Jurnal Hukum Prasada
Volume 13, Number 1, 2026, pp 1-8
ISSN (print) 2337-795X; ISSN (online) 2548-4524
https://doi.org/10.22225/jhp.13.1.2026.1-8

OPEN ACCESS
Original Research Article

Article received: October 30, 2025 Reviwed: March 27, 2026 Accepted: March 30, 2026

Ius Constituendum of Regulating Trading in Influence as a Form of Corruption Offense in Indonesia

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Abstract. Corruption offense is an extraordinary crime that requires special handling. The modus operandi of corruption offenses always vary, and even several other forms of corruption offenses have been regulated under UNCAC, one of which is Trading in Influence. Nevertheless, Indonesia has not yet adopted Trading in Influence as a corruption offense in its positive law. This study is a legal research type that uses statutory, conceptual, and comparative approaches. The legal sources employed include primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials, which were inventoried and then analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method. The study aims to determine the urgency of regulating trading in influence in Indonesia and to compare the regulation of trading in influence among Indonesia, France, and Spain. The results show that, in its characteristics, trading in Influence meets the elements of a corruption offense because it involves the use of influence by an individual or a corporation toward a state administrator to obtain a benefit. The absence of explicit rules on trading in influence in the Indonesian Law on the Prevention of Corruption (UU PTPK) creates a legal gap that is exploited by corrupt actors. Indonesia has not adopted trading in influence in its positive law. Unlike countries such as France and Spain, which have clearly regulated this offense in their Penal Codes by distinguishing between active and passive actors, Indonesia needs to promptly regulate the trade of influence (Trading in Influence) as a corruption offense to close the legal gap and strengthen anti-corruption efforts.

Keywords: corruption offense; corruption; trade in influence

Introduction

Corruption offenses are a type of extraordinary crime that pose acute, systemic problems, threatening the livelihoods of many people and harming the state. The perpetrators of corruption offenses and their modus operandi change rapidly, while the pace of statutory change often lags several steps behind the crime (Purwanto & Adillah, 2021). This gap has become an opportunity exploited by criminals, whether individuals, groups, or corporate bodies, to act in ways not covered by existing laws. This demonstrates that corruption offenses are not like other conventional crimes. The crime of corruption is also known as white-collar crime because the perpetrators are people of high standing, such as legislators, executives, or other officials (Syauket & Nisa, 2025). Currently, Law Number 20 of 2001, which amends Law Number 31 of 1999 on the Elimination of Corruption, commonly referred to as the Corruption Eradication Act (UU PTPK), already accommodates seven types of corruption offenses, including losses to state finances or the national economy, bribery, embezzlement in office, extortion, deceit, conflicts of interest in procurement, and gratuities (Fadhil et al., 2022). These seven types are conventional corruption offenses that have evolved with various dynamics in the modus operandi of the

perpetrators (Habeahan et al., 2025). As time and technology have progressed, the criminals' methods have developed toward more modern forms, for example, a new type of corruption offense known as the practice of trading in influence (Irza & Jaya, 2020).

Trading in Influence first appeared in Article 18(a) and (b) of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003 (Ferdinand et al., 2021). Broadly, the term trading in influence refers to acts aimed at promising or offering, directly or indirectly, to a state administrator or public official in order to obtain a benefit (Sembiring et al., 2020). This can be interpreted as the act of promising an offer so that a public official abuses their power or authority. Typically, such actions are carried out by individuals who have relationships or access to power. Trading in influence is broader in scope than bribery or gratuities because it involves a broker or influencer who holds status as a public official, a political party, or other parties close to policymakers, enabling them to influence policy directions as ordered by the influencer (Bulu & Mustajab, 2022). Morally, influence-trading practices are not justifiable because policy decisions are not made in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and tend to benefit the private or affiliated party of the influencer (Effendi et al., 2023). Beyond that, Trading in Influence also impacts economic growth, reduces foreign investment, and harms the Indonesian people broadly (Kolono & Widjajanti, 2024).

Indonesia, as a party to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), has not yet accommodated trading in influence within the UU PTPK. This situation indicates a legal lag in Indonesia's adoption of international provisions, while several UNCAC participant countries have incorporated trading in influence as a type of corruption offense in their laws, such as France and Spain, which share a civil-law system similar to Indonesia. France and Spain have prohibited the practice of trading in influence as part of strengthening the integrity of their legal and governmental systems. Trading in influence is considered to undermine the principles of justice, transparency, and public trust in state institutions. France regulates this within an anti-corruption legal framework that emphasizes accountability of public officials, while Spain adopts it through criminal law reforms focused on preventing the abuse of power. The actions of these two countries demonstrate their commitment to aligning national regulations with UNCAC's international standards, while also reflecting an awareness of the importance of creating governance that is clean and transparent.

Based on the above, this study aims to determine the urgency of regulating trading in influence as a modern form of corruption in Indonesia, and to compare the regulation of trading in influence among Indonesia, France, and Spain.

Method

This type of research is a comparative juridical study that uses three approaches: the statutory approach, the conceptual approach, and the comparative approach. The statutory approach is used to examine the application of norms in Indonesia; the conceptual approach is used to articulate legal concepts based on the doctrines of legal scholars; and the comparative approach serves to provide a comparison of norms applicable in Indonesia and in other countries, especially France and Spain, because both using civil law system like Indonesia and implement trading in influence arrangements within their legal systems (Marzuki, 2005). This study is conducted by collecting legal materials from primary, secondary, and tertiary sources through literature review, which are then analyzed comprehensively using a descriptive-analytical method.

Discussion

The Urgency of Regulating Trading in Influence as a Modern Form of Corruption Offense in Indonesia.

Corruption is a global challenge that continues to persist and affects countries at various stages of development (Jupriyadi & Hasanah, 2023). Legislation has not kept pace with the development of

corruption offenses occurring in Indonesia, as Satjipto Rahardjo noted that law is always lagging behind the evolution of its regulated objects (Rahardjo, 2006). Law should be responsive because its creation is participatory, carrying aspirational substance and detailed material that is limited by the configurations of democratic politics. Recently, corruption offenses have evolved, and there is a normative new modus operandi that has not yet been regulated in the UU PTPK (Rumaday, 2021).

Trading in influence practices frequently occur within the legislative, executive, and judicial environments, sometimes with compensation and sometimes without (Setyawan, 2025). Normatively, UU PTPK cannot adequately prosecute them, thereby undermining the constitutional order, national life, and the state (Viladelfia & Octora, 2021). There are several typical methods used in influence trading, such as a top-down or vertical approach that leverages the influencer's power to pressure as many civil servants as possible to follow their demands; another method involves an influencer acting as an intermediary between private actors and civil servants, organizing everything neatly until the ordered decision is issued (Sulaeman et al., 2023). As described above, such practices are often employed by both civil servants and private parties across various projects to satisfy the interests of both sides. Trading in Influence has criteria that make it a plausible corruption offense. The criteria include: (a) a legal subject—an individual or corporation—that has influence over a public official due to power, money, prominence, or family ties; (b) the use of that influence by the individual or corporation against a public official to act or refrain from acting in a way that abuses authority and contravenes law and regulations; (c) the intent to obtain something or some benefit that is improper from a public official for the benefit of the instigator or another party, reflecting the mens rea or intent element of the offense; (d) it is typically carried out by three parties (a trilateral relationship), where the first party typically acts as the giver of something to obtain a benefit from the state administrator, while the second and third parties are the influencer and the decision-maker.

Trading in Influence has become part of the modus operandi of corruption offenses, accompanied by bribery, so judicial practice has frequently relied on Article 11 of the Corruption Eradication Law (UU PTPK) and provisions on crime accompaniments. This practice is used because rules about bribery are the easiest to apply in court to prove alleged influence trading. However, it should be understood that trading in influence is two different things from bribery, because the briber usually comes from the private sector with a desire for policies or decisions that benefit them, thus providing certain gifts. In contrast, trading in influence does not operate that way; it typically involves at least three parties: the influencer, the owner of the influence, and the state organizer (Omisore, 2013). In this context, the influencer often also serves as a go-between who bridges private interests with public servants, coordinating things neatly until the ordered decision is issued. As described above, such practices are often used by both public officials and private parties across various projects to satisfy the interests of both sides. Trading in influence has criteria that make it plausible as a corruption offense. The criteria include: a) a legal subject—an individual or corporation—that has influence over a state administrator due to power, money, notoriety, or family ties; b) the use of that influence by the individual or corporation to induce a state administrator to act or refrain from acting in a way that abuses authority and contravenes law and regulations; c) the intent to obtain something improper from a public official for the benefit of the instigator or another party, reflecting the mens rea or evil intent; d) it is generally carried out by three parties (a trilateral relationship), with the first party typically acting as the supplier of something to obtain a benefit from the state administrator, while the second and third parties are the influencer and the decision-maker (Mahmud et al., 2024).

Practice of influence trades is not only suspected to be carried out by individuals outside the government or by non-governmental organizations, but also by high-ranking government officials who frequently act against subordinates (Herlina & Handitya, 2023). Structurally, a civil servant will typically follow a supervisor's directions even if they violate the rules, in order to protect their position from being shifted or transferred; thus the subordinate will comply with what the senior official mandates (Kardiat et al., 2025). More broadly, influence trading often occurs as interventions, such as the executive asking

the judiciary to decide a matter in line with the government's wishes, relying on the influence held by the executive leadership (Wibowo & Zulfiani, 2025). Yet under the doctrine of the separation of powers, the judiciary is an independent and autonomous body that should not be manipulated or intervened upon by other branches of power. Therefore, the widespread practices described above compel the state to respond swiftly to prevent broader impacts on governance that could harm the public.

Weaknesses in Indonesia's criminal law on corruption stem from the rapid evolution of corruption modus operandi that metamorphoses to exploit gaps in the UU PTPK (Harahap et al., 2025). On the one hand, law enforcement agencies tend to focus on the legality of norms, rather than pursuing bold legal reforms that try cases of trading in influence with a ratio decidendi grounded in justice (Jupriyadi & Hasanah, 2023). Trading in Influence was first regulated in the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), accommodated in Article 18 of the convention, which states that influence trading constitutes a crime within the corruption offense category. Indonesia, as a country that has ratified the UNCAC, has legal consequences to adopt regulations deemed important into positive law in Indonesia (United Nations, 2004). The emergence of gaps in the UU PTPK due to the non-regulation of influence trading has become a loophole exploited by certain actors to circumvent the law, so this legal vacuum requires serious follow-up.

Introducing and reformulating the offense of influence trading by revising the UU PTPK could be a strategic government breakthrough to reduce corruption in Indonesia, closing every path to corruption. This effort would not only seal the legal gaps exploited by corrupt actors but also demonstrate the state's commitment to creating a clean, transparent, and principled government in line with the spirit of justice and good governance.

A Comparative Regulation of Trading in Influence: Indonesia, France, and Spain

As a participant in UNCAC, Indonesia has ratified the UNCAC through Law Number 7 of 2006 regarding the Ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, 2003 (the UN Convention Against Corruption, 2003). One of the nomenclatures formulated in the convention concerns the application of national law in the form of prohibiting trading in influence. However, to date, Indonesia has not adopted trading in influence as a form of corruption offense despite ratifying the convention.

Trading in Influence is regulated in Article 18 of UNCAC, which states:

"*Each Sstate Party shall consider adopting such legislative and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offences, when committed intentionally:*

1. *The promise, offering or giving to a public official or any other person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage in order that the public official or the person abuse his or her real or supposed influence with a view to obtaining from an administration or public authority of the State Party an undue advantage for the original instigator of the act or for any other person;*
2. *The solicitation or acceptance by a public official or any other person, directly or indirectly, of an undue advantage for himself or herself or for another person in order that the public official or the person abuse his or her real or supposed influence with a view to obtaining from an administration or public authority of the State Party an undue advantage.*"

This article explains that the practice of trading in influence is an act deliberately carried out by public officials and/or non-public officials who actively offer or give, or passively receive, benefits or advantages that are not deserved in order to cause those officials to abuse their influence. At first glance, the definition of trading in influence resembles bribery, but there are distinctions between these two forms of crime.

Bribery, as regulated in Articles 5 and 12 of the Corruption Eradication Law (UU PTPK), essentially occurs when someone gives, promises, or receives something of value with the aim of influencing the actions of a public official or a party to do or not do something related to their authority (Saputra & Mahyani, 2017). Bribery emphasizes a direct exchange between the giver and the recipient with the expectation of a benefit or certain facilities (Lambsdorff & Frank, 2010). By contrast, trading in influence

is more covert because it does not always relate directly to the formal authority of a public official (Dhumillah & Oktavianto, 2025). This practice occurs when someone uses their closeness, network, or influence over authorities to obtain benefits for themselves or others in exchange for something in return. Thus, the focus of influence trading is not on the use of authority per se, but on exploiting relationships or strategic positions to influence the decisions of those in power. The fundamental difference between bribery and trading in influence lies in the object of abuse.

According to explanations from GRECO (Group of States Against Corruption), there is a fundamental distinction between the practice of trading in influence and bribery. Trading in influence does not require the action or inaction of a public official to be present. This practice occurs when someone with influence uses their position to assist a party with an interest by intervening with a public official to obtain a particular action. This aligns with the statement by the Deputy Chair of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Laode M. Syarif, who asserted that trading in influence is not identical to bribery (Kumparan, 2019). A person who trades in influence does not always receive a bribe, whereas a public official who receives something, even if it falls outside their official duties, is still considered bribery. If bribery requires the receipt of something by a public official, trading in influence does not require such a condition. Essentially, trading in influence is a delictum sui generis, a crime in itself with its own distinctive characteristics. Therefore, the existence of a criminal offense of trading in influence remains valid, whether it occurs with bribery or without any bribery at all (Ferdinand et al., 2021).

The existence of differences in characteristics between trading in influence and bribery indicates that trading in influence should be adopted as a distinct offense in the Corruption Eradication Law (UU PTPK), because trading in influence also opens up opportunities for criminals to commit corruption by using or leveraging their influence, which is then traded. The evolution of this crime must be balanced by a revolution in legislation so that every crime that threatens the state can be anticipated and acted upon.

Meanwhile, France is one step ahead of Indonesia in adopting a prohibition on the practice of trading in influence within the Nouveau Code Penal (NCP) or the French Penal Code. The offense of trading in influence is regulated both actively and passively in Articles 435-2 and 435-4 of the French Penal Code. In Roman imperial times, there was a case involving Vitronius, a close associate of Emperor Alexander Severus. He was sentenced to death after it was proven that he actively offered his services to various parties to influence the emperor for a certain reward. This event taught that what Vitronius traded was not something tangible but rather an abstract concept (Julia Philipp, 2009). History later records that the offense of trading in influence began to be accommodated in the French Penal Code when the rule was enacted on July 4, 1889. This regulation emerged as a response to a number of events that made French legal scholars realize that there was still a gap in the legal norms in force at the time.

One case that spurred the birth of the rule involved a member of parliament named Mr. Wilson. In addition to serving as a member of parliament, Wilson was also the son-in-law of President Jules Grévy. By exploiting his proximity, he prominently presented himself as a figure with substantial influence. This drew the attention of a civil servant who then made a pact with Wilson, hoping that Wilson's influence could help him obtain a medal of honor, even though the matter was beyond Wilson's authority as a member of parliament. For his actions, Wilson was charged with bribery. However, he was ultimately acquitted because the elements of the offense of bribery were not met. This case provides concrete evidence of gaps in the French Penal Code at the time, because Wilson's actions could not be fully qualified as bribery.

The fundamental difference between bribery and trading in influence becomes clear from the case quoted. In bribery offenses, the perpetrator is typically a public official or civil servant who receives something in exchange for taking actions that directly relate to their office. In trading in influence, on the other hand, the reward is given to a party who has access to or close contact with a public official, even though the act itself does not directly concern the official's authority. It is this legal gap that ultimately spurred the creation of a new regulation. On July 4, 1889, the French Penal Code (Codigio pénal) formally

regulated trading in influence as a standalone offense. As law evolved, this provision was later clarified in the French Penal Code of 1994.

In the 1994 French Penal Code, trading in influence is divided into two forms (Julia Philipp, 2009). First, active trading in influence, which occurs when someone offers or provides a reward to a party believed to have access to a public official in order to obtain some specific advantage. Second, passive trading in influence, which occurs when the party who has influence over a public official receives a reward or an offer with the aim that the giver of the reward will obtain benefits through the public official whom they influence. Thus, the legal development in France shows how experience from real cases, such as that of Mr. Wilson, can drive the creation of a specialized rule that distinguishes bribery from trading in influence, enabling the legal gaps in the earlier period to be addressed more clearly (Gawi & Imtichani, 2021).

On the other hand, Spain also adopted the practice of trading in influence within its criminal law codification, namely in Articles 428 to 430 of the Spanish Penal Code. However, the difference is that Spain did not actively adopt trading in influence as a form of a criminal offense.

Article 428 of the Spanish Penal Code, when translated loosely, means:

"*An official or public authority who influences another official or public authority who takes advantage of the performance of their position or of any other situation arising from their personal or hierarchical relationship, or with another official or public authority, to achieve a resolution that can directly or indirectly produce economic gain for themselves or for a third party, shall be punished with imprisonment for six months to two years, a fine of twice the obtained or sought gains, and a special disqualification from public employment or office and from exercising passive voting rights for a period of five to nine years. If you obtain the desired benefit, this punishment shall be applied at the upper end of the range."*

Meanwhile, Article 429 of the Spanish Penal Code, when translated loosely, means:

"*Someone who influences a public official or authority who takes advantage of any situation arising from their personal relationship with him or with another public official or authority to achieve a resolution that can directly or indirectly yield economic gain for themselves or a third party, is punished with imprisonment of six months to two years, a fine equal to twice the gains obtained, and a prohibition on contracting with the public sector, as well as the loss of eligibility for subsidies or public assistance and the right to tax incentives and Social Security benefits for a period of six to ten years. If you obtain the desired benefit, this punishment shall be applied at the upper end of the range*."

Furthermore, Article 430 of the Spanish Penal Code, when translated loosely, means:

"Those who offer to perform the conduct described in the two preceding articles (428 and 429) request a reward from a third party, a gift or other consideration, or receive an offer or promise, are punished with imprisonment from six months to one year. If the crime is committed by an authority or public official, the punishment is specially qualified for public office or employment and for the exercise of passive voting rights for a period of one to four years. If, pursuant to Article 31, a legal entity is responsible for crimes included in this Chapter, a fine of six months to two years shall be imposed. In light of the provisions in Article 66, judges and courts may also impose the penalties provided for in subparagraphs b) to g) of Section 7 of Article 33."

Based on these provisions, there are observable differences in the elements between the offense of influence peddling as regulated in Articles 428 and 429. In Article 428, the offender is a public official who has a personal or hierarchical relationship with another influenced official. Meanwhile, Article 429 assigns the offense to a legal subject (an individual or non-public official) who also has a personal closeness to the relevant public official. Both articles emphasize the requirement of a relationship—whether hierarchical or personal—between the actor and the public official who is the object of influence. Therefore, merely giving advice cannot automatically be categorized as this offense, unless it is done by someone in a higher hierarchical position or uses moral pressure through a personal

relationship. In addition, Article 430 contains enhanced penalties for certain subjects, including legal entities. This indicates that the regulation of influence peddling in the Spanish Penal Code is not limited to individuals but can extend to entities that participate in the misconduct.

Conclusion

The legal framework in Indonesia, particularly UU PTPK, has not been able to keep pace with the development of increasingly complex corruption modus operandi, one of which is the practice of trading in influence. In terms of characteristics, trading in influence meets the elements of corruption offenses because it involves the use of influence by an individual or a corporation over public officials to obtain gains. The absence of explicit rules on trading in influence in UU PTPK has created legal gaps that are exploited by corrupt actors.

Indonesia has not yet adopted trading in influence into its positive law. By contrast, countries such as France and Spain have clearly regulated this offense in their Penal Codes, distinguishing between active and passive perpetrators. Therefore, Indonesia needs to promptly regulate trading in influence as a corruption offense in order to close the legal gaps and strengthen efforts to eradicate corruption.

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