THE ROLE OF SMART CITY POLICY IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN SERANG CITY BANTEN

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the implementation of smart city policy in Serang City, Banten Province, Indonesia, in the context of local government reform from a centralised to a decentralised system. The main objective is to analyse how smart city policy can improve people's welfare through integrating information technology in e-government, e-budgeting, e-planning, environmental management, and urban planning. The methodology used is a descriptive analysis design with a qualitative approach involving direct data collection in the field and observation of social interactions. The results show that the effectiveness of smart city policy implementation in Serang City is influenced by five main dimensions: environmental conditions, inter-organizational relationships, available resources, characteristics of implementing agencies, and the quality of public services. These factors interact with each other to support or hinder the achievement of policy objectives. This study concludes that the success of smart city policies depends on technology and the ability to manage resources, inter-organizational coordination, and human resource quality development. Continuous evaluation and adjustment of policies and practices are needed to create sustainable and inclusive solutions to improve people's quality of life.

KEYWORDS: *Decentralization, Smart City, Serang City, Policy Implementation*

INTRODUCTION

The reform process of local governance in Indonesia is characterised by a change in the system from centralised to decentralised. This reform began with the implementation of Law No. 22/1999, later revised through Law No. 32/2004, and finally became Law No. 23/2014 on Regional Government. This law, together with Government Regulation No. 38/2007, regulates the implementation of government affairs, including mandatory and optional affairs by Provincial and Regency/City Governments, promoting the principle of autonomy.

The concept of decentralisation in Law No. 23/2014 emphasises the transfer of government affairs by the central government to autonomous regions to regulate and manage their government affairs and the interests of local communities. This allows regions to form and implement policies based on the initiatives and aspirations of their communities, as well as to develop regional economic capabilities, improve community welfare, and encourage the enforcement of human rights and democracy.

In the context of this problem, implementing the smart city concept in Indonesia is a special focus, where local governments compete to implement it to improve the community's welfare. The smart city concept is expected to integrate information technology in e-government, e-budgeting, and e-planning, as well as in environmental management and urban planning (Yin et al., 2015). However, challenges in its implementation include cost and human resource constraints.

This research also highlights the importance of innovation in local governance, as described in Chapter XXI of Law No. 23/2014, to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and public services. This is considered vital in facing society's increasingly complex demands and making government meaningful to its people.

In particular, this research focuses on Serang City, Banten Province, as a case study in its efforts to become a smart city. Serang City was chosen because of its potential as a livable, investment, visitation and e-city city, supported by its strategic location in the industrial, trade and service areas. This research examines Serang City's efforts to manage its urban problems and potential to develop the smart city concept in the context of local economic development, improving people's quality of life, and the social and economic challenges it faces.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyse the implementation of smart city policies to improve community welfare in Serang City, Banten Province. The method chosen is a descriptive analysis design with a qualitative approach, which allows researchers to understand phenomena in their natural context through direct data collection and observation of social interactions. This research is planned to take place from February to March 2024.

In this study, data collection procedures were carried out through two main stages: the pre-field and field stages. The pre-field stage includes initial preparations before data collection, while the field stage includes direct data collection activities at the research location. The data needed includes information

related to the implementation of smart city policies, which are detailed in the duties, functions, rights and obligations of local governments by the limits of their constitutional authority.

The determination of informants was carried out through purposive techniques, which included selecting individuals who were considered capable of providing information about implementing smart city policies in Serang City. The selected informants included various stakeholders, such as the Chairman of the DPRD of Serang City, the Regional Secretary, the Economic and Development Assistant, relevant SKPDs, Sub-districts, Company Directors, and religious, community and youth leaders.

Data collection techniques were conducted through literature studies, interviews, and observations. Data analysis was done by checking data validity through triangulation, which involved determining data classification, editing, coding, structured data presentation, data confirmation to strengthen the validity of the information obtained, and data interpretation to reveal actual and factual research problems.

The research location in Serang City was chosen because of the city's efforts in implementing the concept of e-government as part of the smart city initiative, including regulation, development, empowerment, and public services. This condition makes Serang City a relevant case to be studied in the context of smart city policy implementation and its impact on improving community welfare.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals that the implementation of smart city policies in Serang City, Banten Province, is influenced by various factors that can be grouped into five main dimensions: environmental conditions (Chourabi et al., 2012), inter-organizational relationships, available resources, characteristics of implementing agencies, and the quality of public services. These factors interact with each other in supporting or hindering the realisation of policy objectives to improve community welfare.

1. Environmental Conditions: Local social, economic, and political conditions affect the substance and implementation of policies. The active involvement of communities and other stakeholders is considered essential in this process.
2. Interorganizational Relationships: Coordination and collaboration between various government and non-government organisations have proven important in supporting successful policy implementation.
3. Available Resources: The availability and management of resources (human, financial, and information) play a critical role in the effectiveness of policy implementation (Nam & Pardo, 2011).
4. Implementing Agency Characteristics: Policy implementers' motivation, competence, and commitment to the objectives and processes significantly impact the final results.
5. Public Services: The quality of public services, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, are important indicators in measuring the

success of smart city policy implementation (Garcia et al., 2016).

The analysis shows a gap between policy objectives and the reality of implementation caused by various factors. First, there is variability in environmental conditions that affect policy adaptation (Kenneth, 2022). Second, challenges in inter-organizational relations indicate the need for better cooperation and coordination between sectors (Masud & Khan, 2024). Third, limited resources are a major obstacle, especially financially and humanely (Ambreen, 2022). Fourth, the characteristics of implementing agencies highlight the importance of building internal capacity and employee motivation. Fifth, aspects of public service (Neirotti et al., 2014) emphasise the need for improvement in all dimensions to meet public expectations (Khalil & Weber, 2020).
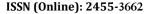
Implementing smart cities involves utilising technology, data and public services to improve urban life. Supporting research on smart cities in Europe by (Caragliu et al., 2011) highlights technology integration in the urban environment. In addition, research such as that conducted by (Putra et al., 2020) measuring the maturity of smart public services emphasises the importance of efficient public service delivery in smart city initiatives. In addition, (Elanda et al., 2022) ensure inclusivity and responsiveness in policy development. In addition, research by (Pati et al., 2022) underscores the importance of utilising digital platforms for efficient and innovative public service delivery in smart cities.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study underlines that the implementation of smart city policy in Serang City, Banten Province, is an integrated complex process involving various important dimensions such as environmental conditions, inter-organizational relationships, availability of resources, characteristics of implementing agencies, and quality of public services. This research confirms that the success of smart city policy depends not only on applying the latest technology but also on the ability to utilise existing resources, ensure effective coordination between organisations, and especially support and develop the quality of human resources involved in implementation. Furthermore, this research shows that to improve people's welfare through smart city policies, a joint commitment from all stakeholders, local governments, the private sector, and communities must work together to create innovative solutions responsive to local needs and challenges. Smart city policies should be geared towards achieving a broader goal than just the application of technology: improving people's quality of life. This requires continuous evaluation and adjustment of policies and practices to ensure that smart city initiatives effectively provide sustainable and inclusive solutions for all levels of society in Serang City.

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