

## Factors cause the failure of policy implementation of traditional customary governance system (Nagari) in West Sumatera Province, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This study examines the persistent non-implementation of West Sumatra Provincial Regulation Number 7 of 2018 concerning the return to a traditional nagari governance system in Indonesia. Despite its enactment, no district-level government within the province has translated the regulation into enforceable local policy. This phenomenon presents a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation. Employing a qualitative-descriptive methodology, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, then triangulated and interpreted using both etic and emic perspectives. The research adopts several theoretical lenses, including the policy implementation models of Van Meter and Van Horn, Edwards III, Grindle, and Mazmanian & Sabatier, to understand the multidimensional challenges. Findings reveal four primary factors hindering implementation: (1) overly optimistic expectations that overlook diverse local customs ("adat salingka nagari"), (2) dispersed governance systems that complicate vertical coordination, (3) insufficient stakeholder involvement during policy formulation, and (4) political cycle uncertainties and limited political will at sub-national levels. These barriers underscore a disconnect between elite-driven top-down policymaking and the participatory, context-sensitive governance structures embedded in Minangkabau society. The study concludes that successful implementation of such context-specific governance reforms requires tailored derivative regulations at district and city levels, inclusive policy design involving local actors, and robust intergovernmental coordination. This research contributes to broader discourses on policy implementation gaps in decentralized governance systems and the challenges of harmonizing legal frameworks with indigenous political traditions.

**Keywords:** *Failure public policy, Local government, Policy implementation, Traditional customary governance system, West Sumatra.*

### 1. Introduction

The reform of the nagari government bureaucracy in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia has been carried out several times, starting from the nagari government system changing to the village system during the new order era marked by the application of Law Number 5 of 1979 concerning village government, then returned to the nagari system during the reform period marked by the birth of the law on regional autonomy.

This change is still considered unable to produce significant changes. Changes in the governance system from the village system to the nagari system have not been able to solve the problems that occur in the community and the government itself, such as the fading of local wisdom values in the form of customary and cultural values and religion in the community. Then the problem of dualism of leadership in the community between customary leaders and nagari government leaders. Furthermore,

the problem of the democratic system used is not in accordance with local democratic values in Minangkabau. the figure of the village government leader who does not fit the criteria of local values. Then also the current nagari government is also considered to provide less space for participation in the wider community and existing institutions in the community so that the impact on the performance of the nagari government is not optimal. In short, the reform of the nagari government is seen as not in accordance with the situation and conditions as well as the local wisdom values of the Minangkabau people.

On the basis of this situation, in 2018 the West Sumatra Provincial Government issued a policy in the form of Regional Regulation of West Sumatra Province Number 7 of 2018 concerning Nagari. The content of this regulation is that the government wants to restore the lowest level of government system in West Sumatra to a custom-based nagari government system (traditional village). In addition to the problems mentioned above, the basis for the birth of this policy is Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. This law provides an opportunity for regions to form a government system at the lowest level, namely villages or other names with a customary village format according to community initiatives. Since the enactment of West Sumatra Province Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2018 concerning Nagari until the beginning of 2024, there has not been a single regional government at the district level that has followed up on this policy in the form of Regional Regulations at the district level so that the change in the nagari government system to customary nagari still cannot be implemented. The rationale for researchers making this one of the focuses of research is that this regulation on nagari has been established and ratified in 2018, but until the end of 2024 there is still no local government at the district and city level, totaling 19 in West Sumatra Province, which follows up on this West Sumatra Provincial Regional Regulation.

For this reason, based on the above conditions, it is necessary to examine the factors that have caused this policy not to be implemented until now with the formulation of the problem as follows, What are the factors that are obstacles that cause the Regional Regulation of West Sumatra Province Number 7 of 2018 concerning Nagari not to be implemented?

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical framework in a study comprises a critical and organized analysis of the literature relevant to the topic, providing a theoretical contextualization and defining the key concepts. It must comprehensively contain theories, models and previous research, identifying gaps, contradictions and consensus in the literature that are important for the focus of the work being developed.

To see how the policy implementation of the West Sumatra Provincial Regulation Number 7 of 2018 concerning Nagari in West Sumatra is, it is necessary to understand the theories and concepts of policy and policy implementation, as well as the factors that influence policy implementation. According to Koontz and O'Donnell [1] defines policy as a general statement of understanding that guides the mind in decision making. Van Meter and Van Horn [2] say that formulating this implementation process is "those actions by public or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions".

In principle, policy implementation is a way for a policy to achieve its goals. No more and no less. To implement public policies, there are two choices of steps available, namely directly implementing in the form of programs or through the formulation of derivative policies or derivatives of these public policies. The series of policy implementation can be clearly observed, starting from programs, to projects and to activities. The model adapts mechanisms that are common in management, especially public sector management. Policies are derived in the form of programs which are then reduced to projects, and finally manifest in activities, whether carried out by the government, the community or government cooperation with the community. Van Meter and Van Horn [2] defines public policy implementation as actions in previous decisions. These actions include efforts to transform decisions into operational actions within a certain period of time as well as in order to continue efforts to achieve

major and minor changes determined by policy decisions carried out by public organizations directed at achieving predetermined goals.

Meanwhile according to Daniel and Mazmanian [3] said that: Implementation is understanding what actually happens after a program is declared effective or formulated is the focus of attention on policy implementation, namely events and activities that arise after the ratification of State policy guidelines which include both efforts to administer them and to cause real consequences / impacts on society or events. From the explanations above, it can be concluded that policy implementation will not begin before goals and objectives are set or identified by policy decisions. So, implementation is a process of activities carried out by various actors so that in the end it will get a result that is in accordance with the goals or objectives of the policy itself.

Based on the above opinions, policy implementation in this case is intended as a series of actions taken by the government in order to realize the achievement of predetermined goals. Policy implementation does not always run smoothly, many factors can influence a successful implementation. This is influenced because basically policy implementation is not always in a vacuum, so there are various kinds of influencing factors around it that influence policy implementation.

The opinion of a policy expert who focuses more on the policy implementation model in a bottom-up perspective is Adam Smith. According to Smith [4] policy implementation is seen as a process or flow. Smith's model views the policy implementation process of the policy process from the perspective of social and political change, where policies made by the government aim to make improvements or changes in society as a target group.

Furthermore, according to Smith, policy implementation is influenced by four variables, namely: First, Idealized policy, namely the interaction pattern initiated by the policy formulator with the aim of encouraging, influencing and stimulating the target group to implement it. Second, Target groups are part of the policy stake holders who are expected to adopt the interaction patterns as expected by the policy formulator. Because this group is the target of policy implementation, it is expected to adjust patterns of behavior to the policies that have been formulated. Third, implementing organization, namely the implementing agencies responsible for implementing the policy. Fourth, Environmental factors are elements in the environment that affect policy implementation such as cultural, social, economic and political aspects.

To enrich the understanding of the various factors that influence policy implementation, researchers try to elaborate several theories of policy implementation and serve as the basis for analysis in this study. The first is the George C. Edwards III Model. Edwards III [5] argues: "In our approach to the study of policy implementation, we begin in the abstract and ask: What are the preconditions for successful policy implementation? What are the primary obstacles to successful policy implementation?" At least George C. Edwards III said that in the approach to the study of policy implementation, the abstract question starts from how the preconditions for the success of public policy and secondly what are the main obstacles to the success of public policy To answer this important question, Edwards III offers and considers four factors in implementing public policy, namely: Communication, Resources, Disposition or Attitudes, and bureaucratic Structure" explains the four factors referred to, namely communication, resources, attitudes of implementers, structure.

The second is the model proposed by Theory GRINDLE [6] where the success of implementation according to Grindle is influenced by two major variables, namely the content of the policy and the implementation environment (context of implementation). These variables include: the extent to which the interests of the target group or target group are included in the policy content, the types of benefits received by the target group, the extent of the desired changes from a policy, whether the location of a program is appropriate, whether a policy has mentioned its implementers in detail, and whether a program is supported by adequate resources.

Furthermore, the theory put forward by Daniel and Mazmanian [3] Sabatier argues that there are three groups of variables that affect the success of implementation, namely the characteristics of the problem (tractability of the problem), the characteristics of the policy / law (ability of statute to

structure implementation) and environmental variables (no statutory variables affecting implementation). The theories and concepts related to policy, policy implementation, and factors that influence this policy are used as a basis for thinking and analyzing research data found in the field.

In addition to the theory described above, researchers also try to explain the concept put forward by Hudson, et al. [7] there are four main causes that make a policy not work or fail, namely “overly optimistic expectations; implementation in dispersed governance; inadequate collaborative policymaking; and the vagaries of the political cycle”. Based on Hudson's opinion, if we relate it to the context of this research, there are excessive or overly optimistic expectations with this policy. The policy of the Regional Regulation of West Sumatra Province concerning Nagari essentially wants to restore the status of nagari, which now still adheres to the village government system to a custom-based nagari government system (traditional village).

### 3. Methodology

This research uses qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. The reason the researcher chose this method is that this qualitative descriptive method and approach has a more diverse approach in academic research than quantitative research. Although the process is the same, qualitative procedures still rely on data in the form of text and images, have unique steps in data analysis and use inductive thinking [8]. Qualitative research is research that collects, analyzes, and interprets narratives comprehensively on visual data to gain understanding and insight into an interesting phenomenon. In the context of this research.

The focus of this research is related to the factors that have become obstacles that have resulted in the non-implementation of the Regional Regulation of West Sumatra Province Number 7 of 2018 concerning Nagari in West Sumatra to date.

Related to the types and sources of data in this study are broadly divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. As for the form of primary data that researchers have obtained from the research conducted such as; data recording interviews with research informants who have been previously determined in accordance with the research theme. then other primary data obtained by researchers in this study is data in the form of documentation in the form of photos taken directly both photos of informants and photos of research locations. Meanwhile, secondary data is data obtained through documents, archives, regulations, and documentation relevant to research problems. Third is the observation technique, this observation technique is a form of systematic observation and recording of symptoms related to the theme of this research.

Meanwhile, related to crosschecking data in this study is the multiple triangulation method as mentioned by Woodside [9] which says “using multiple methods to triangulate, confirm and deepen understanding by using multiple sources all focusing on the same process / event within the same case being described”. For more details, the following triangulation is adopted from the opinion of Creswell [8]. All data were analyzed using qualitative methods through etic and emic interpretation. In qualitative research, etic information is the view of the researcher while emic information is the view of the informant. Both of this information can not only be interpreted according to the methods, techniques, and views and experiences of researchers in the field alone, but also accompanied by literature and theoretical reviews. As explained by Strauss and Corbin [10] that: “a qualitative researcher requires theoretical and social sensitivity, the ability to maintain analytical distance while at the same time drawing upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen, astute power of observation, and good interaction skills.”

### 4. Results and Discussions

A policy is unlikely to experience success or even failure by itself. In the top down approach, it all depends on how the implementation process is hierarchical. This process starts from the initial idea stage before an action is taken, then the link between the objectives of the policy and the policy instruments which will ultimately determine the results. this hierarchy of policy formation plays a more

important role than policy implementation. Despite many criticisms this model is still popular in policy making. However, with the rapid changes in situations and conditions, the current policy context is understood to be much more complex than the previous policy context.

With the development of an increasingly complex policy environment, uncertainty, non-linearity, and adaptability greatly affect the implementation of public policies. This condition then greatly affects the success or failure of the implementation of a public policy which requires diverse solutions according to the context of the time and place where the policy is implemented. In the context of policy implementation in the form of Provincial Regulation Number 7 of 2018 concerning this nagari, which until now has not been implemented, the researcher does not conclude that this policy has failed, but it still cannot be implemented as it should.

On the one hand, this policy has procedurally gone through stages in accordance with regulations related to the formation of regulations, namely Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislation. In the formation of a regional regulation or local regulation, there are several stages that must be passed, namely: (1) planning stage; (2) drafting stage; (3) discussion stage; (4) ratification or stipulation stage, (5) enactment stage, and (6) dissemination stage. However, on the other hand, new problems arise when this regulation is implemented. In many cases, policy implementation does not always run smoothly and successfully. There are many obstacles and factors that influence it. This condition is based on the assumption that policy implementation does not exist in a value-free or vacuum place, so there are various kinds of factors that influence it, both internal and external factors.

According to Hudson, et al. [7] there are four main causes that make a policy not work or fail, namely “overly optimistic expectations; implementation in dispersed governance; inadequate collaborative policymaking; and the vagaries of the political cycle”. The following describes the main causes that make the Regional Regulation Policy of West Sumatra Province concerning Nagari unable to be implemented: First, Overly optimistic expectations. On the one hand, the ideals or goals of this policy are quite ideal and very much in line with the values of local wisdom in Minangkabau. The solution of returning to the custom-based nagari government system is seen as very suitable to overcome the problems being faced by the people in West Sumatra in general. Then also this solution is also seen as being able to overcome and anticipate the development of the progress of the times and civilization and an uncertain future. But on the other hand, the provincial government also needs to realize that to get to that point, it needs to realize that the situation and conditions in the regions, especially the situation at the district and city government level, are different and very dynamic. Not to mention the situation and conditions that exist at the nagari level in each district and city in West Sumatra which are different from one nagari to another.

The optimism and hope of the provincial government is considered excessive because the policy of the provincial regulation on customary nagari is very dependent on the customary system that exists in each nagari. Minangkabau has diverse customs and has differences in each village. This is contained in the term “adat salingka nagari”. This means that the customs that exist in each nagari only apply in that nagari and do not apply to other nagari and vice versa. This condition in another more familiar expression is “lain padang lain ilalang, lain lubuk lain ikannya”. With this principle and reality, it will not be easy to imagine or even implement a uniformity in one thing, in this case the customary governance system at the village level.

Second, implementation in dispersed governance. Then further related to the implementation of a policy that is applied to a government structure that has a fairly wide distribution. Policies formulated at the national level may face challenges to achieve a certain level of consistency in delivery at the local level, a very challenging process where the subnational level has its own level of political authority.

If we analyze further, the development of the government system with the implementation of regional autonomy that is increasingly established at the district and city levels also makes the position of this regulation more complicated to implement at the existing district and city levels. Then there are also the situations and conditions of different government institutions that are scattered at the district

and city levels. Related to the obstacle of the absence of derivative regulations at the district and city levels of local government as a follow-up to this Provincial Regulation.

This provincial regulation policy is only a legal umbrella which still requires further regulations below it to be implemented. This condition is quite reasonable because of the regional autonomy system that we use where the authority is at the district and city level of government, not in the province. On this basis, policies issued by the provincial government related to regulations in the district and city areas need to be followed up by the government at the district and city levels in the form of regulations so that they can be implemented in the administrative areas of the district and city governments respectively. For this reason, good communication and coordination is needed between the organizations or institutions involved, in this case between the government at the provincial level and the government at the district and city levels, as well as between the government at the district and city levels and the government and communities at the nagari-nagari level.

The third is Inadequate collaborative policy making. According to Hudson, et al. [7] The weakness of policy making is the failure to build collaboratives to find common ground for solving public problems in a constructive way. In the context of formulating a policy, it is necessary to integrate different perspectives. The involvement of various elements and stakeholders is important in producing an appropriate policy in the context of solving public problems faced together. One of the weaknesses in public policy making so far is the lack or low involvement of elements or stakeholders that are relevant and have an interest in the problems being faced.

The formulation of the West Sumatra Province Regulation on Nagari policy has in principle gone through an appropriate process. The formulation process took a long time and went through a comprehensive discussion. This discussion process is carried out in formal governmental spaces and scientific discussion forums initiated by the government and the wider community. Although the issue of the nagari government system has become a public problem in West Sumatra, the desire to return the nagari government system to the customary government system is still limited to the elite community. Elite communities include the provincial government, both executive and legislative, then traditional leaders, scholars, and academics, with the note that not all of them are involved and agree. On the other hand, the government at the district and city levels, and even at the nagari level, the level of involvement is still not optimal in terms of formulating this policy.

The lack of involvement of local governments at the district and city levels, as well as governments at the nagari level and communities at the nagari level, is certainly understandable given the wide and distant administrative and geographical coverage. This situation gives the impression that this policy is more top-down and likely elitist. This is because the ideas for changing the custom-based village government system are not purely born from the village level, be it the village elite or the people in the village.

Given this condition, it can be concluded that the limitations in collaboration during the policy formulation process occurred both horizontally and vertically, from the provincial to the nagari levels. According to Creswell [8] policies must be designed to connect actors vertically and horizontally through a collaborative and participatory process in shaping policy considerations. Policy makers require sustained collaboration with various stakeholders across different sectors, such as politics, management, and administration, as well as the involvement of local actors and institutions. According to Hudson, et al. [7] without such collaboration, conflicts may arise concerning the legitimacy of the resulting policy. Therefore, policy formulation and implementation must be treated as an integrated process, rather than merely a series of separate and distinct stages.

Fourth, the vagaries of the political cycle. This refers to the irregularities or unpredictability of the political cycle. In the context of this study, it is understood as the political situation and conditions within the government at the provincial, district/city, and *nagari* levels. This socio-political condition is a key factor in supporting the successful implementation of a policy. If policymakers fail to recognize and consider environmental factors, especially the existing social and political environment, they will likely encounter obstacles during implementation. According to many policy experts, the social and



political environment is one of the factors that significantly influences policy implementation success. One relevant theory is the policy implementation theory by Van Meter and Van Horn [2] which identifies several factors that affect successful policy implementation: the existence of policy standards and objectives; resources; characteristics of the implementing organization; attitudes of the implementers; inter-organizational communication; and the social, economic, and political environment.

In the context of implementing institutional reform policies for the *nagari* governance system, political support from local actors is essential, not only at the district and city government levels but also at the *nagari* level. At the district and city government levels, for instance, support must come from the executive branch and regional legislative bodies. Achieving this requires genuine effort and political will from local elites (both executive and legislative) to formulate and establish regulations for reforming the *nagari* governance system based on customary (*adat*) traditions.

The difficulty in implementing this policy also lies in the condition of a society that is now highly open to information and ideology. As we all understand, democratic values have become the prevailing paradigm and standard in state and societal life today. These democratic values have permeated both public spaces and domestic and private spheres, making them extremely difficult to reduce or reverse. Take, for example, the system of electing public leaders at the *nagari* level. Since the implementation of regional autonomy, the selection of *nagari* leaders has been conducted through direct elections by the *nagari* community, a practice that continues to this day. Despite its shortcomings, this system has become a norm and necessity in a country that adheres to a democratic system.

Another equally important aspect is the political support from local elites at the *nagari* level within the administrative regions of district and city governments. The *Nagari* communities of today are no longer the same as in the past, when they were more socially homogeneous. Currently, *Nagari* communities are largely fragmented along social, economic, and political lines. This condition presents its own challenges when the government proposes a policy that substantively alters the governance structure of *nagari*, which has been in place and practiced since the beginning of regional autonomy. Differences in perspectives and interests among the community and local elites at the *nagari* level must be taken into consideration. The push and pull between those who support and oppose this regulation must be anticipated and addressed from the outset.

## 5. Conclusion

From the results of the research findings and discussions, there are several factors that are obstacles to why until now the West Sumatra Provincial Regulation Number 7 of 2018 concerning *Nagari* has not been implemented. The obstacles faced by the provincial government in implementing the policy of the Provincial Regulation concerning *Nagari* include: the policy of the Provincial Regulation concerning *Nagari* is a type of policy that is only a legal umbrella. This means that in order to be implemented, derivative policies are needed, in this case regional regulations at the district and city levels. Then the second obstacle is the lack of clarity regarding the *nagari* government system that is to be implemented in the *nagari*. This is also related to the values of "*adat salingka nagari*" where there are differences in customs and culture in each existing *nagari*.

Meanwhile, the suggestions and recommendations resulting from this study include those related to the formulation of policies related to this *nagari* government system where the West Sumatra Provincial Government and the West Sumatra Provincial DPRD need to consider the diversity of values, norms, and local wisdom systems that exist in each *nagari* so that when this policy is implemented it does not encounter obstacles and barriers. Then also the West Sumatra Provincial Government and the West Sumatra Provincial DPRD in formulating policies on this *nagari* need to involve more stakeholders who have relationships and interests with the issues and themes of this customary-based *nagari* government system. The West Sumatra Provincial Government must build effective communication and coordination with the government at the district and city levels in order to immediately create derivative regulations in the form of district and city regulations related to *nagari* government reform which is a follow-up to the West Sumatra Provincial Regulation Number 7 of 2018

concerning Nagari. Collaborate with stakeholders related to this regulation such as customary leaders at the nagari level both institutionally and individually, clerics, and academics in finalizing the concept of the customary nagari that is to be implemented.

### Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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