory is of much importance in the context of contractual governance in public universities that there are interactions among university administrators, procurement officials, contract managers and suppliers throughout the procurement process. The theory supports the objective of assessing the effect of contract monitoring on organizational effectiveness, as monitoring provides universities with the opportunity to evaluate the suppliers' compliance and to hold them accountable during the contract implementation. It further contributes to the objective of exploring the role of contract enforcement in organizational effectiveness. Clearly defined contract obligations and enforcement mechanisms reduce agency problems, deter non-compliance, and improve supplier performance. Effective oversight and enforcement, therefore, enhance efficacy, clarity and organizational effectiveness.

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Relational Exchange Theory

Ian R. Macneil proposed Relational Exchange Theory in 1980. The theory questions the notion that business partnerships are purely governed by formal contracts and stresses the importance of long-lived relationships based on trust, cooperation, flexibility and shared commitment.

According to Relational Exchange Theory, good buyer-supplier relationships are built on a combination of formal contracts and informal relational norms. Contracts specify the legal obligations. Relational governance is concerned with collaboration, open communication, trust, flexibility and joint problem solving. This theory argues that organizations perform better when they use contractual and relational governance mechanisms in a synergistic manner to manage long-term relationships within the supply chain.

Relational Exchange Theory provides a solid theoretical basis to understand the importance of dispute resolution mechanisms in enhancing organizational effectiveness. The theory argues that conflicts of contracts are unavoidable in relationships between organizations, and that the best way to solve the conflicts is through collaboration approaches such as negotiation, mediation and joint problem solving, which enhances trust, commitment and long-lasting cooperation between supply chain partners. The theory stresses the importance of maintaining mutually beneficial relationships to reduce conflict, minimize disruptions to transactions and promote continued cooperation rather than relying on legal enforcement alone. Therefore, it is expected that effective conflict resolution strategies will strengthen supplier relations, enhance contract execution, and improve organizational effectiveness. The theory argues that public universities can achieve better procurement outcomes, stronger supplier relationships, and higher institutional effectiveness by aligning formal contractual agreements with cooperative approaches to dispute resolution. However, the theory provides a sound conceptual framework for understanding these relationships, but empirical research specifically on dispute resolution mechanisms in supply chain contractual governance, particularly in public universities, is lacking and needs to be further investigated.

Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory was initially introduced by George C. Homans in 1958 and was expanded by Peter M. Blau in 1964. The theory states that relationships develop through reciprocal exchanges which build trust, commitment and mutual benefits over time.

Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals and organizations form relationships by assessing the anticipated benefits and costs of their interactions. Mutual trust, equity, reciprocity and dedication in exchange relationships increase the likelihood that parties will share information, collaborate and invest in long-term relationships. Thus effective communication and information dissemination improves organizational linkages and improves overall performance.

Social Exchange Theory is the basic model to evaluate the effect of information dissemination on organizational effectiveness. Sharing information creates more clarity, cooperation and partnership between academic institutions and vendors. Timely and accurate dissemination of procurement data improves planning, forecasting, execution of contracts and decision making, while reducing ambiguity and misinterpretations. Therefore, the improved sharing of information contributes to better supply chain relationships, more efficient procurement and better firm performance.

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3.2 Empirical Review

Empirical evidence points to the significance of contractual governance in supply chains for enhancing organizational performance through different governance mechanisms. Contract enforcement, monitoring, dispute resolution and information sharing are examples of contractual governance practices that work in concert to improve procurement performance, supply chain efficiency, accountability, collaboration and organizational competitiveness, rather than operate in isolation. However, the magnitude of these effects varies across sectors, countries and institutional settings.

Contract Enforcement and Organizational Performance

Contractual enforcement is an important element of contractual governance, and is believed to improve organizational performance by promoting adherence to contractual obligations, limiting opportunistic behaviour and increasing accountability. Empirical studies have consistently found positive relationships between strong contract enforcement and organizational performance, but the routes through which these benefits are obtained differ across contexts.

Research conducted in Kenya provides compelling evidence of contract governance efficacy. Contractual governance in supply chains substantially enhanced the performance of agro-processing firms by improving coordination among partners, boosting productivity, and increasing profitability (Ominde et al., 2022). The study by Ominde (2024) revealed that contractual, relational, transactional, and transformational governance collectively improved organizational performance. The linkages were further boosted by efficient information exchange.

Likewise, Benmehaia et al. (2024) observed that the adoption of contract enforcement mechanisms, fair pricing structures, and institutional support significantly enhanced contractual outcomes for tomato farmers involved in contract farming in Algeria. Their results suggest that explicit contractual obligations help to reduce uncertainty and improve the efficiency of supply chains especially in difficult institutional contexts.

But there is mixed evidence from around the world. Li et al. (2026) studied the Chinese construction industry, and observed that contractual governance did not have a direct positive effect on green supply chain management practices. The effect was indirect and was manifested through relational governance. This finding is in contrast with the Kenyan studies (Ominde et al., 2022; Ominde, 2024) which found significant direct effects of contractual governance. The variation shows that the success of contract enforcement is conditional on contextual factors such as industry characteristics, institutional development and the quality of inter-organizational relationships.

The review of research indicates that contracts improve organizational performance by promoting compliance, accountability and teamwork. But most of the current studies are on the manufacturing, agriculture and construction industries and so there is little evidence on public universities in Kenya.

Contract Monitoring and Organizational Performance

Contract monitoring is a key governance tool to ensure effective performance of contractual duties throughout the life of the contract. Oversight generally improves the effectiveness of procurement by increasing accountability, reducing the risks of implementation and improving the performance of suppliers as generally shown by empirical data (Alozie, 2026).

Mugecha and Ndeto (2024) also established that the management of contract records and vendors significantly improved procurement performance in metropolitan county governments in

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Kenya by enhancing transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency. Similarly, Kamau and Mburu (2023) found that effective management of pre-contract, bidding, execution, and post-award phases enhanced the performance of the supply chain in manufacturing firms.

Similar findings were found by Changalima et al. (2023) who stated that supplier supervision significantly improved procurement efficiency in Tanzanian public organizations, through cost reduction, lead-time reduction, and buyer satisfaction. But as contract management became more complicated, the positive association weakened, showing the importance of organizational capability in good contract management.

Additional corroboration of these conclusions is provided by infrastructure initiatives. Lagat (2026) found that contract monitoring and evaluation, post-contract administration, relationship management and contract closure greatly enhanced the performance of road construction projects in Kenya. Likewise, Oluwagbemigun (2024) argued that, contractual provisions alone are inadequate to mitigate supplier risks and ensure compliance and thus there is need for adjuncts such as continuous monitoring, auditing, governance oversight and due diligence mechanisms. Cafaggi and Pistelli (2026) also suggested that digital governance tools and artificial intelligence could improve oversight by increasing transparency, accountability and enforcement for supply chains.

Collectively, these studies show that contract oversight greatly improves procurement effectiveness, operational productivity and project accomplishment. However, empirical data is largely focused on construction, county administration, manufacturing, and procurement environments, with little focus on contract oversight practices in public universities.

Dispute Resolution Mechanisms and Organizational Performance

The importance of dispute resolution mechanisms (DRMs) as an essential element of contractual governance is recognized, but there are few empirical studies that have examined their direct effects on organizational performance. Studies show that good conflict management reduces contractual delays, maintains supplier relationships and improves long-term effectiveness of the organization.

According to Kamau and Mburu (2023), effective contract management during the contract lifecycle reduces challenges in project implementation, thereby improving supply chain performance. This implies that the timely resolution of contractual disputes leads to the successful implementation of projects. Similarly, Lagat (2026) found that relationship management after contract signing has a positive impact on project outcomes and that cooperative conflict resolution is important in contract execution.

Global evidence also strengthens the significance of relational methods in resolving contractual disputes. Rehman and Nadeem (2026) revealed that collaborative actions in public-private partnership initiatives positively influenced sustainability performance via relational governance; however, the relationship was negatively moderated by environmental unpredictability. Likewise, Erpay & Günaydın (2026) argued that relational contracts improve formal contractual arrangements through trust, repeated interactions, and cooperative problem solving, which reduces conflicts and increases governance efficiency.

The evidence so far suggests that effective systems of dispute resolution improve the performance of organizations by protecting long-term relationships, minimizing disruption and ensuring the successful implementation of contracts. However, empirical studies on dispute resolution mechanisms in contractual governance of the supply chain are scanty, particularly in the context of public universities in Kenya.

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Information Sharing and Organizational Performance

Information sharing is widely recognized as a critical governance mechanism that facilitates coordination, transparency, collaboration, and effective decision-making across supply chains. The literature reviewed has consistently shown that organizations with good information sharing mechanisms have better organizational and supply chain performance.

According to Ominde (2024), dissemination of information significantly enhanced the relationship between governance practices and performance of organizations in Kenyan agro-processing companies. Similarly, Al-Rawashdeh et al. (2023) showed that the quality of information and its sharing significantly improved organizational performance in the tourism sector in Jordan through promoting better coordination among collaborators in a supply chain.

Furthermore, Wu et al. (2023) also demonstrated that inter-organizational governance improved supply chain resilience by means of effective coordination, collaboration, and information sharing. Ibrahim (2025) also found that contractual and relational governance mechanisms help overcome organizational, technical and relational barriers related to digital transformation, facilitating information flow between manufacturers and retailers. In addition, Jyoti and Akter (2022) observed that digital contract management systems, vendor performance assessment and compliance oversight enhanced organizational competitiveness by increasing information transparency and supplier performance management.

Collectively, these studies suggest that information exchange improves contractual governance through increased coordination, reduced information asymmetry, collaborative decision making, and enhanced organizational performance. However, most of the empirical data is drawn from manufacturing, tourism, retail and agro-processing industries. There is little evidence on information-sharing practices in public universities in Kenya.

Synthesis of Empirical Evidence

The research reviewed suggests a general consensus that contractual governance in supply chains improves organizational performance by fostering compliance, oversight, collaboration, supplier alignment, and information sharing. But there are significant contextual differences. Kenyan studies (Ominde et al., 2022; Ominde, 2024; Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024) generally show direct positive effects of contractual governance, while foreign studies (Li et al., 2026; Rehman & Nadeem, 2026) suggest that governance effectiveness often depends on additional relational mechanisms. Furthermore, the organizational performance has been operationalized in different ways (e.g., procurement efficiency, operational efficiency, profitability, sustainability, project performance, supply chain robustness), which makes it difficult to make direct comparisons across studies. The data also shows a clear contextual gap as the bulk of the existing studies are on manufacturing, construction, agriculture, retail, tourism, infrastructure and county administrations, while empirical investigation of contractual governance in Kenya's public universities is scarce.

3.3 Critique of the Reviewed Empirical Literature

The reviewed literature strongly suggests that contractual governance in supply chains enhances procurement, supply chain, and organizational effectiveness. However, a careful examination of the literature shows many conceptual, methodological, contextual and theoretical limitations that restrict the generalizability and practical applicability of current knowledge.

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In the first place, the literature shows a large conceptual gap in the implementation of contractual governance of the supply chain. Some studies have utilized a narrow conception of governance, specifically limiting to contractual governance (Ominde et al., 2022). Other studies apply broader governance frameworks, including relational, transactional, transformational, or digital governance (Ominde, 2024; Ibrahim, 2025). On the contrary, some authors explore contract management approaches, for example vendor oversight, and contract administration (Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024; Kamau & Mburu, 2023), while others examine governance mechanisms, such as monitoring, relational governance, or regulatory compliance (Changalima et al., 2023; Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026). The multiple definitions hinder direct comparison between studies and point out the lack of a common structure of contractual governance .

Second, the existing literature is characterized by significant methodological limitations. Most of the Kenyan studies have adopted the cross-sectional survey design, self-administered questionnaires, and regression analysis (Ominde et al., 2022; Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024). Although these methods reveal statistical associations, they do little to demonstrate causality and the development of governance practices over time. Comparatively, global research uses systematic reviews, longitudinal datasets, and conceptual analyses (Benmehaia et al., 2024; Nguyen & Zuidwijk, 2025; Erpay & Günaydın, 2026), emphasizing the importance of methodological variation. Consequently, cross-sectional designs are common and do not allow for an understanding of the long-term effects of contractual governance.

Thirdly, the literature shows a substantial contextual and sectoral constraint. Most of the empirical studies have been conducted in manufacturing, agro-processing, construction, local government, agriculture, transportation and public-private partnership. Consequently, there is limited evidence of contractual governance in public universities, whose procurement systems, governance structures, stakeholder contexts, and accountability obligations are significantly different from those in the sectors previously examined (Cavalheiro et al., 2024). This limits the application of current findings to higher education institutions.

Fourth, the research shows important differences in performance evaluation. The performance of organizations have been assessed by a number of metrics such as procurement effectiveness, project outcomes, supply chain efficiency, sustainability indicators, operational productivity, profitability and resilience. While these measures underscore the multidimensionality of organizational performance, they also pose difficulties for cross-study comparative analysis and obscure the identification of governance mechanisms that consistently lead to better organizational outcomes.

Fifth, while the importance of governance integration is acknowledged in many studies, few studies have examined the interactions between different contractual governance mechanisms within a single analytical framework. Much of the research has focused on individual governance aspects in isolation and has not examined the combined effect of contract enforcement, monitoring, dispute resolution and information sharing on organisational performance. This fragmented approach limits our understanding of the relations between dynamics in governance practices.

The assessment ultimately points to nascent governance challenges that have not been fully explored. Studies conducted globally in recent times identify digital governance, artificial intelligence, big data dissemination, regulatory diligence, sustainability, and cooperative governance as the key determinants of supply chain efficacy (Ibrahim, 2025; Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026). Such emerging issues of governance have however received very little empirical attention in the Kenya context, especially in public sector organisations.

The reviewed literature suggests that contractual governance improves organizational performance, but important limitations remain in conceptual, methodological, contextual, measurement, and integration aspects. These limitations provide the basis for the research gaps identified in the next section.

3.4 Research Gaps

A review of the reviewed literature highlights several gaps in the research, which offer opportunities for future research. These deficiencies include contextual, methodological, geographical, conceptual, theoretical and knowledge constraints identified in the existing literature.

There is a contextual void in that most of the empirical study has been undertaken in specific sectors such as agro-processing (Ominde et al., 2022; Ominde, 2024), manufacturing (Kamau & Mburu, 2023), metropolitan county administrations (Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024), road infrastructure (Lagat, 2026), agriculture (Benmehaia et al., 2024) and public-private collaborations (Rehman & Nadeem, 2026). The results are not readily generalizable to other organizational contexts due to differences in contractual governance practices, procurement procedures, regulatory mandates, and stakeholder expectations across sectors.

However, a methodological limitation is apparent in the dominance of cross-sectional survey methodologies using structured questionnaires and quantitative evaluations (e.g. descriptive statistics, correlation and regression) (Ominde et al., 2022; Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024; Changalima et al., 2023). Although these approaches yield statistical correlations, they provide a limited understanding of the evolution of governance practices over time. Longitudinal approaches (Benmehaia et al., 2024), systematic evidence aggregation (Nguyen & Zuidwijk, 2025) or analysis of legal and policy frameworks (Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026) have been applied in relatively few studies. Longitudinal, mixed-methods, and comparative research designs would benefit future research by improving causal inference and contextual understanding.

There is a spatial disparity as governance research has been carried out mainly in particular countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan, China and Jordan. Differences in procurement laws, institutional structures, governance arrangements and socio-economic conditions limit the applicability of results across different jurisdictions, pointing to the need for comparative analyses in a variety of national contexts.

There is also a conceptual gap in the literature. Previous researchers have studied governance mechanisms independently such as contractual governance (Ominde et al., 2022), contract management stages (Kamau & Mburu, 2023), management of contract records and vendor supervision (Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024), supplier evaluation (Changalima et al., 2023), digital governance (Ibrahim, 2025), relational governance (Rehman & Nadeem, 2026), and due diligence (Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026). Few studies have explored the interaction of these governance mechanisms within a coherent contractual governance framework and its impact on organizational performance.

The review was carried out within different theoretical paradigms, such as Transaction Cost Theory, Agency Theory, Theory of Constraints, Stakeholder Theory, Contract Theory, Game Theory and the Economics of Relational Contracts. Although these theories provide useful insights into specific governance mechanisms, there is no single theoretical framework that sufficiently embraces the interplay of formal contractual controls and relational governance. This points to the need for multi-theoretical frameworks that can explain the complex nature of contractual governance in modern supply chains.

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The assessment also highlights a lack of understanding of new governance challenges. Recent studies have indicated the significance of developments in digital governance, artificial intelligence, sustainability due diligence, equitable governance, and technology-enabled contract oversight (Ibrahim, 2025; Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026). However, empirical evidence on the impact of these emerging governance mechanisms on organizational performance, particularly in developing countries, is still lacking.

Its main contribution is identified in the evaluation as a major contextual shortcoming in a sector-specific sense. Although the literature on contractual governance is growing, there is a conspicuous dearth of consolidated evidence on the contractual governance of supply chains in the public universities of Kenya. Present research has been on manufacturing, agro-processing, construction, county administrations, agriculture and various public sector entities. Yet public universities operate under unique procurement guidelines, governance frameworks, accountability standards and stakeholder anticipations. Therefore, the results obtained from different sectors cannot be assumed to be applicable to higher education institutions. This review integrates the existing body of knowledge on public universities, identifies a notable gap in the literature, underscores the importance of contractual governance in university procurement and organizational effectiveness, and delineates a targeted agenda for future empirical inquiries within the realm of Kenya's higher education.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

This paper reviewed and synthesised existing empirical and theoretical literature on the relationship between supply chain contractual governance and organizational performance in reference to the importance of these governance mechanisms to public universities in Kenya. The reviewed evidence points to a consistent finding that supply chain contractual governance enhances organizational performance through accountability, procurement efficiency, supplier collaboration, operational efficiency, and organizational resilience. However, the strength and routes of these linkages vary across sectors, institutional frameworks and governance contexts.

Literature suggests that contract enforcement is important for promoting compliance to contracts, reducing opportunistic behavior and improving accountability among supply chain partners. Present research reveals that contract monitoring improves the effectiveness of procurement by enabling timely detection of problems in contract implementation, optimum management of resources and it helps in efficient contract management during the contract period.

The empirical evidence reviewed shows that the use of dispute resolution mechanisms improves organizational efficiency by reducing contractual disputes, sustaining cooperative relationships and avoiding disruptions in the execution of contracts. However, empirical research on dispute resolution as a distinct contractual governance mechanism has been less common, implying that the available evidence remains rather limited. Likewise, information sharing is a key governance mechanism that improves communication, coordination, transparency and collaborative decision making among supply chain partners. Research shows that effective information sharing strengthens links between governance, leading to better procurement and organisational outcomes, although much of the evidence to date has been generated outside of higher education.

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The literature indicates that contractual governance is most effective when formal governance mechanisms, such as contract enforcement and oversight, are supplemented with relational mechanisms, such as information exchange, cooperation and trust . The reviewed literature indicates substantial heterogeneity across governance frameworks, theoretical lenses, methodological strategies, and performance measures, suggesting that the relationship between contractual governance and organizational performance is intricate and contingent on context.

Importantly, while the evidence analyzed gives important insights from sectors such as manufacturing, agro-processing, construction, county administrations, agriculture, tourism and a range of organizational settings, these links have not been sufficiently examined in relation to Kenya's public universities. Hence it is not possible to assume that existing research applies to higher education institutions given that public universities operate under different governance systems, procurement procedures, regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations.

This review adds to the existing body of knowledge by bringing together what is known, identifying areas of agreement and disagreement and highlighting the limited evidence on Kenyan public universities. The analysis therefore provides a basis for future empirical studies to investigate the impact of contract enforcement, contract oversight, dispute resolution strategies and information dissemination on organizational efficacy in Kenyan public universities, thus filling a crucial gap in the existing literature.

4.2 Implications of the Reviewed Evidence

Policy Implications

The extant literature reviewed shows that efficient management of supply chain contracts is associated with improved organizational performance through increased accountability, improved procurement efficiency, and improved supplier relationships. Given this evidence, policy makers may want to consider strengthening the regulatory rules for contract management in public agencies. Recent studies have suggested that clarity of contractual obligations, strong monitoring systems and transparent governance frameworks improve procurement outcomes (Ominde et al., 2022; Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024; Kamau & Mburu, 2023).

The evidence analyzed allows to conclude that public entities can benefit from unified contract management systems that allow for contract planning, execution, monitoring, evaluation and termination. Furthermore, studies on digital governance and electronic contract management (Ibrahim, 2025; Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026) indicate that investments in digital procurement technologies can enhance transparency, accountability, and information flow during the contract lifecycle. The literature points to capacity-building initiatives for procurement and contract management personnel as critical mechanisms to improve contractual governance.

Managerial Implications

The data analysis suggests that well-structured contract management processes supported by continuous monitoring, supplier performance evaluation and cooperation between departments are associated with the successful performance of an organization. Procurement and contract management managers could foster collaboration between procurement, finance, legal and user departments for effective contract implementation (Kamau & Mburu, 2023; Lagat, 2026).

Literature indicates that establishing clear supplier performance indicators, regular assessments of contract execution, and keeping detailed contract records may enhance accountability and procurement results (Mugecha & Ndeto, 2024; Changalima et al., 2023). Recent studies have shown that digital contract management systems improve the monitoring, documentation, and decision-making in the implementation of contracts (Ibrahim, 2025; Cafaggi & Pistelli, 2026).

Practical Implications

The research under analysis indicates that procurement specialists can improve contract governance by focusing on contract compliance, continuous control, effective communication, and collaborative partnership with suppliers during the contract period. The literature reviewed indicates that proactive contract oversight improves supplier performance and procurement effectiveness (Changalima et al., 2023; Lagat, 2026).

The literature suggests that quick resolution of disputes through negotiation, mediation and other cooperative measures can help to preserve supplier relationships and reduce operational disruptions (Rehman & Nadeem, 2026; Erpay & Günaydın, 2026). Furthermore, efficient information dissemination and proper documentation of contracts are often identified as crucial governance practices that enhance transparency, coordination, and informed procurement decisions (Ominde, 2024; Al-Rawashdeh et al., 2023).

Implications for Future Research

The evaluation identifies a number of priorities for future research. There is need for empirical research on supply chain contractual governance of Kenya's public universities because existing evidence is mainly from manufacturing, agro-processing, county governments, construction and other organizational contexts. Such research would show if the correlations found in other fields apply to colleges and universities.

Second, future research should employ longitudinal, mixed method and comparative research designs to overcome the largely cross-sectional data available. These approaches can offer a better understanding of the effects of contracting governance mechanisms on organizational performance in different time and institutional settings.

Third, future research should examine the interaction between contract enforcement, contract oversight, dispute resolution systems, and information dissemination within cohesive governance structures rather than treat these governance mechanisms in isolation. Future research may also examine the moderating or mediating role of organizational culture, leadership support, institutional capability, procurement digitalization, regulatory compliance, and technology advancement.

The literature reviewed shows an increasing interest in emerging governance issues, including electronic contract management, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, sustainability-oriented procurement and digital governance. Further empirical investigation of these developing areas will contribute to the holistic understanding of modern supply chain contractual governance, particularly within public sector organisations and higher education institutions.

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