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Paper: “Public Procurement–Intangible Investment Nexus: Insights into Endogenous Growth in Côte d’Ivoire”

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Luca Scaini
Al Akhawayn University, Morocco

Reviewer 2: Nebert Mandala
Office of the Auditor General, Kenya

Reviewer B:

Recommendation: Revisions Required

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title is clear, specific, and adequately reflects the content of the article. The phrase "intangible investment nexus" effectively signals the theoretical framing, and the geographic specification adds precision. Rating: 4

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

The abstract presents the objectives, methodology, key results, and policy implications in a coherent manner. The ARDL-ECM framework, the study period, and the main finding (0.41% long-run elasticity) are clearly stated. One inconsistency should be corrected: the short-run coefficient is reported as "0.034" in the abstract but as "0.34%" in the results section — the authors should verify and harmonise the presentation across the manuscript. Rating: 4

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

The paper is generally well written and readable. One sentence in the Literature Review section contains a clear syntactic error and requires correction: "Other theoretical perspectives have also contributed to understanding public spending is the public choice theory" is structurally broken and should be revised. A light proofreading pass is recommended throughout, as occasional awkward phrasing appears, though it does not impede comprehension. Rating: 3

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The choice of ARDL-ECM is appropriate for the data structure and is adequately justified. The diagnostic testing battery is complete and correctly applied.

However, the methodological section contains critical omissions that prevent a full evaluation. The formal model equations — both the ARDL general form and the ECM short-run specification — are entirely absent from the text, replaced by placeholder references ("we go from the general form of the ARDL model as written below" and "And for the short-term analysis:"). In a quantitative study, the absence of the model equations is not a formatting inconvenience — it makes it impossible to assess the specification, the choice of variables, the lag structure, and the functional form. This must be corrected before the paper can be properly evaluated.

Additionally, the potential for reverse causality is not addressed. In a single-country time-series framework where procurement budgets are likely endogenous to GDP performance, the absence of any discussion of this concern — even as an acknowledged limitation — represents a substantive methodological weakness. The authors should either demonstrate why the ARDL-ECM is sufficient to address endogeneity in this context, or explicitly acknowledge it as a boundary condition on causal inference. Rating: 2

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

The results are clearly discussed and appropriately linked to theoretical expectations. The long-run positive effect of service procurement, the negative coefficient for gross fixed capital formation (interpreted through Pritchett, 2000), and the speed-of-adjustment estimate (ECM ≈ -0.52) are all coherently presented and discussed.

However, Tables 1 through 4 — descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, long-run coefficients,

and short-run ECM dynamics — do not appear in the submitted manuscript. This is likely a formatting issue with the file, but the tables are essential to evaluating the results and must be present in the final version. The short-run coefficient inconsistency noted in the abstract (0.034 vs. 0.34%) must also be resolved here. Rating: 3

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The conclusion accurately summarises the findings, connects them to the theoretical literature, and draws policy implications that are proportionate to the evidence presented. The suggestion to disaggregate service procurement categories in future research and extend the analysis to other WAEMU economies is a useful and honest acknowledgement of the study's limitations. The single-country design as a boundary condition could be stated more explicitly in the conclusion rather than only in the future research paragraph. Rating: 4

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

The reference list is comprehensive and appropriate. All major theoretical anchors (Romer, Lucas, Barro, North, Pritchett) are correctly cited and present. In-text citations appear to correspond to the reference list. Formatting is consistent throughout. Rating: 4

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

2

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Overall Recommendation!!!

Accepted, minor revision needed

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

This paper addresses a genuine and underexplored gap in the public finance and growth literature — the distinct contribution of service-oriented public procurement in a Sub-Saharan African economy. The theoretical framing is solid, the ARDL-ECM methodology is appropriate and well-executed, and the diagnostic testing is thorough. The manuscript is recommended for publication subject to the following revisions, listed in order of priority:

Insert the model equations. The ARDL general form and the ECM short-run specification are referenced but absent from the text. These must be included.

Ensure all tables are present and readable in the submitted file. Tables 1–4 (descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, long-run coefficients, short-run ECM) were not visible in the reviewed version.

Reconcile the short-run coefficient. The abstract reports 0.034 while the results section reports 0.34%. The authors should verify and present a consistent figure with explicit units.

Address endogeneity. A brief discussion of the reverse causality concern — whether higher growth mechanically increases procurement budgets — would strengthen the methodological section. Even a frank acknowledgement of this as a limitation would be sufficient.

Correct the syntactic error in the Literature Review: "Other theoretical perspectives have also contributed to understanding public spending is the public choice theory" requires revision.

State the single-country limitation more explicitly in the conclusion, as a boundary condition on the generalisability of the findings.

These are all addressable in a minor revision. The core contribution of the paper is sound and merits publication in ESJ once these issues are resolved.

ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

NOTE: ESJ promotes peer review procedure based on scientific validity and technical quality of the paper (not perceived the impact). You are also not required to do proofreading of the paper. It could be recommended as part of the revision.

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ESJ editorial office would like to express its special gratitude for your time and efforts. Our editorial team is a substantial reason that stands ESJ out from the crowd!

Reviewer Name: Dr CPA Nebert Mandala	
University, Country: Kenya	
Date Manuscript Received: 13/3/2026	Date Review Report Submitted: 17/3/2026
Manuscript Title: Public Procurement–Intangible Investment Nexus: Insights into Endogenous Growth in Côte d’Ivoire	
ESJ Manuscript Number:	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: YES	
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You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: YES	

Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.	5
<i>(The title is clear and flows coherently from introduction, literature review and discussions all focus on issues identified in the title. The title explores in detail economic growth and goes ahead to show how public procurement in intangible investments such as institutional capacity and innovation greatly contribute to the growth beyond the traditional investments in infrastrucure</i>	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	5
<i>The abstract is clear, short and focus on the key issues under discussion. All the key issues including introduction, methodology, literature and empirical review, discussions and conclusions are well summarized in the abstract</i>	

3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	4
<i>Please proof read the article</i>	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	4
<i>(The methodology adopted is well explained however average readers could benefit better with a more simpler explanation of the methodology</i>	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	5
<i>The results are adequately explained and are well linked to the data analysis and the methodology adopted</i>	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	5
<i>The conclusions are well aligned with the literature review and the discussions and analysis of the data</i>	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	3
<i>There are quite a number of assertions especially in the introduction that need to be referenced so that they don't seem like they are the authors opinion</i>	

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) : Minor revision!

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Thanks. I must say this is excellent work and was impressed with the flow

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only: