

TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF SOCIAL REHABILITATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:

Evidence from Women Involved in Prostitution in Banjarmasin City

Muhammad Riduansyah Syafari¹
Maulidah²
Roni Ekha Putera³

^{1,2}Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia
Jl. Brigjen Hasan Basri, Pangeran, Kec. Banjarmasin Utara, Kota Banjarmasin, Kalimantan Selatan,
Indonesia

³Universitas Andalas, Indonesia
Jl. Lingkar Universitas Andalas, Limau Manis, Kec. Pauh, Kota Padang, Sumatera Barat 25175,
Indonesia

Correspondence Email: riduansyah.publik-fisip@ulm.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Rehabilitation policy relies heavily on local governments to manage the complex, underlying urban social dynamics. This research analysed the social rehabilitation policy implementation regarding women in prostitution as a form of urban poverty case study location being Banjarmasin City, about institutional capacity, local powers and inter-agency collaboration. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection methods including in-depth interviews with social affairs officials, social workers (SWs), rehabilitation analysts, and beneficiaries; non-participant observations at Baiman Shelter; and document review. Thematic analysis was informed by policy implementation frameworks and street-level bureaucracy theory. Results show an implementation strategy characterized by reactivity, with triggers flowing from enforcement rather than vision; scarce capacity within the institutions meant to deliver stability, while significant discretion at ground level skewed the policy process towards short-term social control and away from long-term empowerment. Interagency collaboration is largely informal, while gender-sensitive approaches have not been meaningfully integrated into program design. The paper contributes a contextual model of social rehabilitation policy implementation in which frontline discretion operates amid the ambivalences of reactive governance dynamics shaped by an inter-institutional environment, characterized by both institutional constraints and informal coordination. It shifts street-level bureaucracy theory by showing that discretion is not just individual but also structurally determined (by institutional and/or socio-political forces), directly impacting the effectiveness/trajectory of the restoration policy analyzed in urban governance.

Keywords: policy implementation; local government; social rehabilitation; street-level bureaucracy; public governance

INTRODUCTION

Policy implementation is a pivotal focus in public administration research, particularly in decentralized governance frameworks where local government entities wield direct authority over the provision of public services. Empirical investigations consistently reveal that the likelihood of policy failure is significantly heightened during the implementation phase as opposed to the policy formulation phase, owing to the engagement

of multiple stakeholders, the intricacies of institutional arrangements, and the contextual limitations that influence the practical execution of policy (Hill & Hupe, 2021; Howlett et al., 2020; Pressman & Wildavsky, 2020). Consequently, policy implementation is better conceptualized as a fluid process situated within intricate governance landscapes rather than as a straightforward administrative progression (O'Toole, 2004).

In decentralized systems, local governmental entities play a pivotal role in translating national policy objectives into tangible programs that directly impact the citizenry. Although decentralization affords local authorities the discretion to tailor policies to localized conditions, disparities in institutional capacity often lead to discrepancies between intended policy objectives and actual outcomes (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012; Peters, 2021). These challenges are particularly pronounced in implementing social policies for vulnerable populations, where success hinges not solely on regulatory design but also on organizational capacity, inter-agency collaboration, and frontline practices (Nurhayati et al., 2024).

One enduring social challenge that local governments encounter pertains to the management of women engaged in prostitution, frequently denoted in Indonesian policy discussions as *wanita tuna susila* (WTS). This occurrence encapsulates systemic vulnerabilities associated with poverty, gender disparity, and restricted access to education and employment opportunities, as well as the dynamics of urbanization, rather than solely representing concerns of morality or public order (Kabeer, 2020; Razavi et al., 2022). Consequently, social rehabilitation policies emerge as a crucial governmental strategy for restoring social functioning and promoting sustainable social and economic reintegration.

In the context of Indonesia, local governmental entities primarily execute social rehabilitation policies aimed at women in trafficking situations (WTS) through designated social welfare agencies. In the city of Banjarmasin, this methodological approach is formalized via Regional Regulation No. 12 of 2014, which delineates social rehabilitation as the principal policy instrument for addressing issues associated with prostitution. The policy, in a normative sense, underscores the importance of psychosocial guidance, skills enhancement, and economic empowerment. Nevertheless, empirical investigations into the implementation of social policy reveal that initiatives requiring behavioral and structural changes often face considerable challenges, particularly when institutional resources and coordination frameworks are inadequate (Grindle, 1980; Matland, 1995).

At the level of policy execution, frontline officials assume a pivotal role in influencing policy outcomes. The theory of street-level bureaucracy elucidates how frontline actors exercise considerable discretion in interpreting and implementing policy, particularly in contexts characterized by resource constraints and complex client needs (Lipsky, 2019). Contemporary scholarly work further illustrates that such discretion is influenced by prevailing organizational norms and institutional pressures (Brodkin, 2021; Tummers & Bekkers, 2019). Furthermore, the successful implementation of social rehabilitation policies requires institutionalized intersectoral coordination and gender-responsive strategies to effectively address the structural inequalities women face (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Lombardo & Meier, 2021).

Although there is an increasing body of literature on policy implementation and street-level bureaucracy, current research typically investigates institutional capacity, frontline discretion, inter-agency coordination, and gender responsiveness as distinct analytical aspects. Street-level bureaucracy research has primarily focused on the discretion exercised by individuals, while paying insufficient attention to how this discretion is shaped by broader governance factors, such as reactive enforcement trends, informal coordination methods, and resource constraints. Moreover, empirical research integrating these dimensions into social rehabilitation policies, particularly those aimed at marginalized women in decentralized urban environments, remains scarce, limiting insight into how these elements interact to shape policy direction and outcomes.

This research addresses these shortcomings by developing a cohesive analytical framework that links policy implementation and street-level bureaucracy in the realm of social rehabilitation policy. It specifically explores how institutional capability, frontline flexibility, inter-agency collaboration, and gender sensitivity interact in a reactive governance context to influence policy execution methods. In this way, the research establishes itself not only as a context-specific case study but also as an attempt to broaden street-level bureaucracy theory in resource-limited governance contexts. It contends that frontline discretion is not merely an individual-level occurrence but is integrated into wider institutional and governance dynamics that shape whether social rehabilitation policies prioritize long-term empowerment or short-term social control.

METHOD

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive-analytical method to analyze the execution of social rehabilitation policy for women engaged in prostitution (WTS) by the Banjarmasin City Government. A qualitative design is suitable, as the research aims to understand the context-dependent processes of policy implementation shaped by interactions among institutional frameworks, frontline participants, and target populations (Creswell & Poth, 2019; Hill & Hupe, 2021).

The study took place at the Social Affairs Office in Banjarmasin City and the Baiman Shelter, which function as the primary administrative and operational centers for social rehabilitation initiatives. Data gathering occurred from January to April 2024. Informants were selected through purposive sampling given their roles in policy implementation. This study included 15 informants: 5 structural officials engaged in policy planning and management, 5 frontline implementers (social workers and rehabilitation analysts), and 5 clients from WTS enrolled in rehabilitation programs.

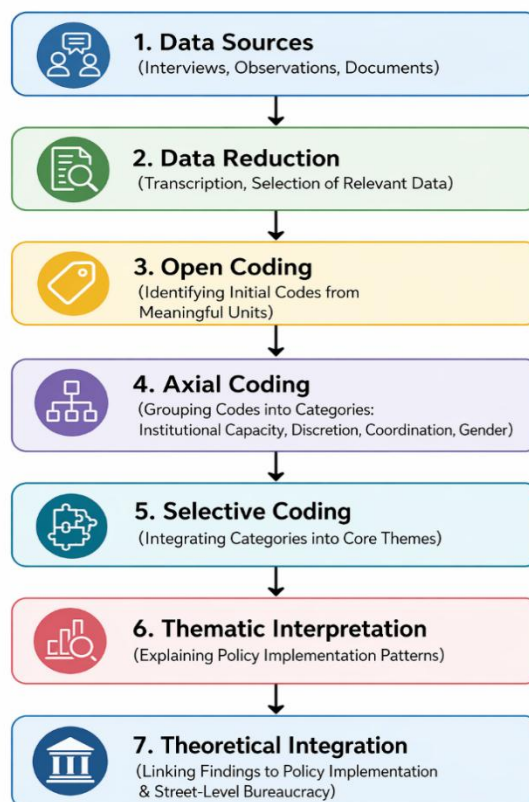
Information was gathered through comprehensive semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews lasting 45-90 minutes per participant were conducted to investigate experiences and practices related to policy implementation, particularly regarding institutional capacity, discretionary practices, inter-agency coordination, and gender responsiveness. Non-participant observation was conducted multiple times during program activities at the Baiman Shelter to document

routine interactions between implementers and clients, as well as the operational dynamics of rehabilitation services. Document analysis centered on regional regulations, technical guidelines, and program reports to situate empirical findings within established policy frameworks.

Data collection occurred in cycles until data saturation was reached, marked by the absence of new themes and the recurrence of similar patterns across interviews and observations. This ensured that the data sufficiently captured the complexity of policy execution processes in the research environment.

Data analysis employed thematic analysis, with organized phases of data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation. During the initial phase, interview transcripts and field notes underwent open coding to pinpoint significant data units. The initial codes were subsequently organized into broader categories through axial coding, emphasizing the connections among institutional capacity, frontline discretion, coordination mechanisms, and gender. Ultimately, selective coding was utilized to consolidate these categories into major themes.

Figure 1. Thematic Analysis Process in Social Rehabilitation Policy Implementation Study.



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical results and analyzes them through the combined perspectives of policy execution and street-level administration. The conversation is

organized around four interconnected factors that influence policy results at the community level. Rather than viewing these dimensions as individual analytical elements, this section illustrates their dynamic interactions within a limited, responsive local governance context. This analysis not only validates existing theoretical insights but also enhances their explanatory significance within the realm of social rehabilitation policy.

Policy Implementation Context and the Local Government Environment

The execution of the social rehabilitation policy for female sex workers (FSWs) in Banjarmasin City occurs amid a local governance environment marked by intricate urban social issues, constrained institutional capabilities, and significant political-administrative pressures concerning public order. Nonetheless, in addition to these typically recognized characteristics, the results indicate that the local governance context significantly influences policy direction to a greater extent than is usually assumed in standard implementation models.

The policy aims to restore social functioning and support sustainable reintegration via psychosocial and economic measures. However, in reality, the policy functions within a regulatory framework that emphasizes stability and order. This prioritization is not only contextual but also constitutive: it shapes how issues are defined, which participants are engaged, and which types of interventions are deemed acceptable.

The empirical results indicate that the majority of FSW clients enter the rehabilitation system via enforcement actions or raids. This entry system effectively frames social rehabilitation as a subsequent administrative procedure instead of a preemptive social intervention. According to a Social Affairs official, "The majority of individuals entering the shelter come from raids." The rehabilitation is based on current conditions rather than initial planning. (Conversation, April 2024). This suggests that the execution of policies is influenced more by specific situations than by program structure.

This pattern results in a reactive implementation approach where policy interventions are sporadic and temporary. Although the literature on policy implementation recognizes the importance of context (Hill & Hupe, 2021; O'Toole, 2004), the results presented indicate a more significant influence: context not only influences implementation but also consistently limits policy orientation. In this regard, the situation illustrates a form of governance in which social policy is integrated into public order strategies, thereby constraining its capacity for transformation.

Institutional Capacity and the Implementation Practices of Social Rehabilitation Programs

Institutional capacity is crucial to how social rehabilitation policy is implemented at the community level. Although the connection between capacity and implementation results is clearly documented in the literature (Grindle, 1980; Matland, 1995), the results of this study indicate that capacity limitations also influence the range and substance of policy implementation.

From a human resources perspective, the small pool of social workers and their various duties result in a situation where administrative responsibilities clash with essential service provision. One social worker stated, “We must manage multiple clients simultaneously and also create reports. “The support that ought to be extensive is now restricted.” (Interview, April 2024). This demonstrates how organizational requirements can shift professional behaviors towards adherence to administrative protocols.

This change affects the character of rehabilitation services. Exchanges between officers and clients are becoming briefer and more uniform, diminishing chances for personalized assistance. Although this simplification aligns with current research in policy implementation (Hill & Hupe, 2021), the case illustrates how it is bolstered by a responsive policy context, resulting in a cumulative impact that further restricts program depth.

Financial limitations also impact implementation methods. Funding allocations primarily focus on operational needs, leaving scarce resources for capacity-building elements such as vocational training and economic empowerment. Even though these elements are typically crucial, their execution is inconsistent and lacks continuity. An official remarked, “Training is available, but it cannot be maintained due to budgetary and facility constraints” (Interview, April 2024).

This situation highlights a discrepancy between policy development and its implementation. Crucially, it also implies that institutional capacity not only limits implementation but also influences which elements of the policy are emphasized. In this regard, capacity serves as a mechanism that converts extensive policy frameworks into targeted and feasible actions.

Bureaucratic Discretion and Street-Level Bureaucracy in Context

In this study, an important element of policymaking execution is bureaucratic discretion. Grounded in the literature of street-level bureaucracy theory (Lipsky, 2019), where frontline officials use discretion to make decisions dealing with complexities within resource-limited settings. The findings imply that discretion here is determined by factors other than the usual emphasis on individual agency.

In client intake, discretion is used to negotiate procedural rules with the client's readiness. Adaptability in data collection reflects both administrative practicality and recognition of the stigma as well as social hazards that clients may endure. It suggests that at some level of decision-making, discretion operates within a moral and social framework.

Such findings indicate that discretion is embedded across broader layers of governance, linking the social and political spheres to bureaucratic practices. Such findings resonate with more contemporary scholarship exploring the structural dimensions of discretion (Brodkin, 2021; Kabeer et al., 2021) and highlight how moral regulation impacts implementation practices.

This is also evident in the ranking of services. When prioritizing interventions, authorities tend to recommend those that are operationalizable in the current context (e.g., mental health advice) while focusing less on programs that require more resources. That

shows how to make an adjustment in response to institutional constraints while also limiting policy outcomes.

Most importantly, relying on discretion converts a provision into a function of variability. Discretion allows flexibility but can lead to inconsistencies in how policies are applied on a case-by-case basis. This reinforces how discretion can operate both as an ordering and as an inhibition (Tummers & Bekkers, 2019).

Here, discretion is elaborated as a systematic instrument allowing for continuous policy action in light of structural limitations. However, its extensive use has demonstrated the need for stronger institutional arrangements to guide and standardize clients' decision-making.

Collaborative Governance, Gender Responsiveness, and Policy Integration

The implementation of social rehabilitation policy involves various stakeholders and requires coordinated efforts across sectors. Collaborative governance structures highlight the significance of established coordination (Bryson et al., 2014; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2022). The results suggest that cooperation in this instance remains disjointed.

Coordination methods are mainly informal and focused on particular phases, especially during implementation. The lack of ongoing collaboration hinders the consistency of rehabilitation results. According to an official, "Once clients exit the shelter, every agency functions independently" (Interview, April 2024). This suggests that collaboration exists, yet it is not organized.

This fragmentation diminishes the efficacy of rehabilitation initiatives, especially in aiding long-term reintegration. Rehabilitation is incomplete without integration into labor market policies and social protection systems. Alongside coordination issues, the research highlights shortcomings in gender sensitivity. Programs often prioritize behavioral change rather than addressing structural inequalities such as stigma and limited economic opportunities. This reflects a personal perspective that overlooks broader social dynamics (Lombardo & Meier, 2021; Heidemann & Boon, 2020).

Customer experiences further demonstrate these constraints. Ongoing stigma and employment obstacles suggest that rehabilitation affects long-term results minimally. According to the capability approach (Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 2020), this implies that policy implementation has not adequately broadened the actual opportunities available to individuals. The results show that collaborative governance and gender responsiveness are both poorly developed, restricting the transformative potential of social rehabilitation policy.

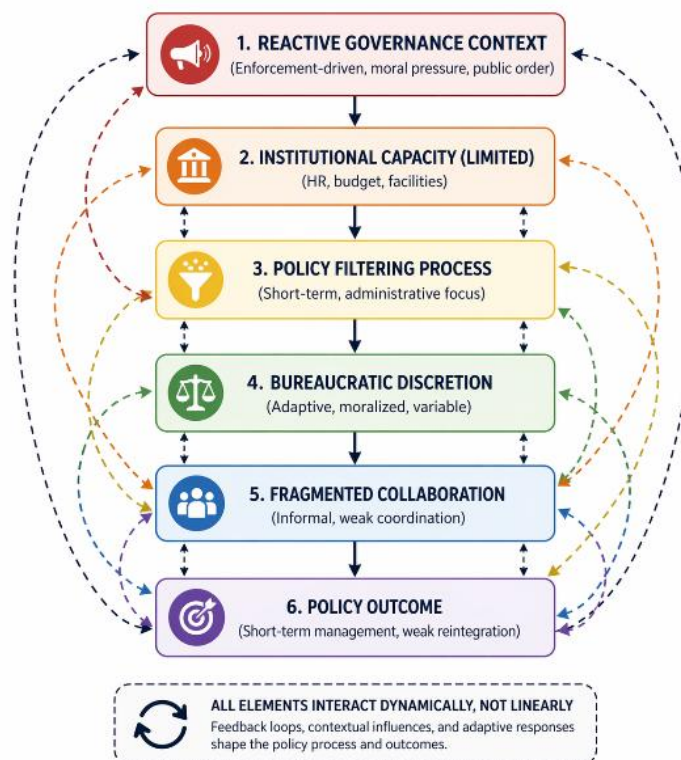
Synthesis and Emerging Conceptual Insight

The synthesis of results shows that policy execution in this context is influenced by the interplay of governance environment, institutional capability, bureaucratic discretion, and collaborative interactions. These components do not function autonomously but rather support one another, creating an implementation pattern characterized by adaptable, short-term practices.

This interaction indicates that policy results are influenced not just by formal design but also by how governance conditions shape implementation processes. Specifically, the interplay between reactive governance and constrained capacity creates a context in which discretion emerges as a key tool for maintaining policy, whereas fragmented collaboration limits enduring effects.

These results enhance the theoretical understanding of policy implementation by emphasizing the significance of incorporating both structural and actor-level aspects. They also propose that in resource-constrained environments with social sensitivities, implementation processes might systematically diverge from standard expectations.

Figure 2. A Dynamic Framework of Reactive Governance: From Institutional Constraints to Fragmented Policy Outcomes



Theoretical Contribution, Novelty, and Scientific Implications

This research makes multiple theoretical contributions that enhance and clarify the current literature on policy implementation and street-level bureaucracy, especially in the context of decentralized and resource-limited local governance. Although earlier research has highlighted institutional capacity, bureaucratic discretion, and inter-agency coordination as crucial influences on policy outcomes, this study's findings indicate that these elements do not operate in isolation; rather, they are shaped by the broader governance context in which policies are implemented.

The main innovation of this research is its recognition of a reactive governance pattern as a foundational element of policy execution. In contrast to traditional models that view policy implementation as a structured and orderly process, this study demonstrates that, within the framework of social rehabilitation policy in Banjarmasin City, implementation is activated by enforcement-focused mechanisms and situational reactions. This responsive approach consistently shifts policy focus from long-term community empowerment to immediate administrative control. In this context, the research advances policy implementation theory by emphasizing that governance rationalities, specifically those motivated by public order and moral regulation, can significantly alter policy aims during implementation.

Moreover, this research expands street-level bureaucracy theory by redefining bureaucratic discretion as a phenomenon embedded within the structure. Although classical viewpoints highlight discretion as a result of personal choices made within limitations (Lipsky, 2019), the results indicate that, in this scenario, discretion is also influenced by ethical factors, unofficial practices, and political-administrative influences. This indicates that discretion can't be fully understood without considering the socio-political context in which frontline individuals operate. Consequently, the research contributes to the growing body of literature that frames discretion within broader institutional and governance contexts (Brodkin, 2021; Hupe et al., 2023).

A significant addition of this study is the framing of institutional capacity as a mechanism for filtering policy. Instead of just restricting implementation, restricted capacity actively influences which components are implemented.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the enactment of social rehabilitation policies for women engaged in prostitution in Banjarmasin City is influenced by a complicated interplay of governance context, institutional capability, bureaucratic flexibility, and collaborative relationships. The results indicate that policy execution does not adhere to a straightforward or entirely structured path, but is instead developed through adaptive practices in a responsive local governance setting marked by enforcement-oriented actions, moral oversight, and administrative demands.

The study empirically demonstrates that the prevalence of enforcement mechanisms as gateways to rehabilitation programs shifts policy focus from its ideal objective of long-term empowerment to short-term administrative control. This reactive governance model is strengthened by restricted institutional capacity, which not only hinders execution but also selectively influences which aspects of policy are emphasized. Consequently, rehabilitation efforts often emphasize quick and administratively manageable actions, whereas structural elements like economic empowerment and sustainable reintegration are inadequately treated.

At the execution level, bureaucratic discretion arises as a key mechanism that facilitates policy continuity in restricted circumstances. Nevertheless, discretion in this scenario is not merely a practice at the individual level but is inherently integrated within

institutional constraints, socio-cultural standards, and governance demands. Although it improves flexibility, it also brings variability and restricts the uniformity of service provision. Simultaneously, collaborative governance is still disjointed and not adequately institutionalized, hindering the integration of rehabilitation initiatives with wider social and economic support frameworks. The absence of gender-sensitive strategies further diminishes the policy's ability to tackle the systemic inequalities encountered by women.

This study enhances the understanding of policy implementation and street-level bureaucracy literature by showing that policy outcomes depend not just on institutional capacity or individual discretion, but on their interplay within a responsive and ethically governed environment. The research suggests an interpretation of policy within its context.

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