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Emergency Procurement and Corruption Risks in Indonesia: Lessons from Disaster Response Governance in Disaster-Prone Regions

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Abstract

Emergency situations require governments to procure goods and services rapidly, often through simplified procedures that prioritize speed over conventional procurement safeguards. While such flexibility is necessary, emergency procurement can also create opportunities for inflated prices, favoritism, conflicts of interest, and weak documentation. This article examines corruption risks in emergency procurement within Indonesia's disaster management system. Using normative juridical and policy analysis, the study evaluates emergency procurement rules, audit mechanisms, transparency requirements, and institutional responsibilities. The article argues that emergency conditions should not be treated as an automatic justification for reduced accountability. Instead, anti-corruption controls should be adapted to emergency circumstances while preserving essential transparency and traceability. The study proposes a disaster procurement integrity framework incorporating pre-approved supplier databases, emergency price benchmarks, digital documentation, post-disaster audits, beneficial ownership checks, and public disclosure of contracts. Particular attention is given to disaster-prone regions where rapid procurement is repeatedly required. The article concludes that Indonesia can improve emergency response while reducing corruption risks by designing procurement systems specifically for crisis conditions rather than temporarily suspending ordinary accountability principles.

[*Situasi darurat mengharuskan pemerintah untuk mengadakan barang dan jasa dengan cepat, seringkali melalui prosedur yang disederhanakan yang memprioritaskan kecepatan daripada pengamanan pengadaan konvensional. Meskipun fleksibilitas tersebut diperlukan, pengadaan darurat juga dapat menciptakan peluang untuk harga yang dinaikkan, favoritisme, konflik kepentingan, dan dokumentasi yang lemah. Artikel ini mengkaji risiko korupsi dalam pengadaan darurat dalam sistem manajemen bencana Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan analisis yuridis dan kebijakan normatif, studi ini mengevaluasi aturan pengadaan darurat, mekanisme audit, persyaratan transparansi, dan tanggung jawab kelembagaan. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa kondisi darurat tidak boleh diperlakukan sebagai pembenaran otomatis untuk pengurangan akuntabilitas. Sebaliknya, kontrol anti-korupsi harus disesuaikan dengan keadaan darurat sambil tetap menjaga transparansi dan ketertelusuran yang penting. Studi ini mengusulkan kerangka kerja integritas pengadaan bencana yang menggabungkan basis data pemasok yang telah disetujui sebelumnya, tolok ukur harga darurat, dokumentasi digital, audit pasca-bencana, pemeriksaan kepemilikan manfaat, dan pengungkapan kontrak kepada publik. Perhatian khusus diberikan pada daerah rawan bencana di mana pengadaan cepat berulang kali diperlukan. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa Indonesia dapat meningkatkan respons darurat sekaligus mengurangi risiko korupsi dengan merancang sistem pengadaan khusus untuk kondisi krisis daripada menangguhkan sementara prinsip-prinsip akuntabilitas biasa.*]

Keywords: Emergency procurement, disaster governance, corruption, public accountability, Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesia's geographical position makes disaster governance an enduring public-administration challenge rather than an exceptional policy concern. Earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, landslides, forest fires, and other hazards periodically require government institutions to mobilize substantial resources within short periods. The governance problem is consequently two-dimensional. Authorities must act rapidly enough to protect lives and restore essential services, but they must simultaneously preserve the integrity of public expenditure. Disaster response frequently requires governments to procure goods and services under conditions in which normal competition is difficult or impossible. The resulting tension between urgency and accountability is not merely technical. It concerns the lawful exercise of public power, the protection of public finances, and the credibility of institutions operating under extraordinary pressure. Lassa (2013) describes Indonesia's transformation from predominantly state-centered disaster management toward more polycentric governance, while Efendi, Agustiyara, and

Putra (2019) emphasize the continuing importance of state–society relationships in disaster management. These developments suggest that disaster procurement should be examined as a governance institution rather than simply an administrative purchasing procedure.

The legal architecture confirms the importance of maintaining accountability during emergencies. Law No. 24 of 2007 concerning Disaster Management establishes the principal institutional framework for disaster management, including governmental responsibilities and emergency response. Procurement is governed by the broader public procurement framework, currently centered on Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2018 concerning Government Procurement of Goods/Services, as amended by Presidential Regulation No. 12 of 2021. Emergency conditions permit adaptations to ordinary procurement procedures, but such adaptations should be understood as legally structured exceptions rather than unrestricted administrative discretion. Law No. 31 of 1999, as amended by Law No. 20 of 2001 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption, remains relevant where emergency expenditure is manipulated for private benefit. Law No. 14 of 2008 concerning Public Information Disclosure provides an additional transparency basis. The legal challenge is therefore not whether emergency procurement should be flexible—it must be—but how flexibility can remain bounded by legality, necessity, proportionality, traceability, and subsequent review.

Emergency procurement presents a distinctive corruption environment because the normal relationship between time, information, competition, and oversight is disrupted. In ordinary procurement, suppliers can compete, contracting authorities can compare prices, documents can be reviewed before decisions are finalized, and unsuccessful bidders may challenge decisions. Disaster conditions compress these stages. Officials may have to identify a supplier immediately, accept limited quotations, approve direct purchases, or rely on existing relationships because waiting for competitive procedures could endanger affected populations. Schultz and Sɯreide (2008) demonstrate that emergency procurement is particularly vulnerable because the urgency that justifies procedural flexibility simultaneously creates opportunities for corrupt behavior. The resulting problem is a classic governance dilemma: the same discretion that allows competent officials to respond efficiently may allow dishonest officials to exploit urgency for private gain.

The corruption risk is particularly significant because disaster procurement often involves concentrated expenditure. A large amount of public money may be spent within days or weeks, while institutional attention is focused primarily on operational outcomes. Officials may face intense political pressure to deliver visible results, humanitarian actors may urgently need supplies, and affected communities may have limited capacity to scrutinize contracts. This creates an asymmetry between the speed of expenditure and the speed of accountability. Traditional auditing, which often operates retrospectively, may occur months after goods have been delivered and contracts completed. By then, evidence may have disappeared, prices may be difficult to reconstruct, and informal relationships between officials and suppliers may be harder to establish. Emergency procurement therefore requires accountability mechanisms that operate both during and after the emergency. The central policy question is not how to eliminate discretion, but how to make necessary discretion observable, reviewable, and attributable.

Previous Studies

The international literature on emergency procurement has consistently identified disasters as environments in which corruption risks can increase. Schultz and Sшreide (2008) classify emergency procurement vulnerabilities around the speed and scale of spending, reduced competition, limited information, and weakened institutional controls. Sшreide (2002) similarly explains that corruption risks are shaped by institutional environments and incentives rather than merely by individual morality. Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) emphasize that corruption becomes particularly damaging when public officials possess discretionary authority over economically valuable decisions. In disaster contexts, this discretion is intensified because officials must make decisions under uncertainty. The literature consequently rejects the simplistic assumption that corruption during emergencies is caused solely by weak ethics. Instead, it highlights institutional design: the structure of decision-making, the availability of information, the distribution of authority, the probability of detection, and the consequences of misconduct. This perspective is valuable for Indonesia because disaster procurement often occurs through complex relationships among central agencies, local governments, procurement officials, suppliers, humanitarian organizations, auditors, and affected communities.

A second stream of research examines disasters as governance crises. Boin, Hart, Stern, and Sundelius (2005) conceptualize crisis management as a process involving sense-making, decision-making, meaning-making, and accountability. Comfort (2007) argues that disaster response requires information sharing and adaptive coordination because crisis environments rapidly change. Kapucu (2006) similarly demonstrates that emergency response depends heavily on networks connecting governmental and nongovernmental actors. Tierney (2012) moves the analysis beyond the idea of disasters as purely natural events by emphasizing social vulnerability and institutional arrangements. These studies imply that procurement cannot be separated from broader disaster governance. Suppliers, civil-society organizations, military actors, local governments, and humanitarian agencies may all participate in emergency response. Consequently, corruption prevention must account for the networked character of disaster operations rather than treating procurement officers as isolated decision-makers.

A third body of research concerns corruption and procurement more generally. Fazekas and Kocsis (2020) demonstrate the potential of procurement data to identify red flags associated with corruption risk, particularly where competition is unusually restricted. Fazekas and Tyth (2016) similarly conceptualize corruption risk through network structures that connect public and private actors. Bauhr and Grimes (2014) emphasize that transparency can improve accountability under particular institutional conditions, although transparency alone does not automatically generate effective control. Lewis-Faupel et al. (2016) show that electronic procurement can affect public procurement outcomes by improving information and competition. These findings are relevant to emergency procurement but cannot simply be transferred without adaptation. Crisis conditions may make full competition impossible, and therefore an emergency system must distinguish legitimate direct contracting caused by genuine urgency from suspicious restrictions that merely exploit emergency status.

Indonesian research reinforces these international findings while revealing important institutional particularities. Puspita and Gultom (2024) find that e-procurement significantly reduced procurement corruption across Indonesian provinces, particularly where procurement spending and capital expenditure were high. Dani and Revindo (2025) similarly find a significant relationship between e-procurement implementation and lower public procurement corruption, while also emphasizing institutional quality, bureaucratic reform, and accountability. Suardi et al. (2024), using data from 744 institutions and suppliers, find that procurement governance is negatively associated with corruption and that the preparation stage is particularly important. These studies provide strong evidence for digital and institutional procurement controls under ordinary conditions.

However, ordinary procurement research cannot fully explain emergency procurement because the institutional environment changes precisely when normal safeguards are most needed. Sugimin's analysis of Indonesian emergency procurement during COVID-19 identifies non-compliance with procurement rules and procedures across different stages of emergency procurement, creating risks of inefficiency, wasteful expenditure, and financial loss. Ayuni, Arinanto, Arsil, and Indrati (2022) likewise argue that Indonesia's disaster-management framework requires stronger checks and balances because emergency authority creates opportunities for abuse of power. Their argument is particularly important because it shifts attention from procurement compliance to the constitutional structure surrounding emergency decision-making.

Research Gap, Novelty, and Contribution

The existing literature therefore establishes three important propositions but leaves their intersection insufficiently developed. First, disasters increase administrative urgency and may weaken ordinary procurement controls. Second, procurement corruption is strongly associated with institutional weakness, limited competition, conflicts of interest, and inadequate monitoring. Third, Indonesia's disaster-governance framework contains accountability challenges concerning emergency authority and oversight. What remains underdeveloped is a specifically Indonesian framework explaining how procurement controls should be redesigned when emergency conditions make ordinary procedures impracticable. This article addresses that gap by developing the concept of crisis-adapted procurement accountability. Its novelty lies in treating emergency procurement not as ordinary procurement with selected safeguards removed, but as a distinct governance regime requiring alternative safeguards. The contribution is threefold: first, it connects emergency-law principles with procurement-integrity mechanisms; second, it proposes a procurement lifecycle model in which preventive, concurrent, and retrospective controls operate together; and third, it argues that disaster-prone Indonesian regions should institutionalize preparedness-based procurement infrastructure before disasters occur rather than improvising procurement controls after emergencies have already begun.

The article adopts a normative juridical and institutional governance approach integrated into this introduction and analytical structure rather than presented as a separate methodology section. The normative dimension examines Law No. 24 of 2007, the public procurement framework, anti-corruption legislation, public-information rules, and regulations concerning financial accountability. The institutional analysis compares the functions of disaster-management authorities, procurement officials, auditors, local governments, and oversight institutions. The study also engages peer-reviewed literature concerning emergency procurement, corruption, e-procurement, disaster governance, accountability, and institutional resilience. The analysis is descriptive because it maps the distinctive features of emergency procurement; analytical because it identifies how urgency, discretion, information asymmetry, and weakened competition interact; and argumentative because it proposes a governance framework intended to preserve both rapid response and public accountability.

Emergency Procurement as a Distinct Governance Regime

Emergency procurement should begin with a recognition that speed is not itself evidence of administrative weakness. In a disaster, delay can impose costs that exceed the financial savings generated by conventional competition. A hospital requiring emergency medical supplies cannot necessarily wait for a full tender process, and a local government responding to a flood cannot postpone the purchase of evacuation equipment while conducting ordinary market procedures. The principle of proportionality therefore becomes crucial. The greater the urgency, the stronger the justification for procedural simplification; but simplification should correspond to actual necessity rather than generalized convenience. Emergency authority should be activated only to the extent required by the crisis. This approach reflects the broader legal principles of necessity and proportionality that should constrain discretionary emergency powers. Ayuni et al. (2022) argue that Indonesia needs stronger checks and balances precisely because emergency conditions create discretionary opportunities. The implication for procurement is straightforward: an emergency exception should explain why normal procedures cannot be followed and should specify the scope and duration of the deviation.

The problem arises when "emergency" becomes a category without a sufficiently defined temporal or substantive boundary. If emergency procurement procedures remain available after the immediate crisis has passed, officials may continue to rely on direct awards or limited competition even when ordinary procedures have become feasible. This creates what may be called emergency normalization. Fazekas and colleagues' recent research on disasters and procurement shows that corruption risks can persist beyond the immediate disaster period, challenging the assumption that emergency-related vulnerabilities disappear when the acute crisis ends. Their analysis of natural disasters in Italy found increased use of non-open procedures, shorter advertisement periods, and single-bid tenders, with some effects persisting into the medium term. The Indonesian lesson is that emergency procurement should contain explicit transition rules. Once the immediate emergency phase ends, procurement should automatically return to ordinary procedures unless a documented justification demonstrates that continued flexibility remains necessary.

Emergency procurement also changes the information environment. Suppliers may know more than government officials about prices, availability, transportation constraints, or product quality. During ordinary procurement, competition can reduce this information asymmetry because multiple suppliers submit comparable offers. During emergencies, the government may have only one or two available suppliers. The resulting informational dependence can create opportunities for price inflation and quality manipulation. Schultz and Sшreide (2008) emphasize that emergency procurement is vulnerable precisely because buyers often lack sufficient information to make fully informed decisions. This suggests that emergency procurement preparation should include pre-disaster market intelligence. Governments should know, before a disaster occurs, the approximate market prices of essential commodities, the geographic distribution of suppliers, transportation costs, production capacity, and alternative sources. Price benchmarking should therefore be treated as preparedness infrastructure rather than an improvised response activity.

The distinction between legitimate urgency and corrupt urgency is also important. A genuine emergency may justify direct procurement, but a supplier's ability to deliver rapidly does not justify an unreasonable price or undisclosed relationship with decision-makers. Emergency procurement should therefore distinguish procedural flexibility from substantive immunity. Officials may have flexibility regarding the number of quotations or timing of competition, but they should remain accountable for price reasonableness, supplier eligibility, conflicts of interest, documentation, and delivery verification. This principle prevents the false choice between saving lives and preventing corruption. In reality, corrupt procurement can itself endanger lives by producing low-quality goods, delayed delivery, or insufficient quantities. Schultz and Søreide (2008) emphasize that corruption in emergency procurement can reduce the resources available for life-saving operations and undermine the quality of relief.

Where Corruption Risk Concentrates During Disaster Procurement

The procurement planning stage presents the first major corruption risk because decisions made before supplier selection can predetermine later outcomes. Even under emergency conditions, officials must identify what goods or services are genuinely required, in what quantity, at what quality level, and for which locations. Manipulation can occur when officials exaggerate quantities, create unnecessary specifications, or prioritize products associated with particular suppliers. Suardi et al. (2024) demonstrate that procurement preparation is particularly related to corruption risk in Indonesia. This finding is especially significant for emergency procurement because the compressed decision-making period can make planning appear too operational to scrutinize. Yet planning decisions may determine millions of rupiah in expenditure. Emergency procurement integrity should therefore begin before a contract is signed, with simplified but documented needs assessments and clear records explaining why specific quantities and specifications were necessary.

Supplier selection creates a second risk. When time is limited, governments may rely on pre-existing suppliers or businesses that can mobilize quickly. This can be legitimate and even necessary. The risk arises when supplier familiarity becomes a substitute for objective eligibility. A supplier may have personal, political, or financial connections with an official, or may use related companies to conceal ownership. Beneficial ownership verification is therefore especially important during emergencies because ordinary market competition may be reduced. Procurement databases should be capable of identifying common ownership, directors, addresses, bank accounts, and previous contracting relationships. If the government repeatedly awards emergency contracts to entities connected to the same network, the pattern should trigger review even when each individual contract appears procedurally defensible.

Pricing is a third major vulnerability. Emergency markets may genuinely produce higher prices because transportation, scarcity, insurance, storage, and production costs increase. Consequently, high prices should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of corruption. The challenge is determining whether an increase is commercially reasonable. Emergency price benchmarks can help distinguish genuine market inflation from artificial markups. A national or regional database could record historical prices for essential emergency goods and adjust them for location and crisis conditions. Procurement officials could then document deviations from benchmark prices. A significant deviation would not automatically invalidate a contract but would require explanation and, where appropriate, independent review. Such a system converts price discretion into documented discretion.

Contract implementation presents a fourth risk that is frequently underestimated. A supplier may deliver fewer goods than contracted, substitute lower-quality products, deliver late, or inflate invoices. During a disaster, officials may prioritize speed and accept incomplete verification because the goods are urgently needed. This can create opportunities for post-delivery manipulation. Emergency procurement therefore requires rapid verification mechanisms. Digital photographs, geolocation records, delivery receipts, beneficiary confirmation, inventory records, and independent inspection can create an evidentiary chain. Technology is particularly useful because it can preserve information before physical evidence disappears. Nevertheless, digital documentation must be complemented by human verification because fraudulent actors can manipulate digital records as well.

The fifth risk concerns conflicts of interest. Emergency procurement decisions may be made by a small group of officials who must work closely with suppliers and disaster-response partners. Such proximity can generate both actual and perceived conflicts. A procurement officer may have a family relationship with a supplier, own shares in a contracting company, or have previously worked for the business. Even where no corrupt transaction occurs, undisclosed relationships can undermine public confidence. Conflict-of-interest declarations should therefore be required at the beginning of emergency procurement and updated when circumstances change. The objective is preventive disclosure rather than automatic punishment. Where a conflict exists, alternative decision-makers or enhanced review can be activated.

Institutional Design for Crisis-Resilient Procurement

The first institutional reform should occur before disasters happen. Disaster-prone regions should maintain pre-qualified emergency supplier pools containing suppliers that have passed basic integrity, capacity, ownership, financial, and technical checks. Prequalification would not mean that listed suppliers automatically receive contracts. Instead, it would create a pool from which emergency purchases can be made more quickly while maintaining minimum eligibility requirements. Suppliers should periodically update ownership information, capacity, licenses, bank details, and relevant certifications. Such a system would reconcile speed with integrity. Rather than improvising supplier selection during a crisis, governments would already possess a vetted market structure that can be activated when necessary.

The second reform is a disaster procurement dashboard linking procurement, financial, supplier, and delivery information. Indonesia's experience with e-procurement demonstrates that digital systems can reduce procurement corruption under ordinary conditions. Puspita and Gultom (2024) found that e-procurement significantly reduced government procurement corruption, while Dani and Revindo (2025) identified similar relationships while emphasizing institutional quality. The emergency environment, however, requires additional functionality. The system should record the legal basis for emergency procurement, the declaration of emergency status, supplier identity, beneficial ownership, contract value, benchmark price, delivery schedule, modifications, and final payment. Where ordinary competition is waived, the system should record the justification. This would create an auditable digital trail without requiring officials to follow procedures that are impractical during crisis response.

The third reform involves segregation of emergency responsibilities. Crisis conditions often encourage concentration of authority because officials need to make decisions quickly. Yet excessive concentration increases corruption risk. The official identifying the emergency need should not necessarily be the same person approving the supplier, authorizing payment, and verifying delivery. Full separation may be impractical during small-scale emergencies, but a minimum two-person or two-stage authorization system can reduce unilateral discretion. For larger procurements, independent financial review should be activated automatically. Ayuni et al. (2025) emphasize that Indonesia's emergency governance framework requires stronger oversight of emergency authority. The procurement implication is that institutional checks should be scaled according to procurement value and risk rather than suspended entirely because the situation is urgent.

The fourth reform should establish risk-based auditing during, rather than only after, emergencies. Traditional auditing is predominantly retrospective. That model remains valuable, but emergency procurement requires concurrent monitoring because the cost of intervention rises rapidly once funds have been spent. Red flags could include repeated direct awards to the same supplier, prices substantially above benchmarks, unusually rapid contract modifications, common ownership among suppliers, incomplete delivery evidence, or concentration of contracts within a particular business network. Automated risk scoring could prioritize transactions for review. This does not mean that every flagged contract is corrupt. Rather, it allows scarce audit resources to focus on transactions with the highest probability of irregularity.

The fifth reform concerns public disclosure. Emergency procurement should not be hidden simply because the government is operating under crisis conditions. Of course, some operational information may need temporary protection for legitimate reasons, but contract value, supplier identity, broad procurement purpose, delivery status, and final expenditure should generally be disclosed as soon as practicable. Transparency can serve multiple accountability functions. Citizens can identify questionable suppliers, journalists can compare prices, civil society organizations can monitor distribution, and auditors can cross-check public information with government records. Bauhr and Grimes (2014) caution that transparency is not universally sufficient for accountability; information becomes meaningful only when actors have the capacity and opportunity to use it. Emergency procurement transparency should therefore be combined with accessible complaint channels and independent review.

The sixth reform should create post-disaster procurement review panels. Once the immediate crisis ends, a multidisciplinary team should examine emergency contracts according to risk rather than simply reviewing every transaction identically. The panel could include procurement specialists, auditors, financial investigators, engineers, disaster-management experts, and legal professionals. The review should assess whether the emergency justification was valid, whether prices were reasonable, whether suppliers delivered according to contract, whether conflicts of interest existed, and whether procurement exceptions continued longer than necessary. The review should also produce institutional lessons. Disaster governance should therefore treat each emergency as an opportunity to improve the preparedness system for the next event.

Lessons for Disaster-Prone Indonesian Regions

The Central Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami demonstrate why emergency governance must account for coordination complexity. Research on the 2018 disaster identifies challenges involving coordination, information, resources, and inclusive governance. The response involved governmental and non-governmental actors operating in a rapidly changing environment. In such circumstances, procurement decisions cannot be treated as isolated administrative transactions because multiple actors may influence needs identification, distribution, logistics, and service delivery. A supplier may interact with local government, humanitarian organizations, military units, community organizations, and beneficiaries simultaneously. This complexity creates opportunities for duplication, unclear responsibility, and fragmented accountability. Procurement integrity therefore depends partly on coordination architecture. Each actor should understand who is authorized to procure, who verifies delivery, who controls inventory, and who reports expenditure.

Indonesia's broader experience also suggests that civil society can be an important governance resource. Efendi, Agustiyara, and Putra (2019) emphasize the role of civil society in disaster management and the importance of moving beyond state-centered approaches. Disaster procurement can benefit from the same principle. Community organizations often possess local knowledge about prices, supplier reputation, delivery patterns, and actual needs. They can identify discrepancies that formal auditors may not detect immediately. However, community monitoring should not be used as a substitute for state accountability. Citizens should not be expected to investigate corruption without institutional protection. Instead, community organizations should operate as an additional information channel within a broader accountability system.

Collaborative governance provides another relevant lesson. Khafian (2023) argues that effective Indonesian disaster management requires coordination among governmental and non-governmental actors. This collaborative structure can improve procurement because governments may lack sufficient logistical capacity to respond alone. Yet collaboration can also complicate accountability if responsibilities become diffuse. When several agencies jointly arrange procurement or distribute goods, it may become difficult to determine who is responsible for irregular expenditure. Emergency procurement agreements should therefore contain explicit responsibility matrices. Collaboration should increase capacity without creating an accountability vacuum.

Repeated disasters create an additional institutional challenge: temporary emergency procedures can become routine. Disaster-prone regions may experience floods, landslides, volcanic activity, forest fires, or other emergencies frequently enough that officials become accustomed to emergency purchasing. The resulting administrative culture may gradually normalize direct contracting and weak documentation. This phenomenon is particularly dangerous because the exception can become easier to invoke than the ordinary rule. Emergency procurement frameworks should therefore contain automatic expiration mechanisms. Every emergency procurement authority should have a defined legal and operational duration. Continued use should require a documented extension based on continuing necessity. This principle aligns emergency procurement with the broader constitutional idea that extraordinary powers should remain temporary and proportionate.

The experience of COVID-19 provides another important lesson. Emergency procurement during the pandemic was not limited to physical disasters but involved a global health emergency requiring rapid purchases of medical supplies and services. Indonesian research identifies non-compliance at several stages of emergency procurement, demonstrating that speed can create procedural weaknesses. The pandemic therefore provides a useful warning against assuming that emergency procurement risks are confined to natural disasters. The same framework should apply to epidemics, technological failures, major infrastructure disruptions, and other events requiring extraordinary public expenditure. Preparing a general emergency procurement architecture would consequently be more efficient than creating ad hoc rules for each type of crisis.

Reframing Accountability: From Post-Disaster Auditing to Preparedness

The conventional model of accountability often assumes a sequence in which government spends money, auditors review the expenditure, irregularities are identified, and sanctions follow. This model is necessary but insufficient for emergencies. By the time a post-disaster audit identifies corruption, the affected community may already have suffered from inadequate supplies, poor infrastructure, or delayed recovery. The social cost therefore cannot be recovered simply by prosecuting the responsible official. Emergency procurement accountability should be redesigned as a three-stage system: preparedness accountability, concurrent accountability, and recovery accountability.

Preparedness accountability establishes supplier pools, benchmarks, procedures, roles, and digital infrastructure before disaster. Concurrent accountability monitors high-risk transactions during the emergency. Recovery accountability examines expenditure and outcomes after the emergency. The three stages reinforce one another and reduce dependence on retrospective punishment.

Preparedness accountability is particularly important because disasters compress decision-making time. Institutions that have not prepared supplier databases, benchmark prices, standardized contracts, emergency authorization forms, and digital reporting systems will inevitably rely more heavily on individual discretion. That does not mean that discretion should be eliminated. Instead, preparedness converts some discretionary decisions into predetermined institutional arrangements. For example, officials should not need to determine from scratch whether a supplier has adequate capacity during a crisis if the supplier has already been prequalified. They should not need to estimate whether a price is reasonable without reference to historical market data. Preparedness therefore functions as a form of anti-corruption infrastructure. It reduces the number of decisions that must be made under pressure.

Concurrent accountability requires a different institutional philosophy. Auditors and oversight institutions should not obstruct emergency operations by requiring ordinary procedural documentation before every purchase. Their function should instead be to identify unusually risky transactions and intervene proportionately. A low-value purchase of standard emergency goods from a prequalified supplier may require minimal review. A large direct award to a newly established company with unclear ownership should receive substantially greater scrutiny. Risk-based monitoring therefore allows accountability to coexist with speed. Suardi et al. (2024) provide evidence that procurement governance dimensions such as integrity, capacity, competition, fairness, and monitoring are associated with lower corruption in Indonesia. Emergency procurement should preserve these principles but adjust their operational form to crisis circumstances.

Recovery accountability is equally important because corruption risks may continue after immediate relief operations. Reconstruction contracts can be substantially larger than initial emergency purchases and may involve infrastructure, housing, roads, schools, hospitals, and public facilities. The emergency may justify simplified procurement for immediate relief, but reconstruction should normally transition toward more competitive and transparent procurement. Fazekas et al.'s disaster-procurement research demonstrates why the transition period matters: procurement risks can persist beyond the immediate emergency. Indonesia should therefore treat the transition from relief to recovery as a specific governance phase with its own procurement controls. The expiration of emergency procurement authority should trigger a formal review of all continuing contracts.

This three-stage model also clarifies the role of technology. Digital procurement should not be understood merely as an electronic version of paper-based procedures. It should serve as an institutional memory for emergency decisions. Each transaction should preserve information concerning who decided, why the decision was made, which legal authority was used, what price was accepted, who owned the supplier, what was delivered, and who verified it. Such information enables later reconstruction of decision-making. Dani and Revindo (2025) emphasize that e-procurement is most effective when combined with institutional reform and performance accountability. Technology therefore cannot replace institutional integrity; it can make institutional decisions more observable and analyzable.

The analysis demonstrates that the principal challenge of emergency procurement is not the existence of exceptional procedures but the institutional management of discretion. Discretion is unavoidable in disaster response because officials must respond to uncertainty, rapidly changing needs, incomplete information, and logistical constraints. Attempts to eliminate discretion completely would make emergency governance rigid and potentially harmful. The relevant objective is therefore bounded discretion. Officials should be permitted to depart from ordinary procurement procedures where necessary, but the departure must be justified, documented, attributable, proportionate, and reviewable. This conception reconciles the operational logic of disaster response with the legal logic of accountability. It also avoids two equally problematic extremes: treating emergency procurement as ordinary procurement regardless of circumstances, or treating emergency status as an unlimited authorization to bypass procurement safeguards.

A second implication is that corruption prevention should be integrated into disaster preparedness. Indonesia's disaster-management institutions understandably focus heavily on evacuation, logistics, shelter, rescue, health services, and reconstruction. Procurement integrity may appear secondary during preparedness planning. Yet procurement is the mechanism through which many of these response capabilities are financed. Without pre-arranged procurement systems, emergency spending becomes dependent on improvisation. Prequalification, price benchmarking, standardized emergency contracts, digital systems, conflict-of-interest declarations, and audit protocols should therefore become part of disaster preparedness. This would represent a significant conceptual shift: anti-corruption would no longer be treated as an external compliance function added to disaster management, but as one component of operational resilience.

A third implication concerns the relationship between transparency and speed. Policymakers sometimes assume that transparency requirements inevitably slow emergency procurement. That assumption is not necessarily correct. Digital documentation can be faster than paper-based reporting, and standardized emergency forms can reduce administrative uncertainty. What slows response is often not transparency itself but poorly designed transparency. Requiring extensive documentation before a life-saving purchase may indeed be counterproductive. Requiring a concise digital record of the supplier, price, justification, and authorization can be both rapid and valuable. The objective should therefore be minimum necessary documentation at the point of purchase, followed by expanded documentation and review during recovery. Such graduated transparency would preserve operational speed without creating an accountability vacuum.

The Indonesian procurement literature also indicates that technological solutions work best when accompanied by institutional capacity. Puspita and Gultom (2024) demonstrate the positive relationship between e-procurement and reduced corruption, while Dani and Revindo (2025) show that institutional factors such as bureaucratic reform and accountability matter alongside digitalization. Emergency procurement reinforces this conclusion. A digital platform cannot prevent corruption if officials collude with suppliers outside the platform, manipulate delivery information, or deliberately enter false data. Technology should therefore be integrated with supplier due diligence, beneficial ownership information, conflict-of-interest controls, risk analytics, and independent auditing. The most effective system is consequently socio-technical rather than purely technological.

Finally, emergency procurement should be treated as part of democratic accountability. Disaster victims are not merely beneficiaries of government assistance; they are rights-bearing citizens entitled to know how public resources are used. Public accountability is especially important during crises because emergency conditions can generate strong political support for government action while simultaneously reducing citizens' capacity to scrutinize decisions. The legitimacy of disaster governance therefore depends on both effectiveness and integrity. A government that delivers quickly but wastes resources may undermine long-term resilience, while a government that protects every procedural safeguard but fails to deliver urgently needed assistance may also lose legitimacy. The appropriate standard is neither maximum proceduralism nor maximum discretion, but a carefully designed institutional balance between urgency, legality, transparency, and public value.

Conclusion

Emergency procurement is an unavoidable component of effective disaster governance, particularly in a disaster-prone country such as Indonesia. The central governance challenge is that the urgency requiring procurement flexibility also creates conditions conducive to corruption. Direct awards, reduced competition, incomplete information, concentrated expenditure, accelerated decision-making, and limited concurrent oversight may generate opportunities for inflated prices, favoritism, conflicts of interest, collusion, and inadequate delivery. Indonesian experience during COVID-19 and broader research on disaster governance demonstrate that emergency authority can produce significant accountability challenges. The appropriate response is therefore not to eliminate emergency procurement but to design a differentiated accountability regime capable of preserving necessary flexibility while maintaining traceability and institutional control.

This article proposes a three-stage framework consisting of preparedness accountability, concurrent accountability, and recovery accountability. Before disasters occur, governments should establish prequalified supplier pools, emergency price benchmarks, standardized contracts, beneficial ownership checks, conflict-of-interest declarations, and digital procurement infrastructure. During emergencies, risk-based monitoring should focus on high-value and high-risk transactions without obstructing urgent operations. After the emergency, independent audits and procurement reviews should examine both financial compliance and substantive outcomes, particularly where emergency procedures continue into reconstruction. E-procurement should support this framework but should not be treated as a substitute for institutional capacity and human oversight. Evidence from Indonesia indicates that digital procurement is associated with lower corruption, particularly when combined with institutional reform and accountability. Ultimately, resilient disaster governance requires the recognition that speed and accountability are not inherently contradictory. The contradiction arises when accountability is designed exclusively for ordinary conditions. Indonesia should instead develop procurement institutions capable of operating under crisis conditions while retaining essential principles of legality, proportionality, transparency, competition where feasible, conflict-of-interest control, and auditability. Emergency procurement should be exceptional in procedure but not exceptional in accountability. Such an approach would allow disaster-prone regions to respond faster without creating institutional spaces in which corruption becomes easier to conceal. In this sense, procurement integrity should be regarded not as an administrative burden imposed upon disaster response, but as an essential component of the state's capacity to protect citizens during crises.

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