

Optimizing Public Policy Evaluation: Utilization of Data and Evidence-Based Approaches in the Evaluation of the Sunan Kuning Semarang Closure Policy

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Abstract

Five years have passed since the closure of Sunan Kuning, yet it has left various residual problems that are not only related to moral issues alone but also linked to economic, health, and social structures. This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the evaluation of the Sunan Kuning Semarang red-light district closure policy. The policy evaluation model used was the Countenance model by Robert E. Stake (2004), which divided policy evaluation into three stages: (1) antecedent; (2) transactions; and (3) outcome. The approach utilized in this research was qualitative. The author used a purposive sampling technique. Information gathering was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, as well as interviews with experts. Additionally, information was also gathered through observation, document analysis, and literature review. The analysis technique involved three components: data reduction, data display, and drawing and testing conclusions. From the research results, the researcher concluded that the closure policy of the Sunan Kuning district has not been optimal. As recommendations, several key elements such as the government's political will in executing each policy process. Additionally, recommendations from previous research considerations and aspects of previous policy experiences need to be considered in policymaking.

Keywords:

evaluation; public policy; evidence-based; localization; Sunan kuning

Introduction

Prostitution practice is an endemic issue, a phenomenon that always exists in certain populations or areas. Prostitution is not only related to morality but also intertwined with economic circles. A study conducted by Lin Leam Lim (1998) in the article "The Sex Sector: The Economic and Social Bases of Prostitution in Southeast Asia" estimated that the economic income contribution of the sex sector to the country reached 2 percent, and 14 percent of the Gross Domestic Product in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand (Lim, 1998).

Views on the issue of prostitution in Indonesia are generally divided into three interest groups: First, those who wish for prostitution to disappear from Indonesian society. Second, those who desire the sex industry to be effectively regulated and reformed. Third, those who demand a clear and consistent government stance on the existence of prostitution (Hull et al., 1997). These

three perspectives and attitudes towards prostitution are met with various policies by the government (Suud, 2019), including the existence of legislation regarding prostitution (The Legislation on Prostitution), and legalized prostitution complexes (The Legalized Prostitution Complex).

In the context of prostitution policy in Indonesia, the year 2015 marked a new chapter for red-light districts in Indonesia. In 2015, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia initiated a policy regarding the Handling of Social Problems, with one of its formulations stating, "The launch of a national movement towards the eradication of red-light districts/prostitution locations in 2015 aiming for Indonesia to be prostitution-free by 2019." One of the factors underlying this policy is the commitment of the United Nations (UN) through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), which since 1996 has been campaigning and promoting the global agenda for ending the HIV pandemic by 2030.

As part of the implementation of the "Indonesia prostitution-free by 2019" policy, the Ministry of Social Affairs closed down several red-light districts, followed by several local governments issuing anti-prostitution Regional Regulations (*Perda*). The city of Semarang closed the Argorejo red-light district, commonly known as Sunan Kuning (SK), in October 2019. The basis for the closure of the red-light district is Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2017 on Public Order, which regulates matters related to prostitution in articles 20-22, explicitly addressing indecent actions, prohibiting prostitution, pimps, and sex buyers.

Red-light districts are often seen as high-risk areas for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and other reproductive health issues. Therefore, the policy of closing red-light districts is expected to reduce these negative impacts and improve the welfare of the surrounding community. However, five years after the closure of Sunan Kuning, it appears that various residual problems persist, which are not only related to moral issues but also linked to economic, health, and social structures.

Several studies indicate the fact that closure policies implemented in some areas do not necessarily eliminate prostitution activities. In fact, they may lead to an increase in the number of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) after the closure of red-light districts (Pramestiwari, 2020). Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) who used to market themselves in Sunan Kuning have now shifted to online marketing through social media. The closure merely shifts the practice of commercial sex to hotels, no longer in the Sunan Kuning location (JawaPos.com, March 9, 2020). The complexity of the issue also extends to the economic aspect of the community in that area. The closure of red-light districts also affects residents who have businesses around the area, such as food stalls, cafes, and karaoke bars. The compensation funds promised by the Semarang City

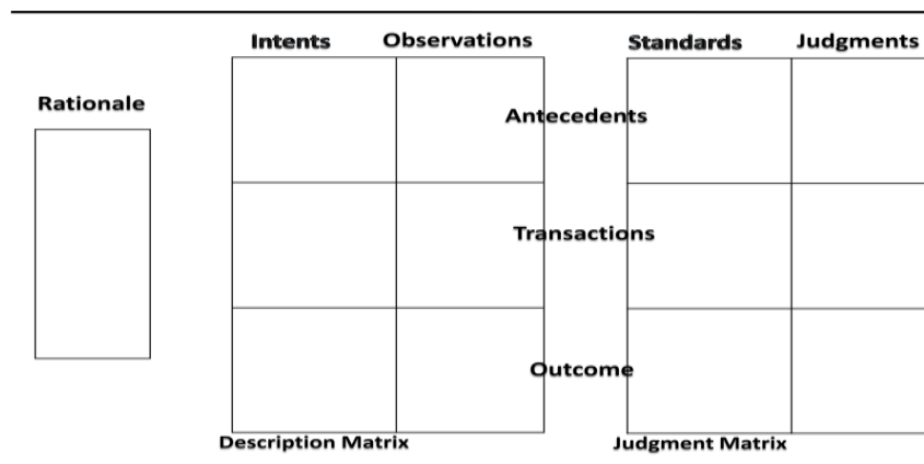
Government for the closure of the red-light district were not received by all workers, and the funds offered were considered insufficient as compensation or for starting new businesses (Sardini & Mukti, 2019).

The closure policy of red-light districts also creates new challenges, especially regarding social and economic impacts. An in-depth evaluation is needed to understand how this policy affects people's lives and to identify potential unintended consequences. Dunn (2003) explains that evaluation not only produces conclusions about the extent to which problems have been addressed but also contributes to clarifying and criticizing the values underlying policies, aiding in adjustments and reformulations of issues.

This research adopted the policy evaluation model "Countenance" by Robert E. Stake (2004), which distinguishes three stages: (1) antecedent; (2) transactions; and (3) outcome. In the antecedent stage, which is the stage before implementation, the focus was on: what factors underlay the Semarang City Government's decision to close Sunan Kuning. In the transactions stage, which is when the policy is implemented, the focus is on: the implementation of the Sunan Kuning closure policy and what challenges it faced. Meanwhile, in the outcome stage, which is the stage after policy implementation, the focus is on the results achieved from the implementation of the policy. Each stage is divided into two parts: description and judgment.

Figure 1.

Countenance Model



Source: Stake, 2004

In general, policymaking in Indonesia currently still does not rely on policy research or social research findings (Asmara, 2012; Sukara, 2012). Furthermore, Pratikno (2012) adds that decision-making in Indonesia at this time is more based on political interests and popular policies, rather than on research that could produce more effective policies.

Deputy of Social Statistics at the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia, Jousairi Hasbullah, emphasizes the importance of evidence-based policymaking. One of the causes of policy implementation failure is inaccurate or incomplete research. The use of evidence-based research is one alternative that can be used in the policy formulation process. As a developing country, Indonesia is expected to follow developed countries that have implemented evidence-based policy (EBP) concepts.

Pollard and Court (2005) stated that in the monitoring and evaluation process, it is important to ensure not only that the evidence is objective, comprehensive, and relevant, but also that the evidence is effectively communicated into the ongoing policy process. Therefore, this research aims not only to provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the closure policy of the Sunan Kuning Semarang red-light district but also is expected to contribute to the improvement and adjustment of more holistic and sustainable policies.

Research Method

The approach used in this research was qualitative. This research not only presented facts in the field but also presented and communicated findings in the field to become the focus of attention that would be manifested in policy evaluation. In this research, the author used a purposive sampling technique. Information gathering was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, as well as expert interviews referred to as Delphi interviews (Miles, 2002; Miles and Keenan, 2002). Additionally, information was also obtained through observation, document review, and literature study. The analysis technique used an interactive model based on three components: data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Evaluation of the Sunan Kuning Area Closure Policy

The policy evaluation model Countenance by Robert E. Stake (2004) divides policy evaluation stages into three phases: (1) antecedent; (2) transactions; and (3) outcome. In the antecedent stage, which is the stage before implementation, the transactions stage, which is when the policy is implemented, and the outcome stage, which is the stage after policy implementation, the focus is on the results achieved from the implementation of the policy. Each stage is divided into two parts: description and judgment.

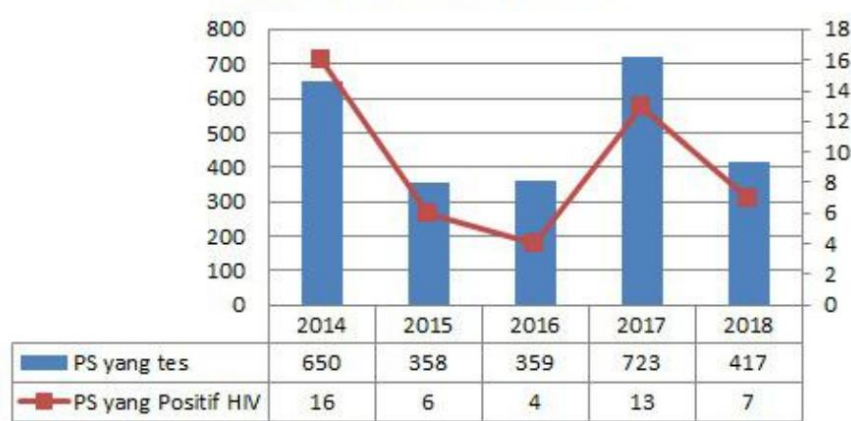
Based on the research results, it is known that the evaluation of the Sunan Kuning area closure policy has several issues, especially during the implementation phase. Weaknesses in the implementation of the Sunan Kuning closure policy have implications for policy impacts. The

closure has not been optimal and comprehensive; thus, prostitution practices are still carried out by some former Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in Sunan Kuning.

From the research results, it is known that before the closure, several factors led the Semarang City Government to close the Sunan Kuning area, one of which was the increase in the number of karaoke venues and the increasing number of karaoke attendants every year. Before the closure policy of the Sunan Kuning area, the government actively conducted health checks through screening, STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections), and morning exercises. In 2011, there were 287 cases of HIV/AIDS, which increased to 427 cases in 2012. The following are data on VCT tests for Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in the Sunan Kuning area from 2014 to 2018.

Figure 2.

VCT Testing Data for Sunan Kuning from 2014 to 2018



Source: Semarang City Health Office, 2019

Note: *PS yang tes*= Sex Workers who were tested;

PS yang positif HIV= Sex Workers who tested positive for HIV

The discovery of individuals infected with HIV-AIDS through VCT testing became a serious threat to the Semarang City Government, which subsequently led to the closure of the Sunan Kuning Area. On the other hand, during this antecedent stage, several phenomena made the closure process of the red-light district difficult to implement. The significant income earned by sex workers (SWs) from prostitution activities became a reason for them to be reluctant to leave their jobs. Additionally, sex workers also did not receive adequate training and guidance, resulting in the majority of them lacking other skills as assets to work in other fields outside of prostitution. In the transaction stage, it can be observed that during the implementation, various rejections occurred even though there was no significant physical contact. This is because the government implemented a specific strategy in closing the Sunan Kuning area, namely by providing mentoring funds to former sex workers (FSWs), although the distribution of these funds was not fairly

extended to other affected members of the general public but only to FSWs who had been working in the Sunan Kuning area.

In the outcome stage, it is known that the impact of the closure of the Sunan Kuning area is divided into two, namely positive and negative impacts. Positively, the closure of the area can protect the values and morals of society and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, the negative impacts include the decline in income of residents who have businesses outside of prostitution. Additionally, the closure of the Sunan Kuning area does not completely eradicate prostitution activities as former sex workers still engage in prostitution practices online to evade government surveillance.

Regardless of the pros and cons of the online prostitution business, this is a cultural consequence in dynamic networked societies. Castells (2002) mentions that there are cultural consequences negatively affecting society caused by technological changes, such as content on the internet deviating from cultural norms (pornography, neofascism including online prostitution). Meanwhile, Van Dijk (2012) states that there is an effect of community networks on human life, namely social change. In the practice of online prostitution, community networks represent hyper-social communities, not isolated societies. From the three stages described, the researcher concludes that the evaluation results of the Sunan Kuning Area Closure policy have not been optimal.

Evidence-Based Approach in Public Policy Evaluation

Good public policy should consist of three factors: (1) An intelligence process involving the use of well-analyzed and synthesized facts to form knowledge, known as knowledge-based policy formulation. (2) A societal process occurs when policies have a strong impact on society and those who will be affected, such as the community learning more about issues and determining policies. (3) A spiritual process should be present in the process of making public policies to ensure truth for all so that there are no hidden benefits for specific groups of people (Wasee, 2009).

In his study "Three Lenses of Evidence-Based Policy," Head (2008) provides a framework of knowledge and data lenses in the EBP approach, which can be seen from three perspectives: Firstly, the political knowledge lens. This lens provides an overview of a policy needing political support. Therefore, policymakers must have a setting agenda, priority scale, and evolving political agenda. This political knowledge lens naturally raises awareness that policymaking in public institutions is a political decision due to the power dimension that fosters competition among political actors, leading policymakers to often compromise policies with evolving political discourse.

In the context of the closure of the Sunan Kuning Area, the Semarang City Government announced through mass media that they would close the Sunan Kuning red-light district in early 2018. However, in reality, the policy was only implemented in October 2019. From a political lens perspective, this can be associated with the political agenda of the local government head, considering that year was close to the political year. After the closure, the Semarang City Government tended to neglect the former Sunan Kuning Area without any supervision or evaluation, resulting in the persistence of prostitution practices. This underscores that the success of public policy implementation is affected by the government's commitment, in this case, the political agenda of the local government head.

Secondly, research-based knowledge (Scientific research-based). Scientific knowledge will provide input for policy innovation that has positive impacts. Scientific knowledge from various interdisciplinary research will provide a positive perspective by offering diverse viewpoints from various theoretical approaches.

The concept of evidence-based policy in Indonesia is not entirely new because fundamentally, the government has already stipulated that every policy-making process must be based on scientific research first. This is embodied in Article 43 paragraph (3) of Law 12/2011 which states, "Draft laws must be accompanied by an academic manuscript". An academic manuscript is a manuscript resulting from research or legal studies and other research results on a specific issue that can be scientifically accountable. This indicates that the first stage of a Bill is the Academic Manuscript or research data.

In the context of the closure of the Sunan Kuning Area, the closure policy was implemented as a derivative of national policy to realize the "national movement towards eradicating prostitution locations" Thus, the policy-making process did not start from specific scientific data related to the conditions in the Sunan Kuning Area of Semarang City.

Third, practical implementation knowledge. This lens provides an overview that data sources, which can also serve as recommendations in policymaking, come from field practitioners or field officers who understand the situation map. In this regard, field officers can provide insights into the challenges, constraints, and obstacles in a policy, thus serving as evaluation materials to achieve maximum policy outcomes.

If related to the context of the closure of Sunan Kuning Area, this aspect of practical knowledge does not seem to be maximized. This is evident from the lack of involvement of various stakeholders from before the closure until after the closure. Even with the closure of the area, it makes the former Sunan Kuning Area even more untouched by supervision, including by the Social Affairs Office of Semarang City.

Evidence-based policy is public policy informed by objective evidence. An essential aspect of evidence-based policy is the use of valid scientific research such as randomized controlled trials to identify programs and practices that can improve policy outcomes supported by relevant data. Good data, analytical capabilities, and political support are crucial elements of evidence-based policy (Cookson, 2005). Policymaking is a complex task, and policymakers need scientific evidence; other factors such as values that govern the system, expert opinions, public opinions, and various other factors influence the final policy decisions of policymakers.

The dynamics involved in managing public interests require accurate and prompt decision-making. An important aspect in the process of evaluating public policies is similar to other crucial aspects in decision-making processes. Like previous steps in the public policy process, the decision-making stage is affected by the nature of the policy subsystems involved and the level of consensus faced by decision-makers (Supriyano, 2022).

Evidence-informed decision-making offers several potential benefits, including the adoption of the most effective and cost-efficient interventions, wiser utilization of scarce resources, and better outcomes for individuals and society (Gabby, 2015). The contribution of data in the public sector is undeniably an attractive approach, especially during the policy formation cycle. Furthermore, big data and artificial intelligence can assist public leaders in making decisions to deliver the best policies.

In the evaluation of public policy related to the closure of red-light districts, big data plays a crucial role in providing comprehensive and diverse insights. Big data can be utilized to analyze the social, economic, and health impacts of red-light district closures holistically. By collecting and analyzing data from various sources such as social media, online surveys, transactional data, and camera recordings, the government can understand patterns of community behavior, responses to policies, and their impacts on various population segments.

Big data analysis also enables the identification of long-term trends and changes that may occur after the closure of red-light districts, assisting the government in making more accurate and evidence-based decisions for future policies. Therefore, big data not only serves as a powerful evaluation tool but also allows the government to adopt a more adaptive and responsive approach to managing complex public policies.

From the understanding related to the perspective of Evidence-Based Policy, this research recommends the existence of several important elements such as political will in carrying out every policy process. In every policy, political support is crucial and inseparable. Policies work well when there is support from all stakeholders including those directly involved in politics. Furthermore, the author also recommends considering previous research as a policy

consideration, so that the evaluation conducted provides good input to policymakers. The next recommendation is the need for input on previous policy experiences; thus, the evaluation conducted has a strong knowledge base and provides concrete improvements to any issues that arise after the policy is implemented.

Conclusion

From the policy evaluation results using the Countenance model by Robert E. Stake (2004), the researcher draws a conclusion that the closure policy of the Sunan Kuning area has not been optimal. The continued practice of prostitution and the emergence of other social issues serve as evidence that the closure of the Sunan Kuning area has not been fully successful. The evidence-based policy (EBP) perspective has not been maximally utilized in each stage, namely antecedent; transactions; and outcome.

Recommendations

There is a need for continued efforts from the local government to address the practice of prostitution in the Sunan Kuning area; therefore, prostitution and other social issues can be tackled and not simply shifted to different places or methods. Several key elements such as the political will of the government in executing each policy process are essential. Additionally, recommendations from previous research and considerations of past policy experiences should be considered in policymaking, ensuring that evaluations are based on a strong knowledge foundation and lead to concrete improvements for any emerging issues.

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