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## The Majority's Shackles: Societal Conflict and Development in the Establishment of Worship Places in Indonesia

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#### Abstract:

This article aims to analyze the problems of establishing worship places in Indonesia and the potential for the development of religious harmony. The previous study explained that the issue of establishing places of worship in Indonesia had been accommodated in the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs (PBM) Number 9 and 8 of 2006 concerning the maintenance of religious harmony, empowerment of spiritual harmony forums, and the establishment of houses of worship. Researchers collected data through interviews and document studies of various cases related to conflicts over places of worship in Indonesia. This study uses a conceptual approach to developing the essential elements of sociology and the Strengths Weakness Opportunity Problem Action (SWOPA) analysis method to analyze the root causes and develop alternative policies to improve conflicts over the construction of places of worship in Indonesia. This study indicates that regulations regarding the establishment of dialogue and become a legitimation to complicate and exclude the process of establishing houses of worship for minorities from various religions. In addition, the structural, cultural, and processual aspects that exist in the community are essential to be managed to minimize the occurrence of conflict. Stakeholders can also consider this analysis to build inclusive inter-religious relations. **Keywords:** Conflict, Development, Establishment, Societal Elements, Worship Places.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The establishment of houses of worship is known to often disrupt inter-religious relations, especially at the city level. Human Rights Watch (2013) stated that there were at least 12 cases in which militant groups, both Muslim and Christian, used the PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006 to prevent the construction of new houses of worship, including a mosque, and to close 31 churches and houses of religious worship that were already standing. Meanwhile, the parties who experience it the most are minority religious groups, belief groups, and religious sects—not only one religion (Halili & Naipospos, 2015; Kusumadewi, 2015; Purnamasari, 2019). SETARA Institute for Democracy and Peace (2017) reports that in the last 11 years, almost all disturbances to places of worship, or to be precise 378 cases, were rooted in these regulations. Of all the religious conflicts in Indonesia, conflicts about places of worship are the most common (Muhyidin & Maharani, 2017). In general, there are three characteristics found in conflicts over the establishment of worship places,



namely objections or rejections submitted by the majority religion in an area against religious minorities, sporadic case findings, and slow and time-consuming resolutions— especially when taking legal action (Purnamasari, 2019).

Meanwhile, the discourse on the establishment of worship places in Indonesia revolves around the issue of success and problems. The success in establishing houses of worship shows that PBM has succeeded in being the guardian of public order in the community. Good socialization regarding the regulations from the government also supports the smooth process of establishing houses of worship. Some cases did experience various dynamics of rejection. Still, cooperation and coordination between institutions as well as a good attitude of multiculturalism in the community made the problems surrounding the establishment of worship houses resolved (A. K. Ahmad, 2010; Aji, 2014; Ansori, 2019; Mujiyanto, 2018; Putri, 2011; Saprillah, 2017). Some discourses also explain that worship places occur due to several factors, such as administrative, theological, and sociological law. Some findings indicate that the government has not effectively disseminated PBM, while others suggest that PBM has faced various problems, even contradicting the Constitution because it is counterproductive to universal values and human rights. Therefore, the implementation of government policies harms the lives of religious believers (Aji, 2014; Al-Amin & Anam, 2019; Ansori, 2019; Firdaus, 2017; Hutabarat, 2015; Mustolehudin, 2015). Generally, the discourse did not see the various potential shortcomings of PBM and the strengths of the policy comprehensively. Various problems regarding the establishment of houses of worship emphasize the ineffective socialization of PBM and focus on problems in the community, both by institutional elites and religious people around worship places.

There are two actors in the conflict over establishing places of worship, namely state and non-state. This requires a different approach to analyze the problems and to solve them. The state-actors-based problems need a structural approach, while non-state-actors-based problems require a cultural and processual approach in solving them. Structural issues related mainly to PBM No. 9 and 8 of 2006. The regulations governing the establishment of worship places are used as a means of communication and serve as legitimacy to exclude the process of establishing houses of worship for minorities. Therefore, it is vital to manage the societal aspects such as structural, cultural, and processual in the community to minimize conflict. Optimal management of these social aspects can bring about policies to build houses of worship that are inclusive of religious minorities.

This study uses the sociological perspective of development by Wirutomo (2013) through structural, cultural, and processual aspects and their slices to analyze the establishment of worship places. With this approach, problems can be described comprehensively by looking at various societal elements in society. The concept of social development provides inclusive policy recommendations regarding the establishment of houses of worship. In addition, this study uses the SWOPA concept to analyze various policy alternatives in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, problems, and actions (SWOPA) in some aspects, namely structure, culture, and process. The qualitative data collection technique used is document analysis. The use of this technique requires the author to be careful in ensuring the authenticity and usefulness of certain documents while also paying attention to the original purpose, context of preparation, and the document's target audience (Bowen, 2009). The research data sources are from primary data obtained through interviews with relevant officials at the Center for Religious Harmony, Ministry of



Religion, and secondary data from research results and reports from government institutions and non-governmental institutions engaged in religious harmony.

## DISCUSSION

## Societal Elements of Social Development

Based on the Annual Report on Religious Life (2012) in Indonesia by CRCS (Center for Religious & Cross-cultural Studies) UGM (Bagir et al., 2013) there are three main issues related to cases of houses of worship, namely: (1) permits to build houses worship from the local government; (2) the problem of community rejection of the presence of a group of places of worship that differs from the religion of the majority of the local community; and (3) the protracted settlement of cases of houses of worship so that the problem becomes more complex.

Meanwhile, the Center for Research and Development on Religious Life of 2011 found that it is not only Christians who have difficulty establishing churches amid the majority of Muslims, such as in Sumatra and Java. Minority Muslims in the central region (Bali) which are predominantly Hindu—in the eastern region, most of the citizens are Catholic and Christian and have difficulty establishing mosques and prayer rooms (Pusat Litbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2011; Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2012). Another interesting finding is that minority Christians also have difficulty establishing houses of worship among other Christians, for example, the Bethel Indonesia Rock Church in Sika Regency (Pusat Litbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2011).

In addition, the Wahid Foundation (2016) also stated that throughout 2015 there were 53 cases of sealing places of worship. 37 of them were carried out by state actors such as Satpol PP or the police and 16 others by non-state actors such as local community organizations. Not only will it lead to sealing or demolition, but the absence of a permit can also trigger the criminalization of activists of places of worship. The Research and Development Center for Religious Life shows that the challenges of religious harmony are still filled with cases related to places of worship. Although there are various case chronicles, the root of the problem is classic: the lack of understanding of the community and officials regarding existing regulations or weak implementation of PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006 (Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2016). The following is a description of the policy instruments based on the elements of structure, culture, and process.

	Table 1. Officetular Element T moning	
Formal Structure of Instruments	The Formal Structure of the Pattern of	
	Power	
In accordance with Law number 12 of	Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) was	
2005 (International Covenant on Civil	formed in each region	
Rights)		
In accordance with Law number 28 of	Quality of human resources in government	
2002 concerning Buildings (administrative	institutions	
and technical requirements related to the		
designation and function of buildings)		
Derivative regulations by local government	PBM Number 9 and 8 are prone to being	
	misused to support the interests of certain	
	groups/persons	

Table 1. Structural Element Finding



Joint Ministerial Regulation Number 9 and 8 of 2006 are regulations issued by the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs and addressed to local governments in their respective regions following the authorities' regulations. However, supervision over the implementation and socialization of this regulation was inconsistent and not sustainable. Still, many parties did not understand the requirements for establishing the worship places even though regulated for 11 years. Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB), formed in each region according to articles 8 and 9, has a role as an agent bridging the local government with the citizens. However, they were not always able to overcome conflicts that occurred in the field since the authority and ability of FKUB members themselves are not evenly well-distributed among regions.

Table 2. Culture	Element Findings
Policy Maker Culture	Society Culture
Lack of discipline in the implementation	Low awareness of administrative and
and supervision of administration and	bureaucratic order
bureaucracy	
Neglect of local wisdom so that the	Local wisdom; mingles with local residents
application of regulations emphasizes more	by promoting tolerance and mutual respect
on formalities	
-	Religiosity
-	Inter-religious tolerance
-	Group fanaticism

 Table 2. Culture Element Findings

Elements of culture are values system that has been deeply rooted in society (Wirutomo, 2013). In this element, the problem is assessed by the policymaker scope-based and the community affected scope-based. The cultural elements in the scope of policymakers are the lack of discipline in regulatory oversight. Regulations sometimes are made without regard to their impact on existing local wisdom. Cultural elements found in the community can be a good culture and support policy implementation. However, there is also a culture that is not such good that it hinders policies' application and creates conflicts. A potential culture supporting policy implementation is an attitude of religious tolerance, religiosity, local wisdom in the form of a desire to mingle and work together. This desire to blend in will encourage an understanding of courtesy and respect for local customs so that social relations are prioritized and not mere bureaucratic or formality.

SETARA Institute for Democracy and Peace (2017) recorded 155 incidents of violations of freedom of religion/belief throughout 2017 spread across 26 provinces. There are 75 violations involving state officials as actors. The state actors who committed the most violations were local governments, with 25 actions. Another state actor who also committed violations was the Police with 17 actions. Meanwhile, of the 201 acts of violation of freedom of religion/belief, 126 of them were committed by non-state actors, namely individual citizens and individuals who are members of community organizations. In addition, group fanaticism influenced by religiosity can lead to negative sentiments towards adherents of other religions and intolerance.

Other intolerance conflicts also exacerbate conflicts over places of worship. The Wahid Foundation report (2016) shows that in terms of regional distribution, violations of Freedom of Religion and Belief occurred in 30 provinces in 2016. The ten provinces with the highest incidences were West Java (28 incidents), DKI Jakarta (25 incidents), East Java



(22 incidents), Central Java (14 events), East Kalimantan (14 events), Jambi (9 events), South Sulawesi (8 events), Yogyakarta (8 events), Banten (8 events), North Sumatra (8 events), Sumatra West (8 events).

Table 3. Process I	Element Findings
Positive Process	Negative Process
Coordination between regional officials as	The lack of policy socialization among
regulated in the PBM	the community makes lack
	understanding about PBM
Meetings and dialogues for socialization	There is no deliberation or failure to
	make consensus
The role of mass media as a socialization	Demonstrations that lead to radical
medium	actions from conservatism group
FKUB as an institution to accommodate	Criticize to articles that are prone to
aspirations, minimize demonstrations and	multiple interpretations; PBM's legal
radical rejections from conservatism group	force is considered weak
Community Support for PBM as regulated	_
worship place to make worship place's	
establishment more orderly	

Table 3. Process Element Findings

The process elements explain the dynamics that occur in the community, which are not yet structured and cultured, in negotiating existing policies (Wirutomo, 2013). Positive negotiations can encourage good implementation, for example, coordination between regional officials, frequent meetings and dialogues between the government and religious leaders, mass media coverage that spreads the spirit of harmony and tolerance, and the presence of aspirational institutions (FKUB). The existence of sentiment towards ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup (SARA) is often caused by a lack of mutual understanding and respect. This can only be overcome through two-way communication between parties who are currently or have the potential to experience conflict.

Several PBM weaknesses, both in terms of the substance of the policy tool itself and its implementation in society, led to dysfunctional negotiations. Certain people can deliberately provoke or take advantage of a heated situation. Along with the continuing disorientation and inconsistency of the security forces and the government in preventing inter-religious conflicts, the potential for disharmony persists. These tensions and conflicts are especially evident regarding the construction of houses of worship. The minority groups tend to difficult to build their respective worship places in majority religious communities areas. According to Azra, these symptoms are a reflection of spiritualpsychological anxiety. In the majority's perspective, the presence of other religious groups, symbolically reflected in their worship places, is regarded as causing social disruption, intrusion, and creating religious-psychological disorders. Each community is not always express but can perceive religious fears (Reslawati, 2015).

Suprayogo states that some religious conflicts, like occurred in Ambon, Sambas Regency, Poso, North Maluku, Mataram, and others, are caused by religious interests expanded into general social life (Haidlor Ali Ahmad & Hidayatulloh, 2016). It is not religion itself that is the source of the conflict, especially regarding the content of its teachings, but the fact that religion has become part of the sociological phenomenon in society. Based on these considerations, an in-depth understanding of religious life,



especially in a pluralistic society, becomes very important. PBM Socialization Number 9 and 8 of 2006 aims to create religious harmony in a pluralistic society like Indonesia.

## The Intersection of Elements of Structure, Culture and Process

In real life, structure, culture, and processes elements do not stand separately, but to a certain degree, they intersect (support each other, influence, and maybe even embedded) to form a complex system (Wirutomo, 2013). All three are basic social elements in social life. The development of a more emancipatory (equal) and inclusive social life (providing basic rights and welfare for all citizens) needs to take into account the three basic elements. (see Figure 1). If the policy ignores this, there will be the exclusion of certain groups.

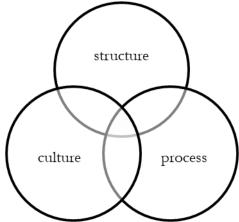


Figure 1. Essential Elements of Socio-Cultural Life: Structure, Culture, Process

Following are the findings of the intersection of structure, culture and process (see Table 4).

	Structure	Culture	Process
Structure	-	The establishment of houses of worship is always based on PBM, but the local wisdom of the local community is ignored ( <i>Cultured Structure</i> )	Criticism of multi- interpreted articles in PBM Community support for more orderly PBM More massive PBM socialization ( <i>Processed Structure</i> )
Culture	Bad bureaucracy Multi- interpretation rules Religion is legalized ( <i>Structured Culture</i> )	-	Deliberation as a space for inter- religious interaction Discourse to strengthens a culture of tolerance by focusing on local wisdom in the midst of intolerant groups

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			(Processed Culture)
Process	lination en regional ils is ted legally ormally; ons between ous adherents adherents ationalized in 3; socialization ins the a of aith meetings lialogues run government ies; nments modate the nds/aspiratio f intolerant s. <i>ared Process</i> )	demonstrations by intolerant groups are cultivated when minorities want to build worship places Deliberations are carried out among elements of society but have difficulty obtaining consensus, especially from intolerant groups ( <i>Cultured Process</i> )	

## Evaluation of the Policy Structure of the Establishment of Worship Places

The evaluation method used in this paper is the SWOPA analysis which consists of Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Problem, and Action and is combined with the problem of Structure, Culture, and Process. The details in the evaluation of this policy are as follows:

The Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and Home Affairs (PBM) Number 9 and 8 of 2006 regarding the establishment of houses of worship aims to maintain religious harmony by providing a sense of security and legality from worship places which incidentally become centers of religious activities for their adherents. Religious harmony is cooperation in religious and social activities (Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2012). Instead of interfering with freedom of worship, this regulation implies protection in the implementation of worship activities.

The constitutional mandate explicitly guarantees freedom of religion. The government should run it. The government is encouraged to be proactive in realizing an inclusive religious life. The government can also work with interfaith leaders to jointly bring about harmonious religious life at the grassroots. In addition, the government can collaborate with elements of civil society engaged in issues of tolerance. To mobilize support and programs at the community level that can strengthen inclusive and productive interfaith communication. Young people and the government can also become strategic



partners in campaigning and producing a tolerant space, both on online and offline activities.

Harmonization of religious communities can also be carried out through FKUB as a facilitator. As happens in society, interaction and social relations between religious communities must go through a long and intensive social process. Conflict problems will not occur when the interaction between religious communities is well established. The existence of FKUB can certainly help build relationships and interactions between communities because FKUB's membership consists of all religions recognized by the government of the Republic of Indonesia.

The Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs Number 9 and 8 of 2006 is still a regulation towards conducive and orderly infrastructure development but has not touched on human development itself. Development must favor change and impact on society. The other weaknesses in this policy are first, the administrative bureaucracy is prone to fraud. Second, some sentences have multiple interpretations. Third, the lack of socialization and education carried out by the government.

There are three things related to opportunity, namely political agenda, public interest, and global trend. The political agenda shows that many institutions at several levels have regulated the rules regarding worship itself as in Article 18 paragraph (1) of the International Covenant on Civil Rights (Law No. 12/2005) that explains the right to freedom of religion has two dimensions, namely an internal and an external forum. The internal forum is an individual's right to have or embrace his religion or belief based on his choice. While the external forum is the right to manifest one's religion/belief, including the right to worship, religious/belief practices, religious celebrations or beliefs (observance), and religious teaching.

Peace and harmony of religious communities are public issues that must be developed in society. This issue must also be supported by the revival of tolerance and diversity as values inherent in the Indonesian nation. The social capital and ideology of Pancasila that they have should make people live more in diversity and difference. In addition, the emphasis on Pancasila as a public religion can also help the success of this policy. This means that Pancasila is interpreted as a unity of religious integration in social and political relations and is oriented and has value in agreements between community members that accommodate the overall norms of religious communities, including for people who are not religious. In support, this policy will flow when the ways of socialization from the government to the community are more modern and understood by the community. In the end, the policy can become a tolerant and harmonious public trend.

Of course, the making and application of policies do not always run smoothly and smoothly. In the process, there are always conflicts or obstacles in implementing a policy. As for the obstacles or problems faced in this policy, first, the role and function of FKUB do not work. In Article 9 PBM No. 9 and 8 of 2006 regulated the duties of FKUB which in essence is an institution that maintains harmony with assistance to the people. FKUB is also a forum for aspirations from mass organizations for recommendations to the government. In reality, FKUB does not seem to have any legal power to be able to move more for religious adherents to create harmony. As in various cases, FKUB is constrained by various factors such as funding and the strong predicate of majority and minority attached to an area (Pusat Litbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2011)



Second, the socialization of policies that are not optimal. The policy of the joint regulation of the two ministers is not well socialized to the public. The socialization is carried out more at the local government level as a permit for the establishment of houses of worship. As a result, the many areas prone to intolerance still do not know about the rules for establishing houses of worship. Third, weak supervision coordination. PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006, articles 5, 6, and 7 explain that each head of government from the governor to the village level assisted by the Ministry of Religion has a role and responsibility to oversee every process of building houses of worship. These three institutions have not yet carried out their respective roles and functions. Therefore, every time there is a problem with the place of worship, these structural elements throw responsibilities at each other and do not know the problem until a conflict or violation occurs. The government is also still weak in mapping potential conflicts. New actions will be taken after the turmoil and are often only reactionary and pragmatic. The government should be able to map the condition of the community from various sides, whether political, economic, ethnic, and religious (Pusat Litbang Kehidupan Keagamaan, 2011). Another problem is the difference in implementing PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006 in Regional Regulations.

Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and Home Affairs (PBM) Number 9 and 8 are guidance for local government to make regulations regarding religious harmony. However, in implementing policies, many regions still do not heed or use PBM as a reference. Many local rules do not make plans for establishing places of worship as well as many of them are not following the PBM reference Number 9 and 8 of 2006. There are even regions that want to abolish PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006. This fact, of course, cannot be separated from the existence of misunderstandings and different implementations from each region. Besides, cultural problems prevailing in the community require the local place to adjust because of the clash with the socio-cultural community. As happened in Aceh and Manokwari, they regulate the regulation of places of worship by the culture of the community and are no longer oriented towards inclusive policies or according to the reference from PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006. The rule finally issued were not based on official regulations and procedures but depended on the circumstances or factors of the dominant regional leadership. This situation, of course, creates a barrier in the distribution of religious harmony that is the main agenda in PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006.

The last problem is related to the sociological condition of the local community. All religious adherents ever experience cases of disputes due to the worship place establishment. Some cases occur in the process of establishment, control, or closure caused by various factors. There is still a growing assumption that the house of worship's existence in an area can be interpreted sociologically as a 'threat' to other religious adherents. In the new worship places area, some people consider that the congregation will spread their religious missions and recruit them to increase the followers. Many also think that a new house of worship building will damage the social order and their conducive environment.

Departing from the previously discussed problems, this policy has shortcomings in socialization, coordination, and clear policy composition. For this reason, further action is needed for the effectiveness of policy application. As for the government's actions to solve the problems in this policy, the first is the socialization of the policies and values of Pancasila to the public. The method used in socializing must also be in a way that is close to the community and touches various groups, especially youth. For example, by using



mass media and social media such as Twitter or Instagram, young people always access. In addition, there is a need for dialogue with FKUB by expanding the scope of socialization that is carried out in cities and spreads to rural areas. Second, increasing the role of FKUB's function as a forum for community aspirations and a means of control to avoid conflict. Third, improve coordination and supervision in implementing policies to avoid fraudulent practices. Fourth, the government can explore local wisdom that exists in the community to create sustainable programs that reflect a harmonious and tolerant life. Fifth, coordination between relevant stakeholders, from the ranks of the central government to the regions, to work together to produce inclusive and interfaith programs. And, a shared commitment to protect minorities. Sixth, together with civil society and youth groups, create spaces and policies that build life at the grassroots that is tolerant and peaceful. Finally, the evaluation of the multi-interpreted articles and clarifying articles that are still ambiguous or cannot be understood in the Joint Ministerial Regulation Number 9 and 8 of 2006 concerning the Establishment of Houses of Worship. Articles that hinder the creation of a tolerant religious life can be abolished and add articles that provide space for religious freedom and guarantee the rights of minorities fairly.

## CONCLUSION

Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religion and the Minister of Home Affairs (PBM) Number 9 and 8 of 2006 were issued to maintain inter-religious harmony as well as to accommodate the worship needs of all citizens through the maintenance and empowerment of religious harmony forums and the establishment of houses of worship. Nevertheless, the practice of social exclusion related to the establishment of houses of worship for minority religious groups in an area still occurs. Freedom to embrace religion is included in the internal realm which is related to private space and must be distinguished from worship activities that touch the public or external sphere. PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006 emphasize conducive and orderly infrastructure development but have not touched human development itself.

Three main aspects must be considered in making policy alternatives. First, issuing derivative regulations in the form of Governor Regulations and Mayor/Regent Regulations concerning inter-religious harmony and permits to build houses of worship. Second, to establish and maximize the role of FKUB at the provincial and city/district levels. Third, the socialization of PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006. In addition, based on the evaluation of the implementation of PBM Number 9 and 8 of 2006, high and medium priority strategies and policies are needed. Strategies and policies with high priority include: 1) issuance of Regional Regulations concerning Permits for the Establishment of Houses of Worship, 2) establishment of FKUB at the grassroots level; 3) socialization of Joint Ministerial Regulation (PBM) No. 9 and 8 of 2006 in-depth and evenly, 4) ratification of the Draft Law on the Protection of Religious People. Meanwhile, policy recommendations with medium priorities include 1) establishment of a Harmony Center; 2) tolerance and diversity education, 3) awareness-raising and tolerance in conflict-prone areas/low tolerance levels, 4) synergy with NGOs working around religious harmony, 5) collaboration with the media to campaign for a tolerant life, 6) PBM revision Number 9 and 8 of 2006.

It needs further research to enrich the scientific findings regarding conflicts over worship places. In the dispute of places of worship, there are two actors, namely state and non-state. This research explores friction over the construction of houses of worship with a structure, culture, and process approach and bases the evaluation on a SWOPA (strength,



weakness, opportunity, problem, action) analysis. Therefore, this study did not explore the description of the roles of actors in creating conflict. There needs to be a comprehensive study to see how the involvement and motivations of these actors move to prohibit the construction of houses of worship. State and non-state actors who create conflict can be explored and compared to see the root of the problem since each issue has its solution. In the dispute over places of worship, there is usually only one actor, namely non-state. As a result, problems stemming from the structure and state do not get adequate attention.

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