

The Misconception of Digitalization in Local Government: Between Efficiency and Practical Reality

Sultan Kalupe¹, Arifin Tahir¹, Muhammad Amir Arham¹, Yanti Aneta¹

¹State University of Gorontalo

Email: sultankalupe@gmail.com

Abstract

Digital transformation in the local government sector is frequently associated with improvements in efficiency, transparency, and accountability. However, this study reveals that digitalization does not automatically lead to enhanced bureaucratic performance. The purpose of this research is to evaluate common misconceptions in the implementation of digitalization policies, particularly in the procurement of goods and services in Gorontalo Province. Employing a qualitative approach and in-depth analysis across four key dimensions, human resources, organizational structure, technology, and processes, this study finds that the use of the e-Procurement system has introduced new challenges, including limited staff competencies, dysfunctional coordination, and underdeveloped ethical practices. The findings highlight a significant gap between the normative expectations of digitalization and its practical implementation. The study recommends the adoption of a systemic approach that takes into account the social, structural, and cultural aspects of organizations before initiating digital transformation.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Local Government, Efficiency, E-Procurement, Gorontalo, Misconception

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Introduction

Digital transformation has become a central issue in bureaucratic reform across various countries, including Indonesia. The government promotes digitalization as a solution to improve the efficiency, accountability, and transparency of public services (Aprilina et al., 2025; Saldanha et al., 2022; Agostino et al., 2022). The utilization of information technology in government administration is regarded as essential in addressing the growing complexity of public administration and meeting society's expectations for fast, affordable, and accessible services.

One of the major initiatives in this context is the implementation of a digital procurement system (e-Procurement), which aims to reduce bureaucracy, close corruption loopholes, and broaden participation among vendors, including local MSMEs (Muladi, 2023). However, as implementation progresses, fundamental issues have emerged that indicate a growing misconception about the meaning of digitalization. In many cases, local governments assume that adopting digital technology will automatically lead to efficiency and effectiveness.

In reality, digital transformation is not merely about tools and applications; it also demands organizational readiness, competent human resources (HR), and adaptive work processes (Trenerry et al., 2021; Trushkina et al., 2020). A lack of readiness in these areas can result in administrative dysfunction, internal resistance, and even program failure. Research from various regions shows that e-Procurement systems have not been fully effective. In several

institutions, procurement processes have become slower due to poor staff comprehension, inadequate digital infrastructure, and weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Moreover, digital transformation is often imposed without first assessing organizational readiness (Silva et al., 2022; Isaev et al., 2018; Fathian et al., 2008). As a result, technologies that are intended to improve efficiency have instead become burdens that hinder civil servants' performance and increase dependency on external vendors. These findings suggest that digital transformation is not a magical solution, but rather a complex process requiring systemic readiness, cross-sector coordination, and cultural change within bureaucracy (Chandratreya, 2025).

This misconception is evident not only at the national level but is even more pronounced at the local level. According to Zhang & Zhou (2022), Many provincial and district governments implement digitalization policies in response to national regulations or global trends, rather than based on genuine local needs. This creates a gap between policy design and actual practice. The case of Gorontalo, for instance, illustrates that despite the implementation of various digital platforms for procurement, the execution remains plagued by delays, political interference, a lack of certified personnel, and indications of conflicts of interest between vendors and procurement officials.

These issues highlight that non-technological-factors play a critical role in determining the success of digitalization. According to the socio-technical systems theory, digital transformation involves not only technological and process changes, but also social aspects such as organizational structure, work culture, and communication patterns (Zhang et al., 2023; Sony & Naik, 2020). In the context of local government, the success of digitalization is largely determined by how well the organizational structure adapts, the extent of digital competence among personnel, and the existence of governance mechanisms that foster collaboration and accountability.

Without these elements, technology becomes nothing more than an empty symbol of modernization. Furthermore, the notion that technology alone can determine organizational performance is a form of dangerous reductionism. The assumption that technology can compensate for structural weaknesses in bureaucracy shuts down critical reflection on deeper managerial issues, such as regulatory overlap, weak ethical culture, and rigid hierarchies (Attwood-Charles, 2018). Instead of fixing the system, digital transformation that lacks structural reform may end up reinforcing the status quo through seemingly modern but fundamentally fragile mechanisms.

One clear indicator of digitalization failure is the consistently low procurement governance index in many regions. According to data from the National Public Procurement Agency (LKPP), many local governments still score poorly in terms of transparency, procurement staff competency, and system integration. Findings from the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK, 2024) also show that manipulation, collusion, and abuse of power persist despite the use of digital systems in procurement. These realities confirm that without adequate integrity and oversight, technology alone cannot eliminate opportunities for misconduct.

These phenomena reinforce the urgency to reorient how digital transformation is understood not merely as a technology project, but as a systemic change process that affects all organizational elements. Local governments must recognize that the key to successful digitalization lies not in how sophisticated the application is, but in how deeply the organization can transform itself in structure, process, and culture. For instance, although Gorontalo

Province has implemented an e-Catalog and a local marketplace system (Potali), it still faces serious challenges in system integration, staff competencies, and political interference in vendor selection.

This reflects the persistent gap between digital system design and real-world implementation within local bureaucracy. This study is therefore essential in providing a more critical perspective on the reality of digital transformation at the local level, particularly in the area of public procurement. Previous research has mostly focused on the success of technology adoption or user satisfaction metrics, but has yet to thoroughly examine the conceptual and implementation failures that lie at the root of digitalization's unfulfilled goals. Through a multidimensional approach that includes human resources, organizational structure, technology, and processes, this study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically toward crafting a more realistic and sustainable digital transformation strategy for local governments.

By using the real-world case of Gorontalo Province, this article seeks to demonstrate that digital transformation is not simply a technical upgrade, but rather a complex political, social, and organizational process. Misconceptions about digitalization can trap local governments in expensive technology projects that yield little benefit. Therefore, a more critical, contextual, and participatory approach is needed in designing and implementing digitalization policies at the local level. This awareness is essential to ensure that digital transformation truly leads to more effective, efficient, and accountable public governance.

Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics surrounding the implementation of digital transformation in the procurement of goods and services within the Government of Gorontalo Province. The case study design was used to contextually illustrate the phenomenon of "digitalization misconception" occurring in local bureaucracy, particularly in the application of e-Procurement systems, e-Catalog platforms, and the locally developed marketplace known as *Potali*. This approach enables the researcher to explore various social, structural, and technical aspects that contribute to the gap between the expected efficiency and the practical reality on the ground. The research was conducted at the Bureau of Procurement of Goods and Services (PBJ) under the Regional Secretariat of Gorontalo Province, which serves as the main institution responsible for implementing digital procurement policies. This location was selected based on the consideration that Gorontalo is among the more active provinces in adopting digital procurement initiatives, yet it still faces considerable challenges in implementation. Data collection was carried out using a triangulation method, combining in-depth interviews, limited observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including structural and functional officials at the PBJ, technical civil servants involved in procurement, and local MSME actors participating in the *Potali* digital system. Observations were conducted at several stages of the digital procurement process, including inputting the General Procurement Plan (RUP), selecting providers, and reporting. Document analysis involved reviewing relevant regulations, procurement reports, BPK audit findings, and procurement transaction data from 2021 to 2024. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as direct involvement in the digital procurement process and at least two years of relevant experience. To expand the range of information, snowball sampling was also employed by asking initial informants to recommend other relevant sources.

This method allowed for the collection of rich and diverse data from procurement managers, service providers, and policymakers.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman, involving three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, field data were selected and organized based on main themes such as human resources, organizational structure, technology, and processes. Data display was presented in the form of thematic narratives and relational matrices between key elements. The final stage, drawing conclusions, was conducted iteratively to ensure the validity of findings and the identification of patterns among variables contributing to misconceptions in digital transformation implementation. To ensure data validity, the study applied four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was maintained through triangulation of methods and sources, as well as member checks with informants. Transferability was achieved by thoroughly describing the research context and setting, allowing findings to be considered for application in other similar settings. Dependability was ensured by systematic documentation of research processes, and confirmability was attained through transparent data auditing and analysis trails. This study is limited in scope to the local context of Gorontalo Province and is not intended for generalization to other regions. Moreover, due to the sensitivity of the topic related to procurement, not all data or information can be disclosed explicitly. Nonetheless, maximum efforts were made to maintain objectivity and analytical depth based on the available data. With this design, the study aims to contribute to the critical discourse on digitalization policy in the public sector, particularly regarding implementation aspects that are often misunderstood.

Results and Discussion

Human Resource (HR) Transformation

Digital transformation in public procurement requires not only the adoption of advanced technology but also the preparedness of human resources as the primary actors responsible for operating such systems. In the context of the Government of Gorontalo Province, the study reveals that HR is one of the most significant weak points in the digital transformation process. Despite the implementation of e-Procurement systems, e-Catalogs, and the local marketplace platform *Potali*, many government personnel still lack a comprehensive understanding of the digital procurement process. This lack of readiness reflects a gap between individual capacity and the complexity of the digital systems being used. One of the main findings shows that within the Bureau of Procurement of Goods and Services (PBJ) in Gorontalo Province, the number of certified procurement professionals remains inadequate.

Internal data indicate a significant shortage of functional officials holding relevant certifications, especially at the levels of Ahli Madya (Senior Expert) and Ahli Pertama (Junior Expert). As of 2024, only a small proportion of employees held active procurement certifications aligned with the current systems in use. As a result, essential procurement tasks such as vendor selection, qualification assessments, and document input into the e-Procurement system are often completed hastily, inconsistently, or even delegated to unofficial third parties. This situation poses serious consequences for the effectiveness and accountability of the procurement process. Limited HR capacity translates to poor understanding of key features in digital systems such as the e-Catalog, SIRUP (General Procurement Planning Information System), and LPSE (Electronic Procurement Services). Several staff members admitted that uploading documents and publishing procurement packages frequently result in technical errors, either due to lack of knowledge or inadequate training. When system updates or changes

occur, procurement operators are generally unprepared due to the absence of ongoing training and limited dissemination.

In-depth interviews with procurement staff revealed that they had never received formal training on digital transformation. Most training consisted of one-time technical briefings without continuous support or mentorship. Consequently, when the e-Procurement system experiences glitches or upgrades, users face difficulties adjusting, thereby slowing down the process and increasing reliance on external vendors. This directly contradicts the intended benefit of digital systems, which should streamline rather than complicate service delivery. Who argue that the success of digitalization depends heavily on the readiness and competence of HR as frontline implementers. When civil servants lack a clear understanding of the system's philosophy, logic, and operations, procurement processes inevitably revert to traditional patterns, even if wrapped in digital interfaces. In other words, only the tools change, while old practices such as data manipulation and personal intervention in vendor selection persist. This creates a dangerous misconception that digital transformation has been achieved merely because electronic systems are in use. According to Fenech et al. (2019), true digital transformation requires simultaneous change across technology, processes, structure, and HR. If one of these components especially HR is left behind, the transformation remains superficial and ineffective.

Another observed phenomenon is resistance to digital systems within bureaucratic work culture. Senior civil servants often show reluctance to learn new systems and instead delegate technical responsibilities to junior staff or even outsourced personnel. This leads to unhealthy delegation and increases the risk of errors or data breaches. The prevailing hierarchical culture in government agencies further delays the adoption of technology, as decision-making is highly centralized while technical operators lack sufficient authority to initiate innovations or accelerate workflows. Some officers are responsible for managing dozens or even hundreds of procurement packages in a single fiscal year without adequate staffing support. In such conditions, the implementation of digital systems becomes an added burden, requiring accuracy, consistency, and a deep understanding. When workloads are excessive, digital procurement processes are more likely to be rushed or poorly executed, undermining the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Additionally, a reward and punishment system for digital procurement performance is virtually non-existent. Employees who perform well in managing digital systems receive no formal recognition or incentives, while those who perform poorly face no meaningful consequences. This lack of performance-based motivation reduces staff interest in embracing digital transformation. Many civil servants view digitalization as an additional burden rather than an opportunity to improve capacity and work efficiency. From a regulatory standpoint, although the legal framework for digital procurement exists such as Presidential Regulation No. 12 of 2021 and No. 17 of 2023, there is still no operational mechanism specifically designed to improve HR capacity in local procurement units. Local governments lack an integrated roadmap for HR development aligned with the digital systems they adopt. As a result, capacity-building efforts are reactive and sporadic, rather than being part of a structured long-term strategy.

This issue is reflected in Gorontalo Province's 2024 Procurement Governance Index (ITKP), which scored only 69.96 classified as "adequate." One of the main evaluation components of the ITKP is the qualification and competency of procurement personnel. The low score confirms that digitalization efforts are not being matched by sufficient HR capacity building.

If not addressed promptly, Gorontalo will continue to lag in maximizing the benefits of digital procurement systems. To address this issue, comprehensive policy interventions are required. First, a master plan for the development of procurement HR capacity must be formulated and integrated with the regional digital transformation roadmap. Second, procurement training and certification must be made mandatory and continuous not merely a bureaucratic formality. Third, an adaptive organizational culture must be fostered through transformational and participatory leadership. Fourth, a reward system should be established to recognize employees who demonstrate high performance in managing digital procurement, providing incentives to encourage further competence. In conclusion, digital transformation in public procurement cannot be effective without adequate HR preparedness and capability. The findings from Gorontalo Province indicate that the lack of qualified personnel, limited training, excessive workloads, and entrenched bureaucratic culture are major barriers. Therefore, building HR capacity is not merely a complementary activity it is the foundational pillar of successful and meaningful digital transformation.

Organizational Structure Transformation

Digital transformation in the public sector cannot be effective without corresponding changes in the organizational structure that manages technology-based services. A rigid, hierarchical, and non-adaptive structure remains one of the main obstacles in implementing digital policies, including in the context of public procurement. In the case of Gorontalo Province, research findings show that the bureaucratic structure, particularly within the Bureau of Procurement of Goods and Services (PBJ), continues to follow outdated patterns characterized by vertical command lines, centralized authority, and limited decision-making flexibility. One of the primary issues identified is the weak integration between departments within the PBJ bureau and between the bureau and other regional government agencies (OPDs). The procurement process, which should ideally run synergistically through electronic systems, is often hampered by convoluted internal bureaucracy. For example, the approval of the General Procurement Plan (RUP), which should be quick and digital, still requires manual authorization from superiors or OPD heads.

Digital transformation, however, demands horizontal, collaborative coordination that is based on real-time data. Moreover, structural dynamics within the PBJ environment reveal a disconnect between job responsibilities and official positions. Technical staff at the lower levels often bear excessive workloads, particularly in managing data input into the e-Catalog and SIRUP systems, yet lack the authority to make decisions or correct errors when they occur. In contrast, mid- and high-level officials, who are supposed to make strategic decisions, often do not understand the technical aspects of the system and instead make decisions based on non-technical considerations. This condition supports the findings of Prasodjo (2025), who stated that organizational structures in government bureaucracies often hinder digitalization because they are misaligned with the needs of digital systems that require speed, efficiency, and transparency. In Gorontalo, the PBJ bureau's structure has not undergone any comprehensive restructuring since the adoption of e-Procurement systems. There has been no reassessment of roles and functions to align them with the logic of digital systems. As a result, overlapping responsibilities and unbalanced workloads are frequently observed.

Another significant finding is that regulatory changes are occurring rapidly, yet the organizational structure has not adapted accordingly. Since the issuance of Presidential Regulations No. 12 of 2021 and No. 17 of 2023, which strengthen the use of e-Procurement and e-Catalog systems, local governments should have restructured their PBJ units to better

support these policies. However, at the time of this study, the PBJ bureau in Gorontalo had not made any substantial structural adjustments. This has resulted in functional stagnation, with new tasks forced onto outdated units without the necessary resources or workload adjustments. Furthermore, there is a tendency for centralized authority in procurement decision-making. Although e-Procurement systems are designed to support open and decentralized tender processes, final decisions regarding vendor selection are still heavily influenced by top-level officials. Interviews revealed that for large procurement packages, decisions were often based not on system evaluations but on directives from superiors. This suggests that while formal structures may reflect digital reforms, informal power structures continue to dominate key decisions.

The lack of adaptive organizational structure also hampers local innovation. The “Potali” program, for instance, is conceptually a breakthrough initiative that involves local MSMEs in digital procurement. However, it has not been formally integrated into the organizational framework. It is still managed by an ad hoc team with no permanent unit or subdivision within the PBJ bureau. As a result, the coordination, oversight, and sustainability of the program rely heavily on current leadership rather than on a strong institutional foundation. When leadership changes, the program risks being discontinued or losing its direction. On the other hand, internal monitoring of procurement performance has not been carried out effectively. The current structure lacks an independent oversight unit capable of conducting internal audits of digital procurement. Meanwhile, the regional inspectorate, which should provide oversight, often lacks the technical expertise needed to understand digital procurement systems, resulting in superficial, administrative evaluations. This opens the door to potential misconduct and weakens control over system implementation. Audit findings from the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK) over the past three years also support the conclusion that structural issues play a major role in the failure of digital transformation.

Repeated tender disputes, delays, and complaints from vendors to legal authorities indicate that the current organizational structure does not support a fast, fair, and transparent procurement process. From a systemic perspective, digital transformation is not merely about tools; it also requires profound changes in workflows, reporting lines, and internal accountability mechanisms. Given the complexity of these challenges, organizational restructuring is urgently needed. First, a comprehensive mapping of roles, functions, and workloads within the PBJ unit should be conducted based on actual transaction data, not outdated formal structures. Second, a dedicated unit for digital development and innovation should be established within the PBJ bureau to oversee system adaptation, training, and internal monitoring. Third, procurement performance reporting and evaluation systems must be digitized and made transparent, moving beyond traditional narrative-based reporting. In addition, a shift in decision-making paradigms is necessary. Bureaucratic leadership must adopt principles of healthy delegation, allowing technically competent personnel to make decisions appropriate to their roles, rather than relying on political proximity or informal influence. If digital transformation is managed using the same closed, centralized logic of traditional bureaucratic structures, the results will not differ from conventional approaches. As Imran et al. (2021) stated, digital transformation requires agile organizations not merely ones that comply with procedures.

Technological Transformation

Technology is a fundamental component of digital transformation. However, in local government bureaucracies, technology is often perceived merely as a technical tool, without being integrated into a broader institutional strategy. This is clearly evident in the digital

transformation of procurement in Gorontalo Province, where digital platforms such as e-Procurement, e-Catalog, and the local platform Potali have been introduced, but without comprehensive optimization and integration. As a result, systems that should accelerate procurement processes instead become sources of delays and confusion for implementers. Research findings indicate that the technologies used in public procurement are not yet fully integrated across platforms. The planning input process (via SIRUP), provider selection (via e-Procurement and e-Catalog), and payment (via SIPD or local financial systems) often operate in isolation and lack synchronization. This leads to procurement delays because field operators must re-enter data across different systems with no automatic interoperability. In several instances, discrepancies between systems cause administrative errors that risk legal accountability.

In addition to integration issues, limited digital infrastructure is another significant barrier. In some agencies and district/city areas within Gorontalo Province, internet access remains unstable. Digital procurement systems that rely entirely on online access become ineffective in such environments. Procurement staff report frequent disruptions, slow uploads, or even complete failures when entering data or uploading documents. This significantly affects the timeliness and accuracy of procurement implementation, especially for strategic procurements with tight deadlines. Another critical issue is dependency on external vendors. Some procurement systems, such as Potali, were developed by third parties without complete technical documentation. When system errors or version updates occur, internal staff are unable to resolve them independently. This creates long-term dependency and incurs additional costs. Furthermore, unclear access rights and data ownership pose serious concerns, particularly when procurement transaction data is stored by third parties without full control by local government authorities.

Technological transformation in a bureaucratic context should aim to create systems that are not only user-friendly but also secure, interoperable, and scalable. However, in the case of Gorontalo, the systems in use tend to be fragmented, lack robust analytical dashboards, and fail to support data-driven decision-making. Many staff members still print procurement documents for physical signatures, indicating that digital systems have yet to fully replace manual processes. Moreover, the technology used does not fully embrace the principle of inclusivity. Local MSMEs the target beneficiaries of the Potali program often struggle to use the platform. Many lack sufficient digital literacy or compatible devices. The local government has not provided technical training, online support, or shared infrastructure to enable MSMEs to participate actively in the digital procurement ecosystem. As a result, large suppliers continue to dominate the e-Catalog system, while local MSME participation remains low.

These findings align with the view of Peppard & Ward (2004), who argue that digital transformation is not merely about using technology but about strategically integrating information systems with organizational goals. When technology is treated as a formality or a symbol of modernization, the result is simply "digitizing the existing bureaucracy" without achieving real transformation. In the context of public procurement, digitalization should reinforce value-for-money principles, transparency, and budget efficiency. But when systems are disconnected, slow, and non-adaptive, those potentials are lost. Data security is also a serious concern in technological transformation. To date, no regional regulation specifically governs the protection of procurement transaction data. The e-Catalog system and local marketplaces lack advanced security features such as data encryption, user activity logs, or two-factor authentication. This increases the risk of sensitive information leaks or data

manipulation by irresponsible individuals. In interviews, some system operators admitted that login credentials are often shared among staff due to the lack of individual accounts—clearly violating cybersecurity principles.

In addition, the use of big data and predictive analytics remains minimal. Digital procurement systems should ideally generate automatic analytical reports on procurement trends, budget effectiveness, or risk patterns. Currently, only basic descriptive data summaries are available. PBJ bureau leaders do not have access to real-time, visualized dashboards that could help identify risks early. As a result, decision-making remains manual and subjective rather than data-driven. Another problem is the absence of a digital audit trail that records every user activity in the procurement system. For strategic procurement cases, it is crucial to track who modified a document, when the change occurred, and how it impacted the process. Without this digital footprint, it becomes difficult to trace irregularities or resolve disputes transparently. This underscores the fact that technological transformation must go beyond interface upgrades and include mechanisms for control and digital accountability.

To address these challenges, the Gorontalo Provincial Government needs to develop a more systemic technological transformation strategy. First, integrating systems such as SIRUP, e-Catalog, SIPD, and the local platform *Potali* must be prioritized. A connected system will reduce data duplication, lighten staff workload, and accelerate decision-making. Second, the development of network infrastructure and local data centers must be expedited, especially in regions with limited connectivity. Third, the development of digital procurement systems should be carried out in-house or at least under strict supervision by the local government to ensure full control over the system and data remains in public hands. Fourth, digital literacy improvement should not only target civil servants but also include local vendors, especially MSMEs. With proper training and technical assistance, their participation in the e-Procurement system can increase, making local product inclusion more achievable.

Fifth, open data principles and cybersecurity must become local government commitments. Every system used should comply with digital security standards and offer transparency features that allow the public to access procurement information in real-time. Sixth, developing digital dashboards for regional leaders should be prioritized to enable fast, accurate, and measurable data-based policymaking. In conclusion, technological transformation in Gorontalo's public procurement system has yet to reach an optimal level. Existing digital systems remain fragmented, unintegrated, unresponsive to user needs, and lack adequate security and transparency. Therefore, improving technology is not merely about procuring new applications but transforming the entire digital ecosystem to support more open, efficient, and participatory public procurement.

Conclusion

Digitalization in government procurement is often narrowly interpreted as the mere adoption of technology. In the context of the Gorontalo Provincial Government, this study reveals that the digital transformation implemented through e-Procurement, e-Catalog, and local platforms such as *Potali* has not yet resulted in the efficiency and transparency promised by national regulations. On the contrary, various implementation distortions have emerged, reflecting a fundamental misconception of what digitalization entails. From the human resources perspective, it was found that the competence of civil servants in operating digital procurement systems remains low. Uneven certification, limited technical training, and heavy workloads are the primary factors hindering effective system implementation. Procurement staff tend to carry out digital procedures as administrative routines, without a deep understanding of the system's

principles and objectives. This affects the quality of implementation, resulting in inefficiencies, delays, and a high potential for input errors.

Organizational structure has also proven to be an obstacle in the digital transformation process. The current bureaucratic structure remains hierarchical, with overlapping functions and centralized decision-making, hindering the flexibility required by digital systems that depend on fast and horizontal coordination. The absence of dedicated digital innovation units and weak internal oversight has rendered the organization unresponsive to technological challenges and evolving work processes. From a technological standpoint, the digital systems applied in Gorontalo remain partial and lack integration. The absence of interoperability among SIRUP, e-Procurement, SIPD, and *Potali* systems results in repetitive data entry, inconsistent records, and potential confusion among users. Network infrastructure is still unevenly distributed, and dependency on external vendors limits the government's ability to manage systems independently. Furthermore, the lack of robust digital security systems increases the risk of data breaches and information manipulation. Meanwhile, the procurement business process has not undergone substantial reform despite the use of digital platforms. The workflow remains rooted in traditional practices, with manual administration still dominating and decision-making not fully supported by digital systems. Resistance to change, low digital literacy, and the persistence of informal practices have reduced digitalization to a superficial change that merely masks outdated systems. Overall, this study concludes that the digital transformation occurring within the Gorontalo Provincial Government has not yet addressed the core aspects of procurement governance. Digitalization has been applied only at the surface level, without systemic reform in human resources, structure, technology, or processes. This underscores that the anticipated efficiencies of digital projects will not be realized if transformation is carried out in a fragmented, partial, and unsystematic manner.

Suggestion

Based on the findings above, the following recommendations are proposed: (1) Strengthen the capacity of procurement personnel (PBJ) on a continuous basis, through technical training, recertification, and incentives for civil servants who are adaptable to digital systems. Forming a technical implementation team with functional authority is also essential to accelerate procurement processes; (2) Restructure the PBJ organization, by establishing a dedicated digital innovation unit and simplifying decision-making procedures to align with the speed and responsiveness of digital systems. Transparency and accountability should be reinforced through internal digital audits; (3) Integrate digital systems comprehensively, covering planning, procurement, and payment phases. Local governments must develop a roadmap for interoperability and retain full control over procurement systems and data; (4) Enhance digital literacy among vendors and the public, particularly local MSMEs, through training, outreach, and community-based mentoring, to increase their participation in the e-Procurement system; (5) Implement robust data security and digital transparency principles, by deploying authentication systems, audit trails, performance dashboards, and real-time public access to procurement data as a form of institutional accountability. Digital transformation in government procurement can only succeed if it is carried out comprehensively and systematically. Without this, digitalization risks becoming an expensive and burdensome technology project, rather than a solution for bureaucratic efficiency.

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