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[1]Fahririn, [2]Ani Siska MY, [3]Nut
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Digital Transformation of Whistleblower Legal Protection in Eradicating Corruption in Indonesia

[1]Fahririn, [2]Ani Siska MY, [3]Nut
[1]Faculty of Law, Sahid University, Indonesia, [2]Faculty of Economics and Business, Sahid University, Indonesia, [3]Rajamangala University Of Technology Krungthep, Thailand
[1]*fahririn@usahid.ac.id*, [3]Masarus.t@mail.rmutk.ac-th

ABSTRACT
Digital transformation has transformed the Indonesian corruption eradication landscape, creating a paradox where technology facilitates new modes of corruption while providing innovative solutions for detection and prevention. Research purpose: the challenges of legal protection for whistleblowers in the digital era, particularly the unpreparedness of conventional systems to face cyber threats. The research method uses a normative legal approach with a statutory approach and a case approach, analyzing regulations related to whistleblower protection and empirical cases such as Eko Sulistyo, who experienced a massive digital attack. Data sourced from primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials were analyzed descriptively, comparatively, prescriptively, and through gap analysis. The discussion reveals that although the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has developed the JAGA and GOL digital platforms, the Indonesian legal framework still has fundamental weaknesses: the absence of conflict of interest regulations, a weak data security system, the absence of post-protection phase regulations, limited economic protection, and the absence of a unified database. The study concludes that the digital transformation of whistleblower protection requires a holistic approach that integrates technological, legal, and social aspects, including regulatory reformulation to accommodate digital threats, the development of robust cybersecurity infrastructure, and the development of a comprehensive and sustainable protection system.
Keywords:: cybersecurity, corruption eradication, digital transformation, legal protection, whistleblowers

Introduction

Corruption is a crime that is difficult to eradicate because perpetrators of corruption usually have strong economic and political positions, so that corruption is classified as "white collar crime, crimes as business, economic crimes, official crimes, and abuse of power" (Nixson et al., 2013). The global corruption eradication landscape has entered a new phase with the arrival of the digital technology revolution that changes the way society interacts with the law enforcement system. This phenomenon creates an interesting paradox: on the one hand, digital technology facilitates increasingly sophisticated modes of corruption with cryptocurrency transactions, electronic data manipulation, and encrypted cross-border crime networks.

In Indonesia, corruption remains a serious problem. This crime causes significant losses to the state's finances. According to Transparency International (TII) Indonesia, Indonesia ranks 85th among 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) and fourth among ASEAN countries. Based on findings by Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW), state losses due to corruption in 2018 exceeded 9.29 trillion rupiah. Indonesia faces a dual challenge in eradicating corruption in the digital age. According to data from kpk.go.id, the number of corruption cases handled by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) from 2014 to 2024 was 1,313 (DJKN, Ministry of Finance).

Corruption can be classified as an extraordinary crime that is rampant in Indonesia, and today it can be said that corruption is carried out in a structured, systematic, and massive manner. Corruption is classified as a white-collar crime, which is then classified as a transnational crime (Hatta et al., 2022). In addition to causing losses to the state, corruption also has a direct impact on people's lives. The massive occurrence of corruption has even given rise to the public view that corruption has become a common practice. This view is certainly dangerous for the continuity of the state; therefore, concrete action and appropriate legal certainty are needed to eradicate corruption.

Eradicating corruption can be considered part of a legal development strategy aimed at eliminating the possibility of corruption and thoroughly handling cases related to collusion, corruption, and nepotism. This extraordinary phenomenon of corruption has led to a public vote of no confidence in the criminal justice system and the law in Indonesia. Corruption has caused widespread economic damage and posed a significant threat. The development of corruption has been quite alarming over time, as evidenced by the total number of cases and the magnitude of losses incurred by the state. One contributing factor to corruption is the administration of a government system that can be described as disorderly and without optimal oversight (Danil, 2021).

The difficulty of eradicating corruption today has become a unique challenge for law enforcement officials. Corruption, initially an individual act, has evolved into organized, structured, and massive actions (Yadi & Teddy Lesmana, 2022). A concrete example of organized corruption, currently widely discussed by the public, is the PT Timah Tbk. corruption case, which involved numerous parties and prominent figures, resulting in state losses of 271 trillion rupiah. This eradication effort is further complicated by the involvement of important officials with extensive networks with various parties, which in turn influences the law enforcement process.

On the other hand, the same technology offers unprecedented opportunities to detect, report, and prevent corruption through more efficient and secure mechanisms. Uncovering corrupt perpetrators with powerful economic and political positions requires courage and witnesses with direct knowledge of the corruption. Witnesses with direct knowledge, whether directly involved or not, and who have the courage to report the incident are called "whistleblowers" (Nixson et al., 2013).

The term "whistleblower" can be defined as someone who knows and reports deviant or suspected acts of corruption that occur in an organization where they are employed or another party who has access to information that supports and is sufficient to support the alleged corruption (Sunarso, 2022). The term "whistleblower" is also defined as a "whistle blower" because it is defined as a referee at a match whose duty is to blow the whistle to signal the start of the match and is analogous to a step to reveal facts about alleged violations. Furthermore, a whistleblower, defined as the whistle blower, can also include a crown witness or a criminal who exposes a crime (Julpandi et al., 2024).

The presence of whistleblowers needs to be protected so that corruption cases can be detected and exposed. However, in practice, this condition is not an easy problem, due to the many things that need to be studied and how to actually position whistleblowers in efforts to eradicate corrupt practices. From a legal normative perspective, based on Law No. 13 of 2006, Article 10 Paragraph (2), the existence of whistleblowers does not have a place to get legal protection. In fact, a witness who is also a suspect in the same case cannot be released from criminal charges if he is proven legally and convincingly guilty, but his testimony can be used as a consideration by the judge in mitigating the sentence to be imposed (Anwar, 2020).

The case of digital violations against Sulistyo (2023) became significant momentum that exposed the vulnerability of whistleblowers in the digital era. After reporting alleged corruption in a 450 billion rupiah infrastructure project at his agency, Eko faced not only conventional physical intimidation but also massive digital attacks—social media account hacking, the spread of discrediting deepfake videos, and doxing that exposed his family's personal data on the dark web. The Central Jakarta District Court's decision Number 287/Pid.Sus-TPK/2023/PN.Jkt.Pst did recognize his status as a whistleblower, but the existing protection system completely failed to anticipate and handle these digital attacks. The Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) acknowledges their limited capacity in dealing with cyber threats, while problematika whistleblowers are not yet receiving good appreciation or minimal support, protection, and respect or adequate appreciation for whistleblowers. Until now, legal guarantees for whistleblowers in Indonesia still do not have regulations that specifically regulate whistleblowers or regulate in detail regarding protection for whistleblowers (Syafriana, 2014).

This research starts from the premise that digital transformation is not an option but rather a necessity for the survival of Indonesia's corruption eradication system. By comprehensively analyzing the technological, legal, and social aspects of digital transformation, whistleblower protection is emphasized, but technology also plays a role in shaping an anti-corruption culture in society. Through the use of digital media, the values of integrity, transparency, and accountability can be disseminated massively and sustainably, especially to the technologically savvy younger generation. Digital-based anti-corruption education is an effective strategy for instilling awareness from an early age that corruption is not merely a violation of the law but also a betrayal of moral values and social justice (Hasan et al., 2024).

Methods Research

Both a statute approach and a case approach are used in this study's normative legal research methodology. By examining several laws pertaining to the protection of whistleblowers, such as Law No. 28 of 1999 concerning Clean State Administration, Law No. 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Corruption, and Law No. 13 of 2006 concerning the Protection of Witnesses and Victims, as well as putting laws like SEMA No. 4 of 2011 and interagency regulations into effect, the statutory approach is carried out. To comprehend the issues of whistleblower protection in the digital age, the case approach examines specific situations like the corruption case of PT. Timah Tbk, Vincentius Amin Sutanto, Agus Condro Prayitno, and Eko Sulistyo (2023), who was the victim of a cyberattack.

The research data is sourced from primary legal materials in the form of laws and court decisions; secondary legal materials, including official reports from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the LPSK (Lembaga Penitentiary Agency), the Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW), Transparency International Indonesia data, and LPSK Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); and tertiary legal materials in the form of scientific journals and academic publications. Data analysis techniques use descriptive analysis to describe the factual conditions of whistleblower protection, comparative analysis to compare regulations with practical implementation, prescriptive analysis to provide recommendations for improvement, and gap analysis to identify gaps between existing regulations and protection needs in the digital era, particularly related to cybersecurity and data protection.

Discussion

By eschewing its traditional strategy, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has made a proactive move in the face of the swift advancement of digital technology. In order to fight corruption, an anti-corruption organization is now using information technology as a key tactic. The JAGA and GOL apps, two flagship platforms introduced by the KPK, are essential cornerstones in the construction of a more open and accountable governmental structure. One digital invention that is revolutionizing citizen participation in the oversight of public services is the Indonesian Corruption Prevention Network, or JAGA. Every resident has the chance to actively monitor a range of government services using this platform, including licensing, village money management, health, and education.

JAGA's system is designed to be easily understood and accessible to the general public. First, citizens can download the app or access the JAGA website to view various information related to public service standards, such as official rates at healthcare facilities or details on the use of social assistance funds in their area. Second, if they encounter irregularities or suspected irregularities, they can immediately report them through the platform's features. For example, if illegal levies are used during document processing, reports can be submitted immediately online. Third, every report received will be followed up by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), and if it leads to suspected corruption, further investigation will be conducted.

The presence of JAGA has transformed the dynamics of public services, making them more transparent and accessible to collective monitoring. Practices previously prone to bribery and illegal negotiations can now be minimized thanks to collective public oversight. While JAGA focuses on external oversight, Gratifikasi Online (GOL) offers a different approach, strengthening integrity within the bureaucracy. This application is specifically intended for civil servants and state administrators who need to report any gratuities they receive.

The reporting process through GOL has been simplified to make it easier for users. Civil servants or state officials who receive gratuities can access the platform via the web or mobile app, then create an account and fill out the provided reporting form. Once the report is received, the KPK team will conduct an analysis to determine whether the gift falls into the category of gratuities that must be reported and returned to the state. The entire process is carried out to a professional standard and in a time-efficient manner. The implementation of GOL has successfully created a cultural shift within the bureaucracy, where officials no longer feel hesitant or have difficulty reporting the gratuities they receive. This aligns with the prevention philosophy that prioritizes preventive measures over repressive ones.

The dual-platform strategy implemented by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) through JAGA and GOL demonstrates a comprehensive and integrated approach. JAGA serves as an instrument for empowering the public to conduct oversight from outside the system, while GOL serves as a tool for strengthening integrity within the bureaucratic structure itself. The combination of these two approaches creates a robust anti-corruption ecosystem, where transparency, accountability, and public participation are the main foundations for realizing a corruption-free Indonesia.

Through the use of digital technology, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has demonstrated that eradicating corruption depends not only on law enforcement but also on preventative efforts that actively involve all elements of society and the bureaucracy. Although the use of technology has significant potential in eradicating corruption, its implementation in the public sector still faces various obstacles. One of the most obvious challenges is resistance from bureaucratic actors who feel threatened by the transparency of digital systems. Technology, with all its forms of automation and openness, tends to narrow the scope for irregularities. This has led to a defensive reaction from individuals who have long enjoyed loopholes in conventional systems. As a result, the digitalization process is often carried out only symbolically without any real commitment from stakeholders. Inequality in technological infrastructure is a serious obstacle to equitable digitalization of government systems (Apriani, 2025). Not all institutions or regions have adequate facilities to implement complex information technology systems. Some agencies still use manual methods due to budget constraints, internet network limitations, or inadequate hardware. This creates a gap in the implementation of technology-based anti-corruption systems, especially in public service sectors that are far from the center of government (Prasetyo et al., 2023).

In the eradication of corruption, the role of whistleblowers, or those who report corruption, is crucial. Whistleblowers are individuals who possess the moral courage to expose corrupt practices, often at significant personal risk. Their contribution to uncovering corruption networks and providing crucial evidence cannot be underestimated. However, the reality faced by whistleblowers in Indonesia presents a worrying paradox. Individuals who should receive protection and recognition for their courage are often victimized and criminalized. Quentin Dempster argues that a whistleblower is a whistle-blower, so called because it resembles a referee in a soccer match or other sport who blows a whistle to reveal the fact of a violation, or a traffic police officer who is about to ticket someone on the highway for breaking the rules, or a scout in ancient warfare who announced the arrival of the enemy by whistling, chattering, leaking, or revealing the facts of a crime, violence, or violation (Gunawan, 2019).

Circular Letter No. 4 of 2011 concerning the Treatment of Whistleblowers and Justice Collaborators in Certain Criminal Cases explicitly states that a whistleblower is defined as a party who knows about and reports a specific crime and is not a party involved in the crime being reported (Gunawan, 2019). Therefore, it can be concluded that whistleblowing is usually directed at the person who first reveals or reports a crime or act deemed illegal in their workplace, or another person within the organization, to internal authorities or to the public, such as the mass media or a public monitoring agency. Such disclosures are not always based on the reporter's good faith but are primarily aimed at exposing the crime or irregularity they are aware of (Abdullah, 2015).

Several cases illustrate the fundamental contradictions in Indonesia's anti-corruption mechanisms. Vincentius Amin Sutanto, a former financial controller who uncovered a Rp 1.25 trillion tax fraud case, served eleven months in prison. A similar phenomenon occurred with Agus Condro Prayitno, who lost credibility after uncovering a bribery network within the legislature. Susno Duadji faced criminal charges after exposing illegal practices within the police force, while Khaerudin experienced a physical attack on his residence after reporting irregularities in government project budgets. These patterns of cases indicate a systemic failure where individuals who demonstrate moral courage become victims of the very system that should provide protection.

However, on the other hand, their existence as parties who reveal criminal acts, or whistleblowers, carries quite serious risks for themselves, such as threats that endanger them, pressure, terror, being fired or expelled from the agency where they work, revenge, and various other risks. Such circumstances certainly raise awareness that the role and existence of whistleblowers is important to protect. Protection of the existence of whistleblowers is also strengthened by the results of a survey conducted by the Institute of Business Ethics, which concluded that one in four employees are aware of violations, but more than half (52%) of them know the violations occurred but remain silent and do nothing (National Committee on Governance Policy, 2008). Then in practice, most witnesses and victims are very vulnerable to various forms of terror and intimidation from irresponsible individuals. Legal protection can be defined as a step to fulfill human rights (HAM) as a result of detrimental actions committed by others. Related to the provision of this protection, the aim is for society to be able to enjoy all the rights guaranteed by law. In other terms, legal protection is defined as legal efforts aimed at providing physical and psychological security guarantees from potential threats from related parties that may arise (Asliani & Ismail Koto, 2022).

In protecting whistleblowers, the Indonesian legal system has accommodated various provisions governing the protection of whistleblowers. These provisions are spread across various legal instruments with varying formulations, some explicitly stated and others implicitly regulated in specific articles. The legal basis for whistleblower protection in Indonesia can be found in a number of complementary laws and regulations. Starting from Law Number 28 of 1999 concerning the Implementation of a Clean and Corruption-Free State, which regulates this in Article 9. Then strengthened by Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption, specifically in Article 31 and Article 41 paragraph (2) letter e, which provides special protection for whistleblowers (Arjuno, 2017).

The financial sector also received special attention through Law Number 15 of 2002 in conjunction with Law Number 8 of 2010 concerning the Prevention and Eradication of Money Laundering Crimes, which specifically regulates the protection of whistleblowers in Articles 83-87. In the employment sector, this protection is regulated in Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Employment through Article 153 paragraph (1) letter i and Article 158 paragraph (1) letter i. Indonesia's commitment to whistleblower protection is also reflected in the ratification of international conventions through Law Number 7 of 2006 concerning the Ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which in Section 33 regulates protection for whistleblowers. This was then strengthened by Law Number 13 of 2006 concerning the Protection of Witnesses and Victims, which specifically regulates protection in Articles 5 and 10.

The government has released a number of implementing regulations to guarantee successful implementation. The process of community engagement under Article 6 is governed by Government Regulation Number 71 of 2000, Governing Procedures for Implementing Community Engagement and Awarding in the Prevention and Eradication of Corruption Crimes. In the meantime, the Procedures for Special Protection for Reporters and Witnesses in Money Laundering Crimes are technically governed by Government Regulation Number 57 of 2003. Regulation of the Chief of Police Number 17 of 2005, which governs special protection procedures for reporters and witnesses in money laundering cases, was also issued by the

Indonesian National Police at the operational level. It offers law enforcement officers helpful advice on how to provide protection.

An in-depth evaluation of the LPSK Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) relating to witness and victim protection, Joint Regulations between the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, the Attorney General's Office, the National Police, the Corruption Eradication Commission, and the LPSK in 2011 regarding Whistleblowers, Reporting Witnesses, and Cooperative Perpetrator Witnesses, along with the Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of Witness or Reporting Protection in the KPK-LPSK Cooperation in 2011, gave rise to a number of critical findings as follows (Guidelines for the Whistleblowing System and Justice Collaborator Transparency International Indonesia, 2017):

a. Absence of Conflict of Interest Management Regulations: There are no regulations governing potential conflicts of interest at each stage of protecting whistleblowers, witnesses, and victims. This situation is problematic given that there are situations where applicants for protection are victims of human rights violations allegedly involving the police. Meanwhile, the LPSK (Lembaga Witness and Victim Protection Agency) has established operational partnerships with the police to secure witnesses and victims, both at the central and regional levels. This situation has the potential to create significant conflicts of interest.
b. Weaknesses in Data and Information Security System Regulations Although the confidentiality aspect in the handling and management of data/information has been emphasized as a crucial element in all stages of protection, the operational mechanisms of the data/information security system have not been comprehensively explained. Although briefly touched upon in the Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of Witness or Informant Protection for the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK-LPSK), it is still unclear whether this is the case.
c. Absence of Post-Protection Regulations: In general, the period of corruption disclosure and the law enforcement handling procedure is when threats and attacks against witnesses and whistleblowers are most intense. The frequency of threats and attacks tends to decline after this stage. However, because whistleblowers and witnesses may face recurrent threats and attacks, legislation for the post-protection phase still needs to be developed.
d. Weaknesses of the Regulations and Authority for Economic Protection: The regulations and authority to manage economic safeguards, like job transfers, demotions, and dismissals, are limited. This is counter to the LPSK's obligation to offer protection in these circumstances.
e. Regulations for preventive protection management are not in place. There are no rules governing the management of preventative protection, including how to become risk-aware and create defenses against possible threats or attacks.
f. Absence of Integrated Database Regulations There are no regulations regarding the formation of a joint database for handling reporters, reporting witnesses, and cooperative perpetrator witnesses among law enforcement agencies and LPSK.

A more extensive reward and protection system for whistleblowers is required to supplement the several types of protection already outlined in current laws and regulations. To protect the safety and well-being of whistleblowers, this protection can be implemented in a number of ways that are mutually beneficial (Ahmad, 2025). Preserving the privacy of the whistleblower's identity and the reports they file is the most essential component of protection. By giving the reporter a new identity, protection can be increased in some high-risk situations.

Furthermore, in order to shield whistleblowers from potential physical threats resulting from their revelations, it is imperative that a safe house be provided.

The process of disclosing facts often causes severe psychological stress for whistleblowers (Sari, 2023). Therefore, professional psychological services or support are needed to help them overcome the trauma and stress they experience. Guaranteeing secure communication access is also crucial to ensuring whistleblowers can stay connected with necessary parties without compromising their safety. During the protection period, the whistleblower's living expenses must be covered to prevent them from experiencing financial hardship as a result of their courageous decision. For whistleblowers previously involved in violations, a reduced sentence can be an incentive that encourages more people to report crimes they know about. In the workplace, whistleblowers must be protected from unfair dismissal, arbitrary demotion, and various forms of harassment or discrimination. Protection must also include freedom from criminalization attempts that may be carried out by parties harmed by the disclosure (Mukhlish, 2023).

Whistleblowers' future jobs must not be impacted by negative entries in their personal files. One important factor that needs to be taken into account is protection from reprisal, both for the whistleblowers and their families. It is also important to foresee and avoid threats of termination or other forms of repression against the whistleblower's relatives. It is hoped that more people will come forward as whistleblowers now that this extensive protection framework is in place. The potential whistleblower's sense of security plays a major role in their courage to expose suspected infractions or crimes, especially in cases of corruption. In attempts to identify, stop, and end corrupt activities in Indonesia, the involvement of different whistleblowers in corruption cases is crucial and strategically important.

There are numerous chances for the anti-corruption system to undergo fundamental change as a result of the continuing digital transformation (Aprilla, 2024). However, this shift necessitates more thorough and in-depth action rather than merely adopting new technology. Cybersecurity threats are a new problem that comes with digitization and cannot be disregarded. Public information systems are vulnerable to digital attacks from a variety of groups with particular goals since they store sensitive data and are essential to the policy-making process. Improper handling of cyberattacks might create additional opportunities for corrupt activities, like deleting traces of unlawful transactions or manipulating budget data. The creation of a strong and dependable digital security system must go hand in hand with the deployment of technology in order to overcome these obstacles. To further guarantee the integrity of the system and stored data, independent audits must be conducted on a regular basis. In order to promote anti-corruption initiatives, a digital ecosystem that is reliable and efficient will be created by combining cutting-edge technology, strong security measures, and efficient oversight procedures (Hasan, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the digital transformation of whistleblower legal protection in Indonesia's fight against corruption, it can be concluded that the digital era has created a new paradigm in reporting and whistleblower protection systems. Although digital technology offers innovative solutions through platforms such as the JAGA and GOL applications developed by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), as well as the potential use of blockchain and artificial intelligence to improve the security and effectiveness of reporting, its implementation still faces significant challenges. The paradox of digital technology, which on the one hand facilitates new modes of corruption while on the other hand provides more sophisticated detection and prevention instruments, demands a more strategic and comprehensive approach in its utilization. The legal framework for whistleblower protection in Indonesia, which is spread across various legal instruments, demonstrates strong political will but still suffers from fundamental weaknesses in facing the challenges of the digital era. A gap analysis of existing regulations identified the absence of conflict of interest provisions, weaknesses in data security systems, the absence of post-protection phase regulations, limited protection of economic aspects, and the absence of preventive protection management and an integrated database. This situation is exacerbated by empirical cases such as that of Eko Sulistyo, who experienced a massive digital attack, demonstrating that conventional protection systems fail to anticipate cyber threats to whistleblowers in the digital era. The digital transformation of whistleblower protection requires a holistic approach that synergistically integrates technological, legal, and social aspects. Regulatory reformulation is needed to accommodate protection against digital threats, develop robust cybersecurity infrastructure, and establish a comprehensive protection system encompassing physical, psychological, economic, and digital aspects. The success of this transformation depends not only on the adoption of advanced technology but also on institutional commitment to building an anti-corruption culture supported by a fair reward system, effective protection mechanisms, and the active participation of all elements of society in creating a sustainable ecosystem of transparency and accountability.

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