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E-Government Service Quality in the Goods and Services Procurement in Riau Province, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze e-government service quality in the goods and services procurement in Riau Province, particularly in Pekanbaru City. The data were collected through an in-depth interview analyzed using a dialogical interpretation approach. The results showed that the service quality of goods/services procurement in Riau Province coordinated by the Electronic Procurement Service (LPSE) through its website `http://lpse.riau.go.id` has already met the users' expectation. Even so, the ad hoc position of the Work Unit of LPSE Riau, decreasing enthusiasm of goods/services providers for upgrading the skills of their human resources, and ineffective communication between LPSE, ULP and PDE of Riau Provincial Government effectively degrade the quality of service that has already run well. Hence, there should be a restructuring of LPSE and Work Units related to the e-government implementation in order to synchronize the implementation of e-government in general and e-procurement in particular in Riau Province.

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1. Background

The Indonesian government, through the policy of electronic government (e-government), applies ICT as a means of improving the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and accountability to create good governance. There are three phases in the utilization of e-government: publishing, interacting, and transacting. The type of Indonesian local government websites is more informational rather than transactional. Feature of the website that is transactional is limited only to e-procurement or interactive public information [1]. Yohana, et al. study's [13] on the utilization and management of government websites in Riau, especially in the city of Pekanbaru, found that the interacting phase has not been established yet, but the transacting phase constituting the hardest stage in the implementation of e-government has been run. This is due to the existence of the LPSE (E-Procurement Service Unit) link, which is part of the implementation of e-government. In many areas, the implementation

of e-procurement, in fact, becomes the most difficult stage in the implementation of e-government.

The facts and phenomena occurring in Riau raise a question about the implementation of e-government by the Regional Government of Riau – whether it simply follows the growing trend or has become an urgent necessity to realize good governance. Indrajit [5] mentions that some e-government initiatives have ended up with failure because the decision to implement e-government is just a copycat. When referring to the order of its utilization, actually there is a counterproductive implementation of e-government in Riau Province. The objective of e-government to improve the quality of public services is difficult to evaluate or assess in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Consequently, the quality of e-government service in Riau can only be seen partially by the utilization phases. In the context of e-government in Riau, the transacting phase has a high acceptance and suitability to be evaluated from the perspective of service quality.

The website LPSE of Riau Province (`http://lpse.riau.go.id`) is the realization of e-government implementation in Riau in the goods and services procurement sector. So far, the procurement of goods and services in government agencies runs in the mainstream as if requiring that there must be a physical meeting between the parties involved in the procurement of goods and services. Thus, the nature of service is offline, that is, the one limited in space, time, and cost. Offline service in the procurement of goods and services unwittingly support further the moral hazard of the stakeholders on the implementation of the goods and services procurement. As a result, it is reasonable to find corruption and leakage cases in the procurement project.

The implementation of e-government also brings the changing demands into the process of goods and services procurement. Initially, such procurement requires meetings and face-to-face contacts, but it is now converted into an online and real-time system. Stakeholders, both government as the project provider and company as the recipient of procurement projects, no longer have to meet physically. The online process can actually save time and money for the two parties. In the long run, even each party can have a positive impact (benefit). The government can realize good governance, the corporate/business sector can achieve good corporate governance (GCG), and the public can appreciate positively the passage of process, for example, in the form of increased confidence and satisfaction with the government and its public services, especially online services. The huge amount of benefits and the multiplier effect that can be obtained from the implementation of Electronic Procurement Service (LPSE) as part of e-government require the online service provider of LPSE Riau to optimize the quality of its services.

The optimization of LPSE's quality of service can be performed by firstly knowing the existing condition of online service quality dimensions or variables itself so studies

or assessments on the service quality of LPSE Riau are important to do. Studies on the quality of e-government service are deemed more urgent "when the citizens' bargaining position is getting stronger and the need for conducting a user survey is increasingly larger" [2]. Such research can identify every variable that has not met the customers/users' need and expectation of the LPSE Riau online services. Stowers [8] mentions two groups of e-government evaluation measures: (1) inputs, outputs and impacts of e-government, and (2) measure of efficiency, service quality, and e-government activities. Therefore, this study is directed to answer the following question: how is the service quality of e-government in the sector of goods and services procurement in Riau Province?

2. Method

This qualitative descriptive study aims to explain, describe, and analyze in detail the quality of e-government service in Riau Province by taking LPSE Service Riau as a locus. The descriptive data was derived from the e-government service users' expectation, interpretation and appreciation. Expectation refers to the users' expectation on the service before they receive a service from a service provider. Interpretation and appreciation emphasize on how the service users assess the overall service they have received.

Primary data was obtained from informants through in-depth interviews. The informants were e-procurement service users from companies (businesses) participating in the auction of procurement project as well as informants from LPSE Riau as the service provider.

The data were then analyzed using a dialogical interpretation approach, i.e. a dialogue between emic and etic comprehensions to understand the phenomena encountered in the field. The dialogue generated a negotiated meaning described in the form of a report. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using an interactive model of analysis.

3. Findings and Discussion

The quality of service in LPSE Riau website was assessed using the dimensions of e-servqual, including efficiency, reliability, fulfillment, privacy, responsiveness, and contact [11].

3.1. Efficiency

Contextually, efficiency in this study refers to the service users' ability of accessing website `http://lpse.riau.go.id` to find the information they search for and leave the site with minimal effort. Efficiency requires the easiness for the LPSE Riau website visitors to do two activities: uploading and downloading data and information related to e-procurement. For the users of the service provider group, service efficiency is represented when they upload the documents required in the process of e-procurement as well as in downloading information, especially those related to e-procurement requirements. In relation to this, the easiness and the efficiency are dependent on the capacity and quality of network connection owned by the provider in the goods/services e-procurement.

Based on the interviews with informants from LPSE Riau, the goods/services providers often complain about the difficulty when uploading the bidding documents. The complaint is considered inappropriate if it is submitted to LPSE Riau considering that LPSE Riau has already provided PC computer devices and an assured the internet network connection. These facilities are in the office of LPSE Riau and can be used freely by all goods/services providers.

From the results of the test, it can be found that the quality of existing internet network in the computers was very good. The data accessing speed for both downloading and uploading is stable at the maximum quota of 16 GB. In other words, if the users fail in uploading or downloading documents using personal computers (not LPSE Riau's computers), it is mainly because of the Internet network connectivity they use. So, this is not LPSE Riau's fault or responsibility.

Furthermore, in the terms of website's accessibility, the service users could access easily the sub links of LPSE Riau website. All links and sites on the website could be opened (read: clicked) easily and present appropriate data and information. For example, when the service users wanted to search for auction, all data and information were presented completely on the site.

3.2. Reliability

Reliability concerns the technical functionality of website `http://lpse.riau.go.id`, especially the extent to which the website is available and functioning properly. The technical functionality of LPSE Riau website at least represents the macro and micro functions. At the macro level, the website `http://lpse.riau.go.id` is a form of e-government implementation manifestation in Riau Province. Thus, its functionality can be seen from the phases of e-government implementation, i.e. publishing, interacting, and transacting.

In the term of the publishing phase, LPSE Riau website has clearly published and shared proper data and information remaining to be relevant to the issues of official government bureaucracy. For example, the publication of a blacklist for the providers of goods/services, sharing data on the performance of e-procurement in Indonesia, and making a lot of data and information related to e-procurement in both Riau and Indonesia accessible to the visitors.

In terms of the interacting phase, LPSE Riau website opens a forum to communicate with its visitors via e-mail accompanied by a quick responsiveness to reply every email coming into LPSE Riau. It is recorded and reported in sub link "Frequently Asked Questions/FAQ". All questions going to the email address helpdesk@lpse.riau.go.id are recapitulated along with the answers or follow-up given by a Verifier and Helpdesk Team. Thus, there is such a two-way communication between LPSE Riau as a service provider and the service users from the general public or service users that already have user ID.

Finally, in the term of the transacting phase, this function achievement is unnecessarily be interpreted as a transaction that must be in the form of a sum of money. Moreover, e-procurement process is an e-government form at the highest phase, i.e. transacting. The occurring transaction is the one between a goods/services provider and a government agency that auctions or tenders its project to a third party via the ULP. The transaction occurs after the announcement of auction/tender's winner and the signing of contract by the winner. Therefore, transaction here should not be understood as a transaction in an online shop, but the occurring transaction refers to a series of activities happening after the announcement of the winner of the goods/services procurement.

At micro level, LPSE Riau website's functionality has been used as its main function – as an online application system that organizes e-procurement activities in Riau Province. It can be seen from the absence of data and information published out of the official service context, particularly e-procurement field. In addition, there is no annoying advertisement and all the shared data, information and questions are still within the context of e-procurement.

3.3. Fulfillment

Fulfillment in this study refers closely to the assurance or fulfillment of service promises or the extent to which the service in Riau e-procurement website provides some assurance to service users. The fulfillment service is certainly related to the e-procurement SOP as well as the inherent duties and functions of LPSE Riau. People who use public services often demand the promises or the rights of service users to the Work Unit which is actually not appropriate. This is the importance of understanding

the public service SOP. E-procurement SOP is a comprehensive process and cannot be broken down. In addition, the real essence of inherent duty and function of LPSE Riau is to "bridge" the goods/services providers and ULP (Procurement Services Unit) and/or SKPD (Regional Work Units) that have activities/projects to be auctioned off to a third party.

The results of study showed that service users from the group of goods/services providers still misunderstand the function and role of LPSE Riau. For example, when LPSE Riau updated the blacklist of companies, there are some companies protesting against the blacklist including them into it. The protest and complaint were submitted to LPSE Riau, whereas the determination of the blacklist was not under the authority of LPSE Riau. In the context of blacklist publication, Riau LPSE only publishes it, while those setting out the blacklist were ULP and/or LKPP (Government Goods and Service Procurement Policy Agency). The blacklisted companies were reported to the ULP to be further shared with the public through the LPSE Riau website `http://lpse.riau.go.id`.

Concerning the question of how LPSE Riau fulfills its service promises, it is associated with values and norms which bind all groups of users of the website `http://lpse.riau.go.id`, especially for LPSE Riau as the "bond" service provider. It is manifested in the decision and agreement of integrity pact becoming a joint commitment later and to which the whole groups must be subjected. Below are the points of agreement and commitment in the Service Integrity Pact of LPSE Riau.

a. Will not practice corruption, collusion and nepotism.

b. Will report to the authorities if there is any indication of corruption in the bidding process.

c. In the procurement, the duties will be performed cleanly, professionally and transparently in a sense, mobilizing all resources and capabilities optimally to deliver the excellent work starting from the preparation, implementation, to the completion of bidding.

d. The one violating this integrity pact will be punished by moral and administrative sanctions, as well as be sued for compensation and a criminal case in accordance with the legislation in force.

3.4. Privacy

The privacy dimension requires the confidentiality of the data and information related to the activities undertaken by the service users of LPSE Riau, especially the group of goods/services providers. In the implementation of e-procurement, the privacy

provided by LPSE Riau is limited to the access to the documents required in the process of goods/services procurement. The documents are in the forms of soft files, and can only be accessed by logging in using a user ID and password that has been registered to LPSE Riau. Therefore, documents that have been submitted to LPSE Riau are then organized in the SPSE application system in an integrated manner. Not everyone can request these data to LPSE Riau.

The informant describes this assurance of confidentiality so that although the police want the tender documents, they must show first the legality proof of such document use. LPSE Riau limits the access to the documents only for the criminal case investigation purpose.

In addition, the login mechanism actually is an integral part of this privacy dimension. Requiring the service users to register first to become a member, then obtaining the username ID and its password are the common and standard mechanism in the context of cyberspace activities. Unique and identical user ID and password become the privacy of each service user. It is because through these user ID and password, the user can access the data and specific information in each e-procurement service. Therefore, the password should be specific and identical, and assigned to only one or two people to be the administrator of the user ID in the SPSE application system.

3.5. Responsiveness

Riau LPSE's responsiveness concerns not only the speed and accuracy in providing services to users, but also the level of its seriousness in responding a wide range of complaints on the e-procurement. The LPSE Riau's responsiveness has been categorized into a good quality in the service user's perspective since some informants admit that LPSE Riau reacts to users' problems or constraints quickly and precisely.

For example, when an informant wrote his complaint in an email, the response and reply was given within less than 24 hours and LPSE Riau showed its sincerity in addressing the problems faced by the user. Such seriousness is represented in the form of follow-up steps on the complaint, criticism, and suggestion submitted via email or telephone and/or directly to the office of LPSE Riau.

The awareness of the importance of realizing the service responsiveness in LPSE Riau becomes the good news in the effort of creating public services that can satisfy their users. There is a fundamental change associated with the initial image of civil bureaucrats from *pangrehpraja* (be served) into *pamongpraja* (to serve). The awareness of serving wholeheartedly certainly departs from a strong grasp on what the duties are both individually and organizationally. Spirit and work ethic built up in the office of LPSE Riau are so conducive that individual personnel are capable of running his/her job description well. Eventually, the impact for the public as service users is

that they can feel the LPSE Riau's empathy and sincerity in providing the optimum services without underestimating even a little complaint/question submitted to LPSE Riau. Such a work culture is actually the fundamental need and expectation of the public as the users of public services, especially in Riau Province.

3.6. Contact

Contact is a tool allowing users to call a service provider when they find difficulty in accessing the website `http://lpse.riau.go.id`. LPSE Riau has established communication with the service users through phone number, email, and office address. The service users of LPSE Riau can call the phone number (0761) 40304, write an email to helpdesk@lpse.riau.go.id, or visit the office (address is included on the website) at Riau Governor's Office Complex, Extension Building, 2nd Floor, JalanSudirman No. 460, Pekanbaru. The website also shows phone numbers as a hotline or a national e-procurement Careline, i.e. LKPP Communication Center at telephone numbers (021) 2993-5577 and (021) 4629-3000. Contacts are displayed in the website `http://lpse.riau.go.id`, which in fact have functioned duly. The author tried to contact the phone numbers and sent an email to the help desk of LPSE Riau and got a quick and accurate response. This means there is no "ping pong" treatment done by staffs who handle every incoming phone and/or email.

4. Conclusion

The online service in the procurement of goods and services in Riau as existing in LPSE Riau website (`http://lpse.riau.go.id`) is already qualified, able to meet the expectation and interest of the service users from either the group of goods/services provider or the governmental agencies which are competent and interested in the e-procurement in Riau. The quality dimensions of online services that have been realized by LPSE Riau as a service provider include efficiency, reliability, responsiveness, fulfillment, privacy, and contact. Generally, these have been met well from the perspective of service users.

This study found three factors/problems that can influence (read: decrease) the quality of service if they are ignored. The first factor is related to the positioning and authority of LPSE Riau in the eyes of goods/services providers, since there are many of them have not yet fully understood the authority limits of LPSE Riau. The second factor is in terms of the IT skills of goods/services providers, especially the local/regional providers (Pekanbaru and surrounding area), which are still quite low until now. The penetration of ICT's, particularly the implementation of web-based public information service has nothing to do with regional economic indicators, human development

index and the literacy rate. These conditions indicate that Indonesia has reached only the stage of recognition or initiation in implementation e-government [12].The third factor is related to the organizational structure of LPSE Riau which is still ad hoc – vulnerable to a destructive impact on the performance of LPSE Riau in general and on the quality of online service in the goods and services procurement in particular.

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