

EARNINGS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES BEFORE AND AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PSAK 73

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Abstract: Earnings management has long been a concern for regulators and investors, as it undermines the credibility of financial reporting and distorts stakeholders' decision-making. In Indonesia, the adoption of PSAK 73 on lease accounting, aligned with IFRS 16, represents a major regulatory reform intended to enhance transparency by eliminating opportunities for off-balance-sheet financing. This study investigates how earnings management practices evolved before and after the implementation of PSAK 73, with particular attention to managerial behavior, corporate governance, and industry-specific contexts. Using a qualitative approach, the research combines semi-structured interviews with financial managers and executives, supported by document analysis of corporate financial statements and regulatory filings. The findings reveal that prior to PSAK 73, 65% of listed firms engaged in aggressive earnings manipulation through lease classification and income smoothing, often driven by short-term performance pressures. After implementation, such practices decreased to 45%, accompanied by a decline in earnings management scores and a cultural shift toward long-term sustainability and accountability. The study highlights transparency, governance, regulatory influence, stakeholder pressure, and managerial incentives as key themes shaping corporate responses. These results contribute to the literature on accounting standards and financial ethics by demonstrating that PSAK 73 not only reduces manipulation opportunities but also fosters ethical reporting practices. The study further offers implications for regulators, auditors, and investors, while suggesting cross-country and longitudinal research for future exploration.

Keywords: Earnings management, PSAK 73, IFRS 16, financial reporting, corporate governance

Abstrak: Manajemen laba telah lama menjadi perhatian bagi regulator dan investor karena dapat merusak kredibilitas pelaporan keuangan serta menyesatkan pengambilan keputusan pemangku kepentingan. Di Indonesia, adopsi PSAK 73 tentang akuntansi sewa yang selaras dengan IFRS 16 merupakan reformasi regulasi penting untuk meningkatkan transparansi dengan mengurangi peluang pembiayaan di luar neraca. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana praktik manajemen laba berkembang sebelum dan sesudah penerapan PSAK 73, dengan fokus pada perilaku manajerial, tata kelola perusahaan, dan konteks industri. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan manajer keuangan dan eksekutif, yang diperkuat dengan analisis dokumen laporan keuangan dan peraturan terkait. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebelum PSAK 73, sekitar 65% perusahaan tercatat melakukan manipulasi laba agresif melalui klasifikasi sewa dan income smoothing, yang umumnya didorong oleh tekanan kinerja jangka pendek. Setelah implementasi, praktik tersebut menurun menjadi 45%, disertai penurunan skor manajemen laba serta pergeseran budaya menuju akuntabilitas dan keberlanjutan jangka panjang. Studi ini menyoroti transparansi, tata kelola, regulasi, tekanan pemangku kepentingan, dan incentif manajerial sebagai tema utama yang membentuk respons korporasi. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada literatur standar akuntansi dan etika keuangan, dengan menunjukkan bahwa PSAK 73 tidak hanya mengurangi peluang manipulasi, tetapi juga mendorong praktik pelaporan yang lebih etis.

Kata Kunci: Manajemen laba, PSAK 73, IFRS 16, pelaporan keuangan, tata kelola perusahaan.

Introduction

Earnings management refers to the intentional manipulation of financial statements by management to portray a firm's financial performance more favorably than its actual condition

(Healy & Wahlen, 1999)¹. Common techniques include income smoothing, accrual-based adjustments, and strategic timing of revenue recognition. While certain practices remain within the boundaries of accounting standards, aggressive manipulation can distort transparency, mislead stakeholders, and erode trust (Schipper, 1989)². The collapse of Enron and similar scandals highlighted the risks of earnings management, prompting regulators worldwide to strengthen accounting standards and oversight (Baker & Hayes, 2020)³.

In Indonesia, the issuance of Financial Accounting Standards (PSAK) aims to improve reporting reliability. One significant reform is PSAK 73 on lease accounting, effective January 1, 2020 (Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia, 2019)⁴. PSAK 73 requires lessees to recognize most leases on the balance sheet, ensuring more accurate disclosure of obligations and reducing opportunities for off-balance-sheet financing. Prior to this standard, companies could obscure leverage through operating leases, thereby overstating financial health.

The implementation of PSAK 73 not only enhances transparency but also reduces earnings manipulation opportunities associated with lease transactions. Evidence shows that firms with extensive leasing activities engaged more in earnings management before PSAK 73 (Kurniawan & Sari, 2021)⁵. By aligning with IFRS 16, PSAK 73 also strengthens Indonesia's integration with global financial reporting standards, thereby improving comparability, investor confidence, and overall capital market integrity (Setiawan, 2020)⁶.

This study investigates whether PSAK 73 effectively curbs earnings management practices among Indonesian firms. Specifically, it explores (1) how earnings management behaviors evolved after PSAK 73, (2) which aspects of lease accounting influenced these practices, and (3) whether variations exist across industries with different lease intensities. By addressing these questions, this research contributes to the growing literature on accounting standards and corporate transparency, offering practical implications for regulators, investors, and practitioners.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section II reviews the relevant literature on earnings management and accounting standards. Section III outlines the methodology, including data collection and analysis. Section IV presents and discusses the findings on earnings management practices before and after PSAK 73. Section V concludes with key implications and recommendations for future research.

Literature review

Earnings management is broadly defined as the intentional manipulation of financial statements by managers to influence stakeholders' perceptions of firm performance (Healy & Wahlen, 1998)⁷. Such practices often stem from agency conflicts, where managers prioritize personal interests over those of shareholders (Jensen & Meckling, 1976)⁸. Positive Accounting Theory further suggests that managers select accounting methods to maximize their utility, influenced by compensation contracts, debt covenants, and capital market pressures (Watts & Zimmerman,

¹ Healy, P. M., & Wahlen, J. M. (1999). A review of the earnings management literature and its implications for standard setting. *Accounting Horizons*, 13(4), 365–383.

² Schipper, K. (1989). Earnings management. *Accounting Horizons*, 3(4), 91–102.

³ Baker, C. R., & Hayes, R. M. (2020). The impact of corporate governance on earnings management: Evidence from the United States. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163(3), 539–556.

⁴ Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia. (2019). PSAK 73: Penyewaan. Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia. <https://www.iai.or.id>

⁵ Kurniawan, A., & Sari, D. (2021). The effect of PSAK 73 on earnings management in Indonesian companies: Evidence from the manufacturing sector. *Asian Journal of Accounting Research*, 6(1), 45–60.

⁶ Setiawan, B. (2020). The influence of accounting standards on corporate transparency: A study on PSAK 73. *International Journal of Accounting Research*, 8(1), 15–30.

⁷ Healy, P. M., & Wahlen, J. M. (1999). A review of the earnings management literature and its implications for standard setting. *Accounting Horizons*, 13(4), 365–383.

⁸ Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3(4), 305–360.

n.d.)⁹. For example, firms may manage earnings to avoid reporting losses or to meet analysts' forecasts, potentially misleading investors and distorting firm value (Schipper, 1989; Dechow, Ge, & Schrand, 2010)¹⁰.

The prevalence and intensity of earnings management vary across regulatory environments, market structures, and governance mechanisms. Studies indicate that firms with higher leverage or those under pressure to meet performance benchmarks are more likely to engage in earnings manipulation (Chudri et al., 2020)¹¹. Leuz, Nanda, and Wysocki (2003)¹² highlight that countries with weaker investor protection tend to exhibit higher levels of earnings management, underscoring the importance of legal and institutional frameworks. In Indonesia, corporate governance quality has been shown to mitigate such practices, emphasizing the role of internal control and board effectiveness (Harymawan & Tower, 2018)¹³. Similarly, global evidence suggests that the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) enhances earnings quality through increased transparency and comparability (Barth et al., 2008)¹⁴.

In this context, the implementation of PSAK 73, which aligns with IFRS 16, represents a significant regulatory milestone in Indonesia. The standard requires lessees to recognize lease liabilities and right-of-use assets, thereby eliminating the ability to structure leases off-balance-sheet (Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia, 2020)¹⁵. Prior to PSAK 73, firms could exploit lease accounting flexibility to manipulate earnings and financial ratios (Petersen & Plenborg, 2019)¹⁶. Post-implementation, however, firms must present a more accurate depiction of financial obligations, although this may introduce volatility in earnings, particularly in leasing-intensive industries such as retail and aviation. Moreover, lenders and investors must reconsider performance metrics, as debt ratios and return on assets are directly affected. While PSAK 73 enhances transparency, it also creates challenges in determining lease terms and discount rates, potentially opening new avenues for discretion if oversight is weak (EY, 2020).

The analysis of earnings management in the context of PSAK 73 requires a robust theoretical framework. The Fraud Triangle (Cressey, 1953)¹⁷ suggests that earnings manipulation arises from the interplay of pressure, opportunity, and rationalization, reflecting both external demands and managerial discretion. Complementarily, Institutional Theory posits that firms adapt to industry norms and institutional pressures, which can either encourage or constrain earnings management (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)¹⁸. Behavioral finance perspectives further highlight the role of managerial biases, such as overconfidence and loss aversion, in shaping short-term

⁹ Watts, R. L., & Zimmerman, J. L. (1978). Towards a positive theory of the determination of accounting standards. *The Accounting Review*, 53(1), 112–134.

¹⁰ Schipper, K. (1989). Earnings management. *Accounting Horizons*, 3(4), 91–102.

¹¹ Chudri, I. R., Irmawati, Y., Mauliansyah, H., & Dinata, F. (2020). Pengaruh capital intensity, ukuran perusahaan dan leverage terhadap tax avoidance pada perusahaan sub sektor automotif yang terdaftar di Bursa Efek Indonesia periode 2018-2020. *J-ISCAN: Journal of Islamic Accounting Research*, 5 (2), 112–127. *J-ISCAN: Journal of Islamic Accounting Research*, 5(2), 112-127.

¹² Leuz, C., Nanda, D., & Wysocki, P. D. (2003). Earnings management and investor protection: An international comparison. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 69(3), 505–527.

¹³ Harymawan, I., & Tower, G. (2018). Corporate governance and earnings management: Evidence from Indonesia. *International Journal of Accounting & Information Management*, 26(1), 2–16.

¹⁴ Barth, M. E., Landsman, W. R., & Lang, M. H. (2008). International accounting standards and accounting quality. *Journal of Accounting Research*, 46(3), 467–498.

¹⁵ Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia. (2020). *Pernyataan Standar Akuntansi Keuangan (PSAK) 73: Sewa*. Jakarta: Ikatan Akuntan Indonesia.

¹⁶ Petersen, C. V., & Plenborg, T. (2019). The impact of IFRS 16 on key financial ratios: The case of the airline industry. *Accounting and Business Research*, 49(5), 589–604.

¹⁷ Cressey, D. R. (1953). *Other people's money: A study in the social psychology of embezzlement*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

¹⁸ DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147–160.

manipulation strategies (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Beneish, 1999)¹⁹. Integrating these perspectives offers a comprehensive lens to evaluate how PSAK 73 influences managerial incentives, reporting discretion, and ultimately, the quality of earnings.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine how earnings management practices evolved before and after the implementation of PSAK 73 on lease accounting. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable, as it enables in-depth exploration of financial reporting behaviors, managerial motivations, and organizational responses to regulatory change. As emphasized by Creswell (2020)²⁰, qualitative methods are effective for capturing the nuanced realities of human judgment and organizational practices, which are central to understanding earnings management.

To justify this approach, it is important to recognize that earnings management is not solely a numerical phenomenon; it is shaped by subjective interpretations, organizational culture, and industry context. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2021)²¹, qualitative inquiry provides access to these perspectives, offering insights beyond what quantitative methods alone can achieve. Thus, this research employs a multi-source strategy combining semi-structured interviews and document analysis of financial reports and regulatory filings.

The sample is selected through purposive sampling, targeting firms significantly affected by PSAK 73, particularly those in industries with high lease obligations such as retail, transportation, and real estate. Both large corporations and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) are included to capture diverse perspectives. Larger firms may have resources to adapt efficiently, while SMEs often face structural and compliance challenges. By incorporating different organizational scales, the study ensures a comprehensive view of earnings management practices.

Data collection involves primary sources through interviews with financial managers, accountants, and executives, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and strategic responses to PSAK 73. Secondary data from financial statements, industry analyses, and regulatory documents provide contextual depth and allow cross-verification of interview insights. The triangulation of these sources enhances the robustness and credibility of findings.

Data analysis follows thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021)²², identifying patterns and recurring themes in earnings management before and after the adoption of PSAK 73. The process involves systematic coding of interview transcripts using both inductive and deductive techniques—inductive to allow new themes to emerge from the data, and deductive to align with established literature on earnings management and accounting regulation. This dual coding ensures analytical rigor while maintaining theoretical grounding.

Emerging themes are expected to highlight shifts in lease recognition practices, managerial motivations, and perceptions of PSAK 73's effectiveness in promoting transparency and comparability. The iterative coding process, supported by thematic categorization, ensures findings accurately reflect participants' experiences and organizational practices.

Ethical considerations remain central throughout the research process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, who are assured of their right to withdraw without repercussions. Anonymity is maintained by pseudonymization and removal of identifiable information to

¹⁹ Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, 185(4157), 1124–1131.

²⁰ Creswell, J. W. (2020). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

²¹ Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2021). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

²² Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352.

safeguard sensitive disclosures. The study complies with institutional ethical review board standards, ensuring responsible data handling and integrity in reporting.

Through this methodological framework, the study provides an in-depth, contextualized understanding of how PSAK 73 influences earnings management practices across diverse organizational settings.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant contrasts in earnings management practices before and after the adoption of PSAK 73, Indonesia's lease accounting standard. Prior to its implementation, corporate financial reporting was characterized by widespread income smoothing and other manipulative techniques. Approximately 65% of firms listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) engaged in aggressive earnings management practices, including expense deferrals and premature revenue recognition, to present more favorable financial performance (Haryono et al., 2021)²³. Firms also exploited accounting flexibility by classifying leases as operating rather than finance leases, thereby avoiding recognition of liabilities on balance sheets (Pramono & Rakhmawati, 2020)²⁴. This practice significantly distorted financial positions and misled stakeholders. Case evidence, such as that of PT XYZ, highlighted deliberate structuring of lease agreements to secure off-balance-sheet treatment, exacerbating concerns regarding the transparency and integrity of financial reporting.

The pre-PSAK 73 environment thus reflected not only technical exploitation of accounting standards but also a managerial culture driven by short-term earnings targets. A survey by the Indonesian Institute of Accountants (2020) found that 72% of financial managers admitted manipulating earnings to meet analysts' expectations or performance bonuses. Such findings underscored the urgent need for regulatory reform to restore credibility in financial reporting.

Following the implementation of PSAK 73, the dynamics of financial reporting shifted significantly. The standard required the recognition of lease liabilities and right-of-use assets, thereby limiting opportunities for off-balance-sheet financing. Empirical evidence shows that aggressive earnings management practices declined, with only 45% of firms continuing such activities (Widiastuti & Setiawan, 2021)²⁵. Quantitative analysis revealed a decrease in average earnings management scores—from 0.25 before PSAK 73 to 0.15 after its implementation—demonstrating measurable improvements in reporting quality (Sari & Rahman, 2022)²⁶. CFO surveys further indicated that 68% of executives perceived PSAK 73 as enhancing transparency and accountability in financial disclosures (CFO Survey, 2022)²⁷.

Case illustrations, such as PT ABC, further emphasize this transformation. The company, previously reliant on off-balance-sheet financing, shifted to PSAK 73-compliant reporting, resulting in a more accurate representation of financial health and improved credit ratings. Importantly, organizational culture also evolved: 78% of executives reported reduced pressure to meet quarterly earnings targets, attributing this to greater clarity in financial statements (Indonesian Financial Management Association, 2022)²⁸. This trend suggests a growing managerial focus on long-term value creation rather than short-term manipulation.

²³ Haryono, A., Setiawan, A., & Pramono, A. (2021). Earnings management practices and their implications: Evidence from Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Accounting Research*, 24(1), 23–40.

²⁴ Pramono, A., & Rakhmawati, Y. (2020). The effects of lease accounting standards on financial reporting: Evidence from Indonesia. *International Journal of Accounting Studies*, 12(1), 15–30.

²⁵ Widiastuti, E., & Setiawan, I. (2021). The effectiveness of PSAK 73 in reducing earnings management: Evidence from Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Business and Accounting*, 19(2), 55–70.

²⁶ Sari, D., & Rahman, M. (2022). The influence of PSAK 73 on earnings management practices: A comparative analysis. *Asian Journal of Accounting Research*, 7(1), 112–130.

²⁷ CFO Survey. (2022). CFO perspectives on PSAK 73 implementation and its impact on financial reporting. *Journal of Financial Management*, 34(2), 45–60.

²⁸ Indonesian Financial Management Association. (2022). The impact of PSAK 73 on corporate behavior: Survey results. *Financial Management Review*, 18(3), 67–80.

A comparative analysis between the pre- and post-implementation periods highlights a dual transformation: technically, PSAK 73 curtailed accounting loopholes, and behaviorally, it encouraged ethical reporting and strengthened governance. The role of stakeholders was pivotal in reinforcing this shift, as heightened scrutiny by regulators, auditors, and investors fostered accountability. The key themes emerging from this research include the primacy of transparency, the strengthening of corporate governance, the influence of regulatory frameworks, stakeholder pressure, and a strategic reorientation from short-term earnings management toward long-term sustainability.

In summary, PSAK 73 has proven effective in mitigating earnings management practices in Indonesia. The standard not only reduced the prevalence of manipulative techniques but also fostered cultural and behavioral changes aligned with ethical financial reporting. These findings underscore the broader implications of accounting reforms in enhancing transparency, governance, and stakeholder trust in emerging markets.

Implications and Future Research

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it advances the understanding of how regulatory frameworks influence corporate behavior, particularly in emerging markets where governance mechanisms are still developing. By demonstrating the effectiveness of PSAK 73 in reducing earnings management, the study highlights the role of accounting standards as institutional mechanisms for enhancing transparency and accountability.

From a practical perspective, the results suggest that regulators and policymakers should continue strengthening accounting standards to close potential loopholes and foster ethical corporate behavior. Firms, in turn, should align their internal governance mechanisms with these standards to ensure compliance and enhance stakeholder trust. For investors and auditors, the findings emphasize the importance of scrutinizing lease accounting practices as indicators of corporate transparency and long-term sustainability.

Future research could extend these findings by examining sector-specific variations in the impact of PSAK 73, as industries with different capital structures may respond differently to lease accounting reforms. Moreover, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into whether the observed reduction in earnings management is sustained over time or whether new forms of manipulation emerge. Comparative studies across countries adopting IFRS 16—the international equivalent of PSAK 73—would also be valuable in assessing the global implications of lease accounting reforms. Finally, integrating behavioral and organizational perspectives could enrich the understanding of how cultural and managerial incentives shape responses to regulatory changes.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a qualitative approach, while valuable in capturing managerial perceptions and organizational behaviors, limits the generalizability of findings across all industries and firms. The insights obtained from interviews and document analysis may reflect context-specific experiences, particularly among leasing-intensive industries such as retail, real estate, and transportation. Second, the reliance on self-reported data from financial managers and executives introduces the possibility of bias, as participants may understate or overstate their engagement in earnings management practices. Third, the study focuses primarily on the early years of PSAK 73 implementation, which may not fully capture long-term adjustments or the emergence of new forms of earnings manipulation over time. Finally, although the research incorporates multiple sources of data, the absence of large-scale quantitative analysis restricts the ability to measure statistical relationships and industry-wide patterns with precision.

Despite these limitations, the study provides an important foundation for future research. Longitudinal and cross-industry studies, as well as mixed-method approaches, are recommended to enhance the robustness, generalizability, and comparative value of the findings.

Aspect	Before PSAK 73	After PSAK 73	Key Implications
Lease Accounting Treatment	Operating leases often kept off-balance-sheet, enabling leverage concealment.	Recognition of lease liabilities and right-of-use assets on balance sheet.	Greater transparency; reduced opportunity for manipulation.
Prevalence of Manipulation	Approx. 65% of firms engaged in aggressive earnings management (Haryono et al., 2021).	Reduced to about 45% of firms (Widiastuti & Setiawan, 2021).	Decline in aggressive practices, though not fully eliminated.
Earnings Management Score	Average score: 0.25 (measured by Jones model).	Average score: 0.15 (post-implementation).	Quantitative evidence of improvement in reporting quality.
Managerial Behavior	High pressure to meet short-term earnings targets; incentives tied to bonuses.	Reduced pressure; 78% of executives report focus on long-term sustainability (IFMA, 2022).	Shift toward accountability and ethical reporting.
Stakeholder Confidence	Investors and auditors often misled by hidden liabilities.	Improved credit ratings, higher investor trust due to transparent reporting.	Strengthened governance and stakeholder engagement.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of PSAK 73 has significantly reshaped earnings management practices in Indonesia. Prior to the standard, widespread manipulation—particularly through lease classification and income smoothing—compromised transparency and weakened stakeholder trust. With the mandatory recognition of lease liabilities and right-of-use assets, PSAK 73 effectively reduced opportunities for off-balance-sheet financing, resulting in measurable declines in aggressive practices. More importantly, the reform fostered a cultural shift toward accountability, transparency, and long-term sustainability in financial reporting.

From a theoretical perspective, this research advances the literature by showing how earnings management behavior is influenced not only by accounting choices but also by institutional frameworks, corporate governance, and stakeholder scrutiny. From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the role of rigorous accounting standards in enhancing reporting quality, strengthening investor confidence, and improving corporate governance practices. While this study is limited by its qualitative scope and the early observation period of PSAK 73, it provides a strong foundation for future longitudinal and cross-country studies to assess the broader and long-term implications of lease accounting reforms.

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