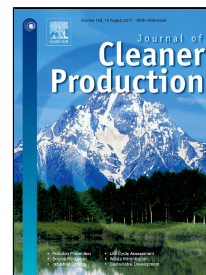


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Public healthcare practices and criteria for a sustainable procurement: A comparative study between UK and Italy

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Abstract

The Health sector can play a significant role towards achieving sustainable development by putting sustainability at the heart of procurement activities. This research analyses the differences relating to how two different National Healthcare Systems (NHS), the Italian and the British, are managing their Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) in terms of supplier's and bidders' sustainable evaluation through specific practices and criteria. The research mainly adopts quantitative inquiry using a survey with procurement professionals from public sector healthcare organisations. A Likert's scale questionnaire was designed to test seven hypotheses covering SPP criteria analysed using Fisher's Exact and Mann-Whitney U tests. While the UK health sector organisations seem to have a propensity for requesting suppliers with an improvement in environmental performances over time and a compliance with voluntary social accountability standards, the Italian organisations seem more focused on the mandatory laws and regulations concerning environment and safety. Other interesting differences lie in the requests to the suppliers of the compliance with voluntary standards related to packaging. The research is just limited to two countries; future studies aimed at comparing SPP criteria for the public healthcare among the other European countries is recommended. Moreover, the findings raised issues such as the trade-off between costs of the product and environmental criteria, the use of national and international standards as supplier's evaluation criteria, the carbon footprint as a way for gaining more trust from local stakeholders and the possible impact of suppliers' ethical scandals in the public sector.

Keywords: Sustainable Public Procurement; European healthcare; Public Sector; NHS; Supplier's evaluation criteria

1. Introduction

Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) is a strategic issue that has increased its popularity in the last decades (Kumar *et al.*, 2008). In the private sector, organisations have dealt with sustainability for procurement and suppliers mainly on a voluntary basis (Beckmann, 2014; Chiarini, 2014, Quarshie *et al.*, 2016). In order to develop a sustainable supply chain, private organisations have implemented performance standards as well as international standards and guidelines (Ciliberti *et*

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