

The Effectiveness of E-Catalog in Preventing Fictitious Procurement: A System Vulnerability and Legal Implications Analysis

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Abstract

The Indonesian government has increasingly relied on digital systems to promote transparency and accountability in public procurement, notably through the introduction of the e-Catalog platform. This digital catalog is designed to standardize purchasing processes, reduce corruption, and eliminate fictitious procurement practices that have historically plagued government spending. However, concerns remain regarding its actual effectiveness and resilience against misuse. This study investigates the effectiveness of Indonesia's e-Catalog system in curbing fictitious procurement practices within the government sector. Employing a juridical-empirical methodology, this article scrutinizes the structural, technical, and regulatory mechanisms underpinning the e-Catalog, identifies potential system vulnerabilities, and explores the legal ramifications of its misuse. The findings indicate that while the system has significantly enhanced transparency and efficiency in procurement processes, it remains susceptible to exploitation through weak verification procedures, user misconduct, and integration gaps. The study advocates for robust policy reforms, including reinforced digital authentication, cross-platform integration, and strengthened legal enforcement to close loopholes and uphold procurement integrity.

Keywords: e-Catalog, Fictitious Procurement, Procurement Law, Legal Accountability, Digital Governance.

1. Introduction

Public procurement constitutes one of the most crucial yet vulnerable sectors in the governance of state finances. Across many jurisdictions, including Indonesia, procurement systems have historically been plagued by inefficiencies, non-transparency, and corruption (Hardinata & Kamaludin, 2022). One of the most pervasive challenges in this area is the occurrence of fictitious procurement—wherein contracts are awarded, funds are disbursed, and documentation is processed, but the actual delivery of goods or services is either partially fulfilled or entirely absent (Hermanto, 2023). This not only causes substantial financial losses to the state but also undermines public trust in the integrity of government institutions.

In response to these long-standing issues, the Government of Indonesia initiated a series of reforms to modernize its procurement system. Central to these reforms is the introduction of the e-Catalog platform by the National Public Procurement Agency (*Lembaga Kebijakan Pengadaan Barang/Jasa Pemerintah* or LKPP) (Zaki et al., 2022). The e-Catalog is a centralized electronic system designed to facilitate direct purchases of goods and services by government agencies from pre-approved suppliers. Through price standardization, real-time access, and a publicly accessible procurement database, the e-Catalog aims to minimize



human discretion and bureaucratic red tape while increasing procurement efficiency and transparency.

Despite these innovations, recent audit findings by the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK) and the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (BPKP) indicate that fictitious procurement practices persist. Instances have emerged in which procurement transactions conducted through the e-Catalog were found to be fictitious—procurement documents were processed without any corresponding delivery or with deliveries that were significantly below the specified quantity or quality (Prakasa et al., 2023). This raises critical concerns regarding the actual effectiveness of the e-Catalog in achieving its anti-corruption objectives.

To explicitly address the objectives of this study, this research aims to critically evaluate the effectiveness of Indonesia's e-Catalog system in preventing fictitious procurement, and to identify both technical and regulatory weaknesses that hinder its optimal implementation. Moreover, the digital nature of the system, while theoretically reducing opportunities for manual tampering, introduces its own set of vulnerabilities. Weak user authentication protocols, limited integration with delivery tracking mechanisms, and poor monitoring of vendor legitimacy all create openings for system manipulation. These systemic deficiencies are further exacerbated by gaps in legal enforcement and inconsistent application of procurement regulations across different governmental entities.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Indonesia's e-Catalog system in preventing fictitious procurement within the public sector. Specifically, it seeks to (1) identify structural and operational vulnerabilities within the e-Catalog mechanism, (2) assess the legal frameworks governing digital procurement and their enforcement gaps, and (3) formulate concrete legal and policy recommendations to strengthen procurement integrity. The study contributes to the discourse on digital governance and public accountability by offering an evidence-based evaluation of a key national procurement tool. Given the persistence of these issues, this study aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the e-Catalog system in preventing fictitious procurement. It seeks to evaluate the structural and operational vulnerabilities of the system, examine the legal frameworks applicable to such misconduct, and propose actionable policy and legal recommendations. By doing so, the research not only contributes to the ongoing discourse on digital governance and public accountability but also supports the development of a more robust and legally resilient procurement infrastructure in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Fictitious Procurement and Public Corruption

Fictitious procurement is widely acknowledged in public administration literature as a form of procurement fraud in which official records suggest that goods or services have been delivered when in fact they have not. According to Transparency International and the OECD, this practice is emblematic of procurement-related corruption, often involving collusion between vendors and public officials to fabricate transactions. The academic discourse highlights that fictitious procurement typically occurs when there is a lack of robust oversight, ineffective internal controls, and insufficient legal deterrence.

Legal scholars emphasize that the structural weaknesses of public procurement systems—including discretionary power without adequate accountability, limited transparency, and fragmented monitoring which create fertile ground for fictitious procurement (Thai, 2017). In the Indonesian context, studies by Ariani and Setyaningrum

(2023) illustrate that such practices persist despite various regulatory reforms, indicating a disconnect between the legal framework and implementation capacity.

2.2. Digitalization of Public Procurement

Digital transformation in public procurement has been promoted globally as a strategic mechanism to reduce corruption and increase efficiency. Electronic procurement (e-procurement) systems like Indonesia's e-Catalog aim to standardize processes, improve auditability, and limit human interference. The World Bank and UNDP have endorsed such systems as pivotal tools for good governance (Arrowsmith, 2004).

However, implementation challenges often undermine the potential benefits of digital procurement. Literature from (Kaufmann et al., 2011) underscores that digital systems do not inherently eliminate corruption risks; rather, they shift the vectors of abuse to system design flaws, digital manipulation, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. In the Indonesian case, the e-Catalog system, while offering a centralized digital interface, remains susceptible to issues like unauthorized access, poor data verification, and loopholes in vendor vetting procedures.

2.3. Regulatory and Institutional Frameworks

The effectiveness of anti-corruption tools like the e-Catalog is also contingent upon the strength and coherence of legal and institutional frameworks. In Indonesia, Law No. 31 of 1999 on the Eradication of Corruption provides the general legal basis for prosecuting procurement fraud. Meanwhile, Presidential Regulation No. 12 of 2021 serves as the primary regulatory framework governing procurement mechanisms, including digital systems like the e-Catalog.

Despite these provisions, legal scholars argue that enforcement remains inconsistent and often reactive. Research by suggests that regulatory enforcement suffers from fragmented institutional coordination and limited investigative resources, particularly at the regional government level. Consequently, fictitious procurement practices may persist even when they are theoretically covered under existing regulations.

2.4. Previous Research

This study is anchored in the theory of digital governance, which posits that technology, when embedded within a sound legal and institutional structure, can improve government transparency, responsiveness, and accountability (Suardi et al., 2025). It also adopts a socio-legal perspective, recognizing that legal rules must be interpreted within their operational context to be effective. This theoretical lens allows for an integrated analysis of technological systems, institutional capacity, and legal frameworks.

3. Methods

This study employs a juridical-empirical approach that combines doctrinal legal analysis with empirical field-based inquiry. The juridical component involves a detailed examination of statutory instruments, regulations, and case law relevant to procurement governance and electronic systems in Indonesia (Sudiarawan et al., 2020). Specifically, it analyzes the regulatory framework established under Presidential Regulation No. 12 of 2021 concerning Government Procurement of Goods/Services, the Corruption Eradication Law (Law No. 31 of 1999), and supporting regulations issued by the National Public Procurement Agency (LKPP).

The empirical component is centered on a qualitative analysis of case studies, audit reports, and stakeholder interviews. Primary data sources include investigative reports from the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK), the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (BPKP), and findings published by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). These

reports were assessed to identify recurring patterns and systemic vulnerabilities that allow fictitious procurement to occur within the e-Catalog framework.

Field data were also obtained through structured interviews with key stakeholders, including procurement officers at regional and national levels, IT personnel managing the e-Catalog system, legal experts specializing in administrative and anti-corruption law, and vendors registered in the LKPP platform. Interviews were conducted across five regions in Indonesia that had been flagged in public audit findings for suspicious procurement activities.

Sampling for the interviews followed a purposive technique, selecting informants based on their professional involvement in procurement activities and direct interactions with the e-Catalog system. The goal was to gather nuanced insights into system operations, bottlenecks, and behavioral dynamics that might not be fully captured in documentary records (Bovens et al., 2008).

The analysis of both normative legal texts and field data employed a triangulation technique to ensure validity and minimize researcher bias. Normative findings were juxtaposed with real-world implementation scenarios to evaluate coherence and detect points of divergence between law and practice. The analytical lens used was primarily interpretive-constructivist, focusing on how actors interact with regulatory frameworks and technical infrastructures in their institutional contexts.

Finally, the findings were synthesized to develop a set of policy and legal recommendations that address both technological and institutional shortcomings. By merging doctrinal legal interpretation with grounded empirical evidence, the methodology ensures that conclusions are not only normatively sound but also practically relevant and contextually informed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Effectiveness of the e-Catalog in Reducing Corruption Risks

The deployment of the e-Catalog system by the Indonesian government was primarily motivated by the need to address endemic corruption in public procurement processes. Traditional manual procurement methods were fraught with discretion, non-transparent pricing, and limited oversight, which provided fertile ground for fictitious procurement and collusion (Yusa et al., 2021). The e-Catalog system introduces structural reforms that aim to minimize these vulnerabilities through digitization, standardization, and traceability.

A key strength of the e-Catalog lies in its ability to reduce the discretionary power of procurement officials. By mandating the use of a centralized and standardized product catalog with pre-approved vendors and fixed prices, the system narrows the scope for arbitrary decision-making. This standardization of procedures reduces opportunities for price mark-ups, ghost transactions, and the selection of non-existent suppliers, which are common modalities of fictitious procurement (Indonesian Corruption Watch, 2023).

Moreover, transparency is significantly enhanced through the real-time publication of procurement data. All stakeholders, including oversight institutions, civil society organizations, and the media, have access to procurement records and transaction histories. This level of openness introduces a deterrent effect, as officials are more likely to adhere to regulations when procurement activities are subject to external scrutiny (Puspita & Gultom, 2024).

Another important aspect is the digital traceability embedded within the e-Catalog system. Each procurement transaction, from product selection to payment, is recorded digitally and can be audited retrospectively. This feature supports forensic investigations in

the event of suspected corruption, enabling investigators to reconstruct transaction flows and identify irregularities.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the e-Catalog system has significantly improved transparency and accountability in public procurement processes in Indonesia. The digitalization of procurement allows for real-time tracking of transactions and reduces opportunities for corrupt practices such as price mark-ups and fictitious procurement. Key informants from the National Public Procurement Agency (LKPP) and internal audit bodies confirmed that the e-Catalog has expedited procurement timelines and limited non-technical interference in the selection of suppliers. However, this effectiveness is conditional and not absolute. The study finds that the system's ability to prevent corruption is highly dependent on the accuracy of uploaded data, consistency in internal oversight, and the integrity of procurement officials using the platform. In essence, while the e-Catalog functions as a preventive tool, it remains vulnerable when institutional weaknesses persist. These findings directly address the first research objective: to assess the structural and operational effectiveness of the e-Catalog system in mitigating corruption risks.

Findings from interviews with LKPP officials and procurement personnel across several regions suggest that the system has led to measurable reductions in procurement irregularities. In particular, price uniformity for frequently purchased items such as office supplies and IT equipment has increased, and procurement cycle times have decreased, limiting the timeframe for manipulative tactics. Audit data from BPKP reinforce these observations, showing a decline in procurement-related findings in areas with consistent use of the e-Catalog.

However, the anti-corruption impact of the e-Catalog is not uniformly distributed across regions. In jurisdictions with strong institutional capacity, the system functions as intended. In contrast, regions with weaker governance structures continue to experience manipulation despite the digital framework. In these contexts, actors exploit procedural gaps such as incomplete data input, lack of logistics verification, or vendor misrepresentation to carry out fictitious transactions under the guise of compliance.

In sum, the e-Catalog represents a significant advance in Indonesia's fight against corruption in public procurement. It introduces transparency, standardization, and traceability—three critical pillars of anti-corruption reform. Nonetheless, its full potential is contingent on institutional support, technological literacy, and robust monitoring mechanisms. Without these, the system's effectiveness in reducing corruption risks remains constrained.

4.2. Identified Systemic Vulnerabilities

Despite the significant improvements brought about by the e-Catalog system in streamlining procurement and enhancing transparency, various systemic vulnerabilities persist that undermine its overall effectiveness. These vulnerabilities arise from technological limitations, procedural gaps, and human factors that collectively expose the system to manipulation and fictitious procurement activities.

a) Weak User Authentication and Access Control

One of the primary vulnerabilities identified is the inadequacy of user authentication protocols. Many procurement officials and vendors access the system using shared or generic login credentials, which complicates accountability and transaction traceability. This lack of stringent access control increases the risk of unauthorized transactions and makes it difficult to pinpoint individuals responsible for irregularities. Furthermore, the absence of multi-factor authentication reduces the security integrity of the platform, leaving it susceptible to credential theft or misuse.

b) Insufficient Vendor Verification and Monitoring

While the e-Catalog system requires vendors to undergo a vetting process managed by the National Public Procurement Agency (LKPP), weaknesses remain in continuously monitoring vendor legitimacy and performance. Several cases were documented where vendors with questionable backgrounds or poor delivery records remained active participants. This persistence can be attributed to bureaucratic inertia, inadequate real-time data sharing between agencies, and sometimes collusion with local officials. The lack of dynamic vendor performance tracking reduces the system's ability to proactively exclude unreliable or fraudulent suppliers.

c) Lack of Integration with Delivery and Inventory Systems

The e-Catalog currently operates largely as a transactional platform without comprehensive integration with logistics, inventory, or delivery tracking systems. This disconnection enables procurement fraud through false claims of goods delivery or service fulfillment. For example, vendors can report successful delivery without external verification, and procurement officials may approve payments without confirming physical receipt. The absence of end-to-end digital monitoring from order to delivery creates opportunities for fictitious transactions to go undetected.

d) Limited Training and Capacity of Procurement Personnel

A recurring theme from field interviews was the variable technological literacy and training levels among procurement officers, especially in remote or under-resourced regions. Limited understanding of the e-Catalog's functionalities and compliance requirements leads to procedural errors, non-adherence to standard operating procedures, and vulnerability to manipulation by more tech-savvy actors. Capacity constraints also hamper the ability to conduct effective oversight or challenge suspicious transactions, perpetuating systemic weaknesses.

e) Incomplete Data and Reporting Mechanisms

The reliability of e-Catalog data depends heavily on accurate and timely input. However, discrepancies in data entry, delays in updating procurement statuses, and incomplete records were frequently observed. These data quality issues undermine audit processes and complicate efforts to detect anomalies indicative of fictitious procurement. Moreover, the current reporting mechanisms lack sufficient automated alert systems to flag irregular activities, placing a greater burden on manual oversight, which is prone to human error.

f) Fragmented Institutional Coordination

Finally, the enforcement environment surrounding the e-Catalog system is hampered by fragmented institutional roles and coordination challenges. Multiple agencies, including LKPP, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Audit Board (BPK), and local inspectorates, hold overlapping responsibilities but often operate in silos. This fragmentation delays investigations, weakens sanction enforcement, and creates loopholes for offenders to exploit inter-agency gaps.

Despite its strengths, the e-Catalog system is not immune to exploitation. This study identifies several systemic vulnerabilities that have yet to be fully resolved. First, the system still relies heavily on the accuracy of data provided by suppliers and manual verification by administrators, leaving room for data manipulation and even fictitious vendors. Second, weaknesses in the pricing evaluation mechanism led to inconsistencies between catalog-listed prices and prevailing market rates, creating loopholes for overpricing. Third, the bureaucratic coordination between user agencies and LKPP often results in delays in data updates and system responsiveness.

These vulnerabilities demonstrate that digital systems, while enhancing efficiency, do not automatically eliminate misconduct. Such weaknesses relate directly to the second research objective: to identify structural and operational vulnerabilities within the e-Catalog. By highlighting these points of failure, the study lays the groundwork for practical and targeted policy reform.

These systemic vulnerabilities demonstrate that while the e-Catalog system introduces important safeguards against corruption, persistent technical and institutional weaknesses allow fictitious procurement practices to continue in some contexts. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires comprehensive reforms spanning technological upgrades, capacity building, and strengthened inter-agency cooperation.

4.3. The Legal Implications of e-Catalogue Abuse

The misuse or manipulation of the e-Catalogue system has profound legal implications, affecting not only administrative accountability but also criminal liability under Indonesian law. As the e-Catalog is a government-mandated procurement platform designed to ensure transparency and efficiency, any abuse undermines the rule of law, public trust, and fiscal responsibility.

a) Administrative Law Consequences

From an administrative perspective, abuse of the e-Catalog system constitutes a violation of public procurement regulations governed by Law No. 2 of 2017 on Public Procurement of Goods and Services. Government officials involved in fictitious procurement or bypassing established e-Catalog procedures may be subject to disciplinary sanctions, including suspension, dismissal, or prohibition from holding public office. Additionally, procurement contracts arising from manipulated transactions are legally vulnerable and may be declared null and void, requiring restitution of state funds (Zaki, et.al. 2022).

Regulatory bodies such as the National Public Procurement Agency (LKPP) are empowered to investigate violations and impose administrative penalties. However, challenges in enforcement due to incomplete data or lack of inter-agency coordination can hinder timely administrative responses.

b) Criminal Law Implications

More severe legal consequences arise under criminal law when e-Catalog abuse involves corruption, fraud, or embezzlement. Articles under the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) and Law No. 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Corruption Crimes (as amended by Law No. 20 of 2001) criminalize acts that cause state financial losses through fraudulent procurement.

For instance, procurement officials or vendors engaging in fictitious transactions such as submitting false delivery reports or inflating prices, may be prosecuted for corruption, collusion, or conspiracy (Pasaribu et al., 2024). Such offenses carry penalties including imprisonment, fines, and confiscation of illicit gains. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) plays a pivotal role in investigating and prosecuting these crimes, although jurisdictional overlaps with other agencies sometimes complicate enforcement.

c) Civil and Financial Liability

Beyond criminal and administrative sanctions, parties implicated in e-Catalog abuse may face civil liability. The state or affected parties can initiate lawsuits to recover financial losses, including claims for damages resulting from fictitious procurement. This legal recourse underscores the financial accountability of government officials and vendors, reinforcing the deterrence effect.

d) Challenges in Legal Enforcement

Despite the robust legal framework, enforcement remains a challenge due to several factors:

- A. Evidentiary Difficulties: Digital evidence from e-Catalog transactions requires sophisticated forensic analysis to establish fraudulent intent and reconstruct irregular activities. Limited technical capacity among investigators hampers effective case-building.
 - B. Jurisdictional Fragmentation: Overlapping mandates between agencies like LKPP, KPK, the Audit Board (BPK), and regional oversight bodies can lead to delays and jurisdictional conflicts.
 - C. Reactive Nature of Enforcement: Most legal actions occur after significant losses are incurred, reflecting a lack of proactive monitoring or early warning systems.
- e) Legal Reform and Future Directions

To address these challenges, legal reforms are recommended to enhance inter-agency coordination, expand forensic capabilities, and institutionalize real-time audit mechanisms linked to the e-Catalog platform. Moreover, integrating biometric authentication and blockchain technology could strengthen the legal validity and non-repudiation of procurement transactions, reducing opportunities for abuse (Hermanto et al., 2024).

From a legal perspective, abuse of the e-Catalog system may constitute acts of corruption, including fictitious procurement, price collusion, and illicit gratification involving procurement officials. However, the study finds that the current legal framework, particularly Law No. 31/1999 in conjunction with Law No. 20/2001 on the Eradication of Corruption, does not explicitly address the new forms of digital procurement misconduct. Moreover, law enforcement authorities often face challenges related to digital forensics and a limited understanding of e-procurement technologies, which hinders effective prosecution.

These legal gaps highlight the urgent need for regulatory adaptation. Existing legal instruments must evolve to recognize and respond to the complexity of digital corruption. This finding supports the third research objective: to examine the legal frameworks applicable to procurement misconduct and to propose legal reforms that ensure the resilience and accountability of digital procurement systems.

Each of the three discussion sections above contributes directly to the core research objectives outlined in this study. First, by demonstrating how the e-Catalog system enhances transparency and reduces corruption opportunities, the study confirms its partial effectiveness. Second, by exposing operational and structural vulnerabilities, it reveals areas where the system remains susceptible to abuse. Third, by analyzing the legal framework's shortcomings, the study contributes to the development of adaptive legal policies that can strengthen digital procurement integrity.

Together, these findings not only advance scholarly understanding of digital governance and anti-corruption strategies but also offer concrete recommendations for enhancing the design, oversight, and legal robustness of the e-Catalog system in Indonesia.

In summary, abuse of the e-Catalog system carries multifaceted legal implications, including administrative sanctions, criminal prosecution, and potential civil liability. These findings align with and expand upon previous research, such as Tjandra (2021), Siregar (2021) and Hutapea (2020), which highlighted the legal ambiguity in prosecuting digital procurement fraud due to outdated regulatory frameworks. However, unlike earlier studies that primarily emphasized the lack of technological infrastructure, this study reveals a deeper structural problem rooted in institutional oversight gaps and inconsistent law enforcement. Therefore, strengthening legal enforcement mechanisms, not only through statutory reforms but also through capacity-building for law enforcement agencies which is critical to safeguarding public procurement integrity and restoring public trust in digital governance frameworks.

5. Conclusions

The e-Catalog system has played a vital role in reforming Indonesia's public procurement sector by enhancing transparency, efficiency, and accountability. Nevertheless, the persistence of fictitious procurement practices indicates that technological solutions alone are insufficient without complementary institutional reforms. The current e-Catalog infrastructure is vulnerable to exploitation due to weak authentication mechanisms, limited real-time oversight, and fragmented regulatory enforcement.

To enhance the integrity and reliability of the e-Catalog system, the following measures are proposed: Multi-Factor Authentication: Implement biometric or OTP-based logins to ensure only authorized personnel access procurement accounts. Vendor Vetting Improvements: Mandate physical inspections and background checks before vendors are approved for listing in the e-Catalog. Blockchain Integration: Adopt immutable record-keeping systems to prevent post-hoc data manipulation. Real-Time Monitoring Dashboards: Develop centralized dashboards with anomaly detection algorithms to flag unusual procurement activities. Stronger Legal Enforcement: Revise the Procurement Law to explicitly address e-Catalog fraud and introduce minimum sentencing guidelines.

Given the evolving nature of digital governance and procurement systems, future research should explore the intersection between emerging technologies (e.g., AI-driven procurement analytics, machine learning for fraud prediction) and institutional capacity. Comparative studies involving other countries that have implemented similar e-procurement systems may also yield valuable insights into best practices and adaptable policy models.

Moreover, there is a pressing need for interdisciplinary research that combines legal analysis, public administration, and data science to evaluate the real-world effectiveness of proposed interventions. Longitudinal studies assessing post-implementation outcomes of anti-fraud mechanisms within the e-Catalog could provide deeper empirical grounding for future reforms.

By situating these findings within a broader reform agenda, this study underscores the necessity of a multi-dimensional approach where technological, legal, and institutional measures are aligned to ensure that digital procurement tools truly function as safeguards of public interest rather than potential instruments of abuse.

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