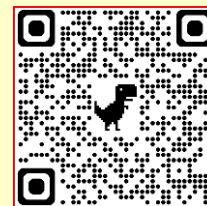


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RELIGION AND POWER IN PUBLIC GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH KALIMANTAN THROUGH A POLICY CYCLE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the relationship between religion and power in public governance in South Kalimantan. In areas with strong religious identities, religion is not only present as a value system, but also often helps shape policy direction. Through a qualitative approach based on literature studies and critical reading of local policy practices, the authors see that the use of religious values in policy does not always run neutrally. In some situations, policies actually intersect with certain political interests and have the potential to cause inequality. Using a policy cycle approach, this paper attempts to show where these influences emerge, while offering a more inclusive and rational direction for improvement.

KEY WORDS: religion, power, public policy, South Kalimantan

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and power is not new in political studies. However, in the context of South Kalimantan, this issue feels closer because the social life of the people is greatly influenced by religious values. In the daily life of the Banjar people, religion is not just a personal matter. It is present in many aspects, including the way the public views government policies. Not infrequently, religious symbols and narratives are used in local political processes. On the one hand, this can strengthen the legitimacy of the government. People tend to be more receptive to policies that are considered to be in line with religious values. But on the other hand, the question arises: do all policies wrapped in religious values really reflect the needs of the entire society?

According to the author, this is where the main problem lies. Not in the presence of religion, but in the way it is used. If not managed carefully, religion can turn from a source of value to a tool of legitimacy that tends to be selective.

This phenomenon actually occurs not only in South Kalimantan, but

also in various other regions in Indonesia. However, in the local context, these dynamics have their own characteristics because of the strong religious identity of the Banjar people. On closer inspection, policies based on religious values often fall between two interests: maintaining social norms and responding to political pressure. In practice, the two do not always go in balance. Therefore, it is important to look at this issue not only from the normative side, but also from the policy process that occurs behind it.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Religion has long been known as one of the sources of legitimacy in politics. In the Indonesian context, these relationships tend to be dynamic—not completely separate, but also not always harmonious. On the one hand, religion-based legitimacy can strengthen public trust. But on the other hand, there are risks when religion is used to limit criticism or reinforce the position of certain groups.

Meanwhile, public policies are ideally prepared based on rational considerations and the needs of the wider community. The reality is

that this is not always the case. Many policies are born from the process of political compromise, social pressure, and even electoral considerations.

The policy cycle approach is used in this paper to look at the process more concretely—from agenda setting to evaluation.

In recent years, studies on the relationship between religion and public policy in Indonesia have shown increased attention, especially after the era of decentralization. Recent research shows that religion-based policies at the local level are often influenced by electoral political dynamics. Fachrudin (2021), for example, found that the use of religious symbols in regional policies tends to increase ahead of political contestation.

In addition, a study by Siti Nurjanah (2022) emphasizes that policies with religious nuances do not always reflect the needs of society at large, but often reflect the preferences of the dominant group more. On the other hand, Ahmad Rizky (2024) shows that the lack of evaluation of religion-based policies causes these policies to tend to persist even though they have an uneven impact. These findings reinforce the argument that the relationship between religion and public policy cannot be separated from the context of power and the political processes that underlie it

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. The sources used include books, journals, and relevant policy documents. In addition, the author also tries to read the phenomenon contextually, especially related to policy practices in South Kalimantan. This approach was chosen so that the analysis does not stop at theory, but also touches on the reality in the field. This approach was chosen because it allows the author to understand the phenomenon in more depth, not only in terms of policy as a product, but also as a process influenced by various actors and interests. In addition, the use of literature studies also provides space to compare local findings with previous studies, so that the resulting analysis becomes more comprehensive.

DISCUSSION

1. Agenda Setting: What Issues Are Considered Important?

If you pay attention, issues related to religion are relatively quickly included in the policy agenda in South Kalimantan. This can be understood because religious values have a strong closeness to society. An example can be seen ahead of the month of Ramadan. Local governments are usually more responsive to issues such as restrictions on entertainment activities or adjustments to business operating hours. But on the other hand, there is an impression that other issues such as poverty or public services do not always receive the same attention. According to the author, this shows that the strength of an issue is not only determined by its urgency, but also by its social and political impetus.

2. Policy Formulation: Not Always Simple

At the formulation stage, religious values are often used as a basis for consideration. This is actually natural. The problem arises when policies do not sufficiently consider the conditions of diverse communities. Banjarmasin City Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2005 concerning restrictions on activities during Ramadan can be an example. The goal is clear, which is to maintain order and respect religious values. However, in practice, this policy is not always easy to apply evenly. Some small business actors, for example, have had to adjust their operations, even though economic needs are still

running. On the other hand, non-Muslim communities also have different needs. Situations like this show that policies based on religious values require a higher level of social sensitivity.

3. Policy Adoption: Who Is Involved?

Formally, the policy adoption process does involve various parties. However, if you look closely, the role of the community is still limited. In some forums, the public is indeed invited. But not all groups have the same opportunity to express their opinions. Certain groups—especially those who lack access—are often unheard. According to the author, this condition makes policies tend to reflect the point of view of certain groups only.

4. Implementation: Between Rules and Reality

The implementation stage is often the real test of a policy. On paper, the rules are obvious. But on the pitch, the situation could be different. In the implementation of policies during Ramadan, for example, there are variations in the way of enforcement. There are regions that apply the rules strictly, while others are more flexible. This difference suggests that implementation is heavily influenced by the local social context. For the author, this is natural, but it still needs to be monitored so as not to cause uncertainty.

5. Evaluation: Frequently Missed Parts

Compared to other stages, evaluation often receives less attention. In fact, this is where we can actually see whether the policy is effective or not. For policies related to religion, evaluation is often a sensitive matter. As a result, open discussions are rarely carried out. According to the author, this is actually a challenge. Without honest evaluation, inappropriate policies can continue to run without improvement.

Viewed as a whole, each stage in the policy cycle shows the influence of religious values that do not always stand alone, but are often related to the interests of power. According to the author, this becomes natural in the context of a religious society. However, the problem is when these influences are not balanced with adequate control mechanisms, so that they have the potential to cause inequality. In this context, public policy should not only function as a regulatory tool, but also as a means of maintaining a balance between the values of the majority and the rights of other groups.

POLICY RESOLUTION

Based on the discussion above, some things that can be considered include:

First, it is important to limit the use of religion as a political tool without eliminating its role as a source of value.

Second, the space for community participation needs to be expanded, not only formal but also substantive.

Third, bureaucratic professionalism must be strengthened so that policy implementation is more consistent.

Fourth, policy evaluation needs to be carried out openly by considering its impact on various groups.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between religion and power in public policy in South Kalimantan shows a dynamic that is not simple. Religion can be a source of positive value, but it can also be used in a political context. Therefore, what needs to be maintained is the balance. According to the author, good policies are not only those that are in accordance with the values of the majority, but also those that are

able to accommodate diversity. This is the challenge as well as the opportunity for improvement in the future.

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MATRIX TABLE

PHASE	CHARACTERISTICS	ILLUSTRATION
AGENDA PREPARATION	At this stage, issues that are considered important will enter the government's agenda. In South Kalimantan, religious issues quickly received attention because they were close to the community's identity and had strong social support. However, other issues such as poverty and public services are sometimes less prioritized.	Ahead of the month of Ramadan, local governments are faster to respond to policies restricting nightlife and adjusting business operating hours than to issues of community welfare.
POLICY FORMULATION	The government began to formulate solutions or rules for problems that have been on the agenda. Religious values are often used as the basis for policy, but sometimes they do not fully consider the conditions of diverse societies.	Banjarmasin City Regional Regulation Number 4 of 2005 concerning restrictions on activities during Ramadan was made to maintain order and respect religious values, but it had an impact on small business actors and non-Muslim communities.
POLICY ADOPTION	At this stage, the policy to be ratified is selected. Formally there is community participation, but in practice not all groups have the same opportunity to express their opinions.	Policy deliberations are often attended by the public, but groups with limited access are less heard, so decisions are more influenced by the dominant group.
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	The policy that has been ratified is implemented by the bureaucracy or related agencies. In its implementation, there is often a difference between the rules on paper and the reality on the ground.	The application of rules during Ramadan differs from region to region: some enforce the rules strictly, others are more flexible according to the social conditions of the local community.
POLICY EVALUATION	The evaluation stage aims to assess the effectiveness of the policy. However, religion-based policies are often rarely evaluated openly because they are considered sensitive. As a result, inappropriate policies can continue to run without improvement.	The policy of restricting activities during Ramadan is rarely discussed for its impact on the economy of small communities or minority groups, so policy evaluation is less than optimal.
POLICY RESOLUTION	This stage contains recommendations for improvement so that policies are more fair, inclusive, and rational.	Expand public participation, strengthen bureaucratic professionalism, limit religion as a political tool, and conduct open policy evaluations.