

Policy for Addressing Beggars in the Pilgrimage Tourism Area of Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the tourism policy regarding beggars in the pilgrimage area of the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb, where begging has become a tradition rooted in *Sunan Gunung Jati's* will: "*Ingsun entrusts tajug lan fakir kemimian*" (I entrust mosques/prayers and the poor). This message is often misinterpreted by the community as justification for the presence of beggars. In tourism policy analysis, it is essential to evaluate how such local traditions intersect with policy objectives, including sustainability, economic impact, and social welfare. Following R. Dye's public policy framework, effective tourism policy must address community needs while considering stakeholder interests and long-term impacts. This study employs in-depth interviews, field observations, and literature analysis, triangulating data from policy officers and tourists to assess current policy outcomes. Both primary and secondary data are used to ensure comprehensive evaluation. Findings reveal that economic empowerment efforts, such as encouraging the sale of *mukena* and prayer mats, have not fully resolved the issue. The persistence of beggars highlights the need for a more holistic tourism policy approach, integrating law enforcement, economic development, and community mindset transformation. Sustainable tourism policy should balance economic benefits with social inclusion and cultural preservation, ensuring that interventions are both humane and effective in the long run.

Keywords: Policy, Countermeasures, Beggars, Tourism, Cirebon, Socio-Cultural

INTRODUCTION

The Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb in Cirebon, West Java, is a prominent pilgrimage tourism destination, attracting visitors seeking spiritual enrichment, performing religious rituals, or simply searching for tranquility (Afghoni & Busro, 2017; Hamzah, 2022; Musrifah, 2018; Rahmawati, 2022; Salimuddin, 2020). The site's popularity increases during special days such as *Maulidan* and *Kliwonan*, drawing large crowds from Cirebon and surrounding regions. Located in *Astana Village* and surrounded by royal tombs of the Kasaphan Palace, Cirebon Palace, and Sunan Gunung Jati Palace, the area is not only a

center for religious tourism but also a hub for economic activity, with many traders and street vendors present. However, behind this vibrant atmosphere lies a persistent social phenomenon: the presence of beggars, ranging from children to the elderly, who are highly visible along the pilgrimage routes. Their presence often disrupts the spiritual atmosphere, reduces pilgrims' comfort, and can negatively affect the image of the pilgrimage site.

The complexity of the beggar problem in this area reflects broader social development challenges. Many beggars come from marginalized groups with limited access to education, employment, and social security, while others may see begging as an alternative income strategy, sometimes organized in a structured manner (Amin et al., 2025). The Indonesian Constitution, Article 27 paragraph 2 and Article 34, mandates the state to ensure the right to work and social welfare, including care for the poor and abandoned children. In response, the Cirebon Regency Government has issued Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2015 concerning Public Order. However, government policies often face challenges such as inconsistent implementation and lack of clarity, leading to varied social and economic impacts on local communities.

The Social Service (*Dinas Sosial*) and Satpol PP (Civil Service Police) play strategic roles in addressing begging. The Social Service focuses on social empowerment and protection, while Satpol PP enforces regulations and public order. Additionally, *Pokdarwis* (tourism awareness groups) collaborate with local governments to manage the arrangement of beggars and street vendors, aiming to maintain the area's beauty and comfort for pilgrims (Febriken et al., 2016; Fitri, 2019; Nusanto, 2017; Syahroni & Pambudi, 2019; Y & Asmara, 2020). A key challenge in this multi-agency collaboration is balancing repressive and humanitarian approaches, as single strategies—either empowerment or control—often fail to address the root causes of poverty and begging.

Tourists and visitors have differing perceptions of beggars: some see them as part of the spiritual experience, while others are disturbed by their presence, especially when begging becomes aggressive. This affects the overall image and attractiveness of the pilgrimage tourism area. Previous research, such as Gumanti et al. (2020), found that despite policies aimed at fostering street children, their numbers have increased, partly due to challenges in funding, human resources, and coordination among stakeholders. Similarly, Suprapti & Wardaya (2024) highlighted that government apparatus often have different interpretations of regulations concerning the poor and beggars, complicating effective policy implementation.

This research aims to fill the gap by analyzing the effectiveness of skills training and empowerment programs as solutions to reduce dependence on begging, while also assessing how the presence of beggars affects the attractiveness of pilgrimage tourism at the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb. The findings emphasize the need for sustainable and humane policies that balance repressive measures with empowerment programs to address the root causes of begging. This approach can help policymakers develop

comprehensive strategies for managing pilgrimage tourism areas, ensuring that both community welfare and visitor experiences are preserved.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the impact of public policy on the practice of begging in the pilgrimage tourism area of the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb. Data collection methods include observation, interviews, and documentation analysis, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. Qualitative research methodologies are particularly effective for characterizing, investigating, and understanding the meanings individuals or groups assign to social or humanitarian issues. According to Creswell (2019), this process involves asking questions, following research protocols, gathering specific data from participants, evaluating data inductively from particular topics to broader themes, and interpreting the significance of the data. The structure of the research report is flexible and can be adjusted to best capture the complexity of the issue, emphasizing personal significance and adopting an inductive perspective.

Primary data in this study refers to information or documents conveyed directly by individuals or parties present during the described events, while secondary data consists of information provided by those not directly involved or present at the time (Hardani, 2020). The researcher conducted interviews with several key stakeholders, including the management of the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb tourist area, the Social Service (*Dinas Sosial*), Satpol PP (Civil Service Police), the Astana Village Government, and the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*). To enhance the validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by combining in-depth interviews, direct field observations, and analysis of previous research articles. Additionally, source triangulation was applied by comparing information from various parties, such as policy officers and visiting tourists. Theoretical triangulation was also utilized, incorporating public policy theory according to R. Dye, which emphasizes government decisions as the core of policy. Through this comprehensive methodology, the study aims to provide a thorough understanding of how public policy influences the phenomenon of begging in pilgrimage tourism areas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to R. Dye, public policy is "whatever governments choose to do or not to do". In the context of the issue of countermeasures of the beggars, this theory suggests that countermeasures should be seen as conscious government decisions that have a real impact. If the government chooses to make active policies, for example through social rehabilitation programs, job provision, and skills education, then this reflects the government's actions to address the root causes of poverty and unemployment that drive the practice of begging. On the other hand, if the government does not make adequate policies or only takes a repressive approach, then this also becomes a "not to do" policy

that has an impact on the continuity of begging practices. Thus, R. Dye's theory emphasizes the importance of government decisions – both actions and omissions – in resolving these social problems.

Socio-Cultural Policy

Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb tour is already very popular in Indonesia, especially for the residents of Cirebon and the surrounding area. The Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb Pilgrimage Tourism Area is famous for the many beggars who live there. Considered a hereditary tradition, this phenomenon of beggars has existed for a long time. Remembering Sunan Gunung Jati's will to the people of Cirebon, "Ingsun titip tajug lan fakir miskin" (I leave a mosque or prayer room and the poor), this tradition of begging cannot be rejected or opposed just like that. However, this is misinterpreted by the community by allowing beggars to remain, as conveyed by Mr. Ilyas as the manager of the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb pilgrimage tourism area. They considered the will of Sunan Gunung Jati to mean giving alms to the poor, including beggars. As a result, they take advantage of the message to lazy and ask for the mercy of others without trying first. It is necessary to carry out awareness campaigns by tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) and local scholars through a cultural approach to separate the meaning of "poor people" in the will from the practice of begging. This can be done as massive education through local media and Islamic boarding schools about productive alms.

Economic Policy

People in the pilgrimage neighborhood beg to earn money to meet their daily needs (Prihatini, 2013). Beggars are not always short of money is the fact that some of them fall into the middle economic category, according to a survey by the Cirebon Regency Satpol PP. (Interview with the Chief Witness of the Operation Control of the Pamong Praja Police Unit, Mr. Wisma Wijaya). The researcher also conducted an interview with the management staff of the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb pilgrimage tourism area - Mr. Ilyas. During the interview, he said that they have offered alternative businesses to beggars, such as stalls around the pilgrimage area, and some of them have accepted it. In addition, there is a suggestion from the Astana Village Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group) to change the work of beggars to a more respectable job, such as selling mukenah, slipper holders, or prayer mats as goodie bags. While this concept is great and can generate additional income, its implementation has not been successful. One of the main reasons is that the amount of money they earn from begging is much greater than what they earn from new ventures. This phenomenon suggests that there is a difference between what beggars expect and what happens, which suggests that changing people's mindsets and behaviors requires a more thorough effort. For this reason, it is necessary to integrate with the KUR (People's Business Credit) program and business assistance.

Education Policy

Education is one of the factors that affect the survival of beggars. Beggars usually only have an elementary school (SD) to high school (SMA) education (SMA) or equivalent, and they are even among those who have no education at all. Because of this, the Social Service carries out the process by training beggars to get more respectable jobs. This training was carried out in the dormitory for three months. They are not allowed to go home and are not allowed to bring pocket money. To help beggars learn, the Social Service has the Bina Mandiri Building and Griya Wanita Mandiri. However, the nature of this training does not force them to follow it; rather, it comes back to the individual's own consciousness whether or not they want to receive training. So, the principle of social work is "helping people help themselves". The goal of this training is for beggars to have skills that they can use to find a better source of income. However, in its implementation, of course, there are obstacles faced, such as; The lack of participation is because the duration of the training is too short, which is only 3 months and does not target a change in mindset, as well as the nature of training that is not mandatory and lacking.

Health Policy

In addition to the educational factor, some of them also take advantage of health limitations, such as physical disabilities (disabilities), and other health problems. This is why they choose to become beggars only because it is difficult to get a job. Through the Social Service, including assistance with the Health Office for rehabilitation and medical examinations as well as disability certification. So that their physical deficiencies and health conditions are not abused. However, in fact, there are no special programs for disabilities such as; inclusive work quota. Therefore, there needs to be synergy with the Health Office for medical examinations and disability certification. Because the visitors are aware of this and believe that they are taking advantage of their shortcomings to beg and seek sympathetic visitors. However, this cannot be fully tolerated because it still interferes with the comfort of visitors.

Public Order Policy

Beggars in pilgrimage areas can earn money from pilgrims or visitors in a variety of ways, from handing out plastic cups or bowls to forcing them to give money to the boxes they have given them. The most common way beggars do this is to suddenly confront pilgrims or visitors and throw plastic cups or force them to put money in the containers they are carrying. Even in front of the tomb building, there are many beggars who prevent visitors or pilgrims from entering the tomb area if they do not give "alms". If a pilgrim or visitor gives money to one of the beggars, the other beggars will come directly to them and ask for the same money. In the worst case, they will follow and pull the pilgrim's clothes to ask for money. They often follow the pilgrims to their vehicles and only leave after they receive the money. With this, it can be assessed that in them there is an embedded mentality of beggars who only want to get an instant income even though in terms of physics they are still able to find other jobs. Visitors have reported

their discomfort due to the beggars being pushy, they hope the manager will act. Strict action was taken against the player by the direct manager. They were allowed to beg only outside the main area of Sunan Gunung Jati's tomb with the aim of avoiding violence while begging. Although it has not been completely resolved, it is quite helpful to improve the comfort of visitors.

The control of beggars in this tourist area has been carried out in accordance with the policy, but it needs to be carried out regularly with supervision and with the awareness of each beggar. Satpol PP asked the surrounding community and the local government to cooperate, but they did not support it, so the implementation of control was not optimal. In their efforts to eliminate beggars in this pilgrimage tourism area, Satpol PP continues to make persuasive efforts such as gathering beggars around the location and sharing information about the ban on beggars. In addition, local village officials, the key keeper of the pilgrimage tourism area, or the management party, must be present at the event. In addition, Satpol PP has installed a warning board "It is forbidden to give to beggars" in front of the tourist area. If beggars continue to violate these regulations and continue to beg visitors, they will be fined in accordance with local government regulations. The hope of Satpol PP is that if it cannot be eliminated, at least the existence of beggars can be reduced so as not to disturb the comfort and beauty of the pilgrimage area. During the control of Satpol PP, of course, it faces many challenges, for example, The community supports the control of beggars in pilgrimage tourism areas, but beggars oppose it and say that Satpol PP is arrogant and does not help the people, or lack of community support in reporting. Since the problem of beggars has been a tradition from previous generations, this problem cannot be simply eliminated. However, beggars must be orderly and not coercive. For this reason, the Social Service suggested making a large box that was opened every Friday and distributed to beggars. This must be done strictly to maintain the safety and comfort of the pilgrimage site. (According to the interview with Mr. Ahmad Syahroni, A.K.S., M.Si. from the Cirebon Regency Social Service).

The presence of beggars in the pilgrimage tourism area of the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb has negative impacts, including: (1) Negative Impressions of Tourism: Many visitors may feel disturbed or uncomfortable with the presence of beggars, which can ruin their pilgrimage experience, (2) Safety and Comfort: Beggars may act aggressively or disturb visitors, which can make them uncomfortable and uncomfortable, (3) Social Stigma: Beggars can make certain areas look negatively on others, which can affect the overall image of tourist areas. (4) Economic Impact: If visitors feel uncomfortable, they may decrease the length of stay or the frequency of their visits, which can ultimately affect the local economic income.

To reduce the negative effects of the existence of these beggars, it is necessary to implement several solutions, including; (1) Community empowerment programs, such as skills training for beggars to get jobs and encourage micro-enterprises that can generate money for local communities; (2) Social and charitable programs, such as holding awareness campaigns to teach visitors how to help beggars through official

organizations., (3) Improving the Safety and Comfort of Beggars, including better supervision in tourist areas and the provision of rest areas and facilities that make visitors feel safer and more comfortable, (4) Tourist Education, including providing instructions to visitors on how to interact ethically and safely with beggars, and (5) Improving the Image of Tourist Areas, including promoting positive aspects of tourist areas to attract better tourism institutions to attract institutions

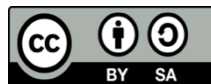
CONCLUSION

The policy for managing beggars at the Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb addresses socio-cultural, economic, educational, health, and public order aspects, yet remains fragmented and suboptimal due to socio-economic challenges and insufficient coordination among stakeholders. Implementation is hindered by factors such as the influx of beggars from outside the region during peak events like *Muludan* or *Kliwonan*, limited authority of *Pokdarwis* and the Social Service, and regulatory discrepancies with the Palace area. While efforts including alternative employment, skills training, and health interventions have been initiated, their effectiveness is constrained by these systemic issues. Suggestions from *Pokdarwis* for routine security by Satpol PP, TNI, or Polri must be balanced with humane, empowerment-based solutions, and the restriction of begging to areas outside the main tomb is intended to preserve visitor comfort. To shift public perception, awareness campaigns involving *Pokdarwis* and local religious leaders are recommended. For future research, it is suggested to explore models of inter-agency collaboration and community-based interventions that integrate law enforcement with sustainable empowerment and social inclusion strategies, ensuring policies are both effective and humane in addressing the root causes of begging in pilgrimage tourism areas.

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