

**Legislative Conflicts on Religious Regulations:  
A Case Study in the Province of South Kalimantan, Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

This paper critically examines the intricate relationship between religion and politics in South Kalimantan, highlighting its impact on public policy and social stability. In a province where the majority of the population is Muslim, religious influence heavily sways political preferences and decision-making. Religious leaders, organizations, and the broader Muslim community often dictate the political agenda, resulting in policies that are deeply infused with Islamic values. These policies can marginalize minority groups such as Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists, thereby posing a significant challenge to the region's social cohesion. The research investigates this dynamic through the analysis of open policy documents, case studies of religion-based policy implementations, and in-depth interviews with religious leaders, prominent community figures, and local politicians. The gathered data provide a comprehensive understanding of how the interplay between religion and politics shapes social and political life in South Kalimantan. The findings reveal that while religious influence can help maintain political legitimacy, it simultaneously raises serious concerns about social justice and religious freedom. To address these challenges, the study recommends inclusive policies, active interfaith dialogue, and enhanced community participation in decision-making processes to ensure a harmonious and just society.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Legislation, Religion, and Politics

**Introduction**

South Kalimantan Province, as one of the regions in Indonesia rich in religious and cultural diversity, faces complex challenges in managing relationships among different communities with varying beliefs. The province is home to various religious communities, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, which coexist in daily life. This diversity creates unique social dynamics where each group has different religious traditions, values, and practices. While this diversity should enrich societal life as a cultural asset, in

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reality, it often presents challenges in maintaining harmony and social cohesion.(Mujiburrahman, 2017, pp. 146–147)

In recent years, South Kalimantan has seen an increase in local regulations (Peraturan Daerah/Perda) with religious undertones, especially rooted in the values of the majority religion, Islam. This phenomenon occurs amid efforts by local governments to integrate moral values and religious ethics into the framework of local law. These regulations are designed with the aim of better regulating community life from the perspective of specific religions, believed to foster a more civilized and moral society. Examples include regulations on dress codes, operating hours of entertainment venues, and rules regarding religious activities.(Na'imah, 2016b, p. 153)

However, the implementation of these regulations often sparks conflicts of interest between policymakers and various community groups, especially those of non-Muslim faiths. For the majority groups, these regulations may be seen as a positive step that strengthens societal identity and morality. However, for minority groups, these regulations are often viewed as discriminatory and detrimental. They feel that regulations that overly prioritize the values of the majority religion can neglect existing religious diversity and sideline their rights as equal citizens. The interests of non-Muslim communities are frequently marginalized in this legislative process. Some adopted local regulations include provisions that directly or indirectly discriminate against non-Muslim groups. Examples include restrictions on worship practices, difficulties in obtaining permits to establish places of worship, and limitations on participating in social and economic activities. As a result, non-Muslim groups feel that their rights as citizens are not respected and protected, leading to feelings of injustice and distrust towards the government. (Indra Surya Saputra et al., 2022, p. 36)

Furthermore, these conflicts not only impact intergroup relations but also affect political stability and regional economic development. Tensions between majority and minority religious groups can lead to societal polarization and hinder efforts to foster inclusivity and tolerance at the local level. Local governments are faced with the challenge of balancing the preservation of the majority religious identity and protecting the rights of minorities, while adhering to constitutional principles that guarantee religious freedom and protection against discrimination. (Asmar, 2019, p. 63)

This conflict can be examined from various perspectives, each providing insights into deeper underlying issues. First, from a political standpoint, policymakers are often influenced by dominant religious groups in their efforts to garner political support and maintain power. In many cases, politicians and local government officials believe that by supporting the agenda of majority religious

groups, they can strengthen their political support base. These religious groups often wield significant influence in society, and their support can be decisive in elections or in maintaining positions of power. (Al Amin & Rosyidi, 2019, p. 279)

As a result, the legislation produced tends to accommodate the interests of the majority groups without considering its impact on minority groups. These local regulations with religious undertones often reflect the values and norms of the majority religion and are widely implemented without regard for the religious diversity within society. For example, regulations regarding dress codes aligned with the teachings of the majority religion can impose burdens on individuals from other religions who have different dress customs. Similarly, restrictions on the operating hours of entertainment venues based on the worship times of the majority religion can overlook the needs and rights of minority groups who do not observe the same worship days.

Secondly, from a legal perspective, the regulations produced sometimes contradict the principles of human rights as enshrined in the Indonesian Constitution. The Constitution of Indonesia guarantees freedom of religion and protects all citizens from discrimination based on religion. These principles should serve as the foundation for every legislative process, yet in practice, local regulations with religious undertones often disregard or even violate these principles. For instance, restrictions on the establishment of places of worship for minority groups can be seen as a violation of the constitutional right to freedom of religion.

Furthermore, these discriminatory regulations not only violate individuals' basic rights but also create an environment that is non-inclusive and detrimental to social harmony. When minority groups feel that their rights are ignored or violated, it can lead to tension and conflict within society. Institutionalized discrimination through local regulations can exacerbate feelings of injustice and distrust towards the legal system and government, ultimately hindering efforts to create a fair and harmonious society. (Setara Institute, 2019)

Since South Kalimantan Province represents one of the regions in Indonesia with lots of religious and cultural diversity, it has to cope with all the links between varied backgrounds of people carrying divergent beliefs. The province, at large, contains huge religious societies, both Islam and non-Islam, such as Christian, Catholic, Hinduism, and Buddhism, which co-exist and perform their daily rituals. With diversity comes special social dynamism whereby each group has different religious traditions, values, and practice. Although this diversity should be an additional culture of society's life, in the reality, it was not simple at all to keep this diversity, and to guard the harmony and cohesion between members. (Mujiburrahman, 2017, p. 169)

Secondly, from the perspective of law, the regulations made sometime are not in line with the principle of human rights provided in the Indonesian Constitution. The Constitution of Indonesia guarantees freedom of believers and also protects all citizens from discrimination based on religion. All these principles should underpin any legislative process, yet in practice, local regulations with a religious hue and intonation often tend to bypass, if not violate, these very principles. For instance, setting restrictions on the right of minority groups to establish places of worship is a violation of this constitutional right. (Syamsir, 2015, p. 116)

These discriminatory regulations not only violate the basic rights of an individual as a human being but also breed an atmosphere that is at best non-inclusive and at worst inimical to social harmony. Such institutionalized discrimination can form the roots of tension and discord within society if minority groups feel that their rights are being overlooked or infringed upon. The intensity increases when feelings of injustice and distrust of the legal systems and government foment against the development of a fair and harmonious society. (Salsabila, 2024, p. 94)

More importantly, their interests have been ignored in this legislating process. For example, some of the adopted local regulations contain elements that directly or indirectly discriminate against non-Muslim groups. Such are reflected in the constraints of worshiping practices, public services, and economic and educational ones. Because of such legislations, non-Muslim groups believe that their rights as citizens are not being appreciated and protected, and they feel deprived and distrusted. (Nurdin & Ropi, 2011, p. 106)

Case illustrations from South Kalimantan indicate that these legislative conflicts have, indeed not only impacted social harmony but also political stability as well as regional economic development. Tensions between majority and minority religious groups can lead to societal polarization, hampering efforts to foster inclusivity and tolerance in society at the local level. Hence the conflicts of interest need to be researched in greater detail for the the solutions in which the interests of the parties involved are taken care of and the principles of justice and equality are also not harmed to arrive. (Lestari, 2018, p. 195)

In the light of the above background, the research concerning legislative conflicts on religious regulations in South Kalimantan is extremely relevant. The objective of this research is to identify the root issues, understand the dynamics of conflicts of interest between the lawmakers and the non-Muslim communities, and suggest the way forward toward drafting legislation that is not only more just but also more inclusive. The approach is hoped to drive home a better understanding

of the importance of protecting minority rights within a democratic legal framework. (Budijarto, 2018, p. 14)

### **Research Method**

This research adopts a socio-legal method that integrates an interdisciplinary approach between normative aspects and sociological perspectives. However, the study primarily employs qualitative analysis focusing on normative aspects within social life. The data analysis process is qualitative, involving in-depth and holistic analysis. The approach used is the descriptive-analytical method, aimed at providing a systematic and detailed overview of the issues under investigation. This overview is obtained through in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders related to the research topic. (Fuad, 2020, p. 32)

The analysis in this research is based on the images and facts obtained during the research process. Each collected piece of data is carefully analyzed to find ways to address existing issues. The data is then organized into expanded text forms, explained in detail, and analyzed to draw valid conclusions.

The legal materials used in this research are categorized into three categories: primary legal materials, secondary legal materials, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include laws, regulations, official records, and official documents of the state that are binding. Secondary legal materials include literature such as books, research findings, academic journals, and information from the internet that support and provide additional context to primary legal materials. Meanwhile, tertiary legal materials consist of dictionaries and encyclopedias that provide additional explanations and clarify both primary and secondary legal materials. (Mezak, 2006, p. 87)

In the context of this socio-legal research, an interdisciplinary approach allows researchers to examine issues from various perspectives, including legal and social perspectives. This helps in understanding how the law is applied and interacts within society. Therefore, this research not only focuses on the analysis of legal texts but also considers how the law functions in everyday social practices. (Irwansyah, 2022, pp. 187–193)

The interview process with relevant sources is a key component in data collection. These interviews are designed to gain deep insights into the issues under investigation and to gather various perspectives that may not be revealed through document analysis alone. The data obtained from these interviews is then integrated with primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials to provide comprehensive and in-depth analysis.

By combining various sources of data and analytical methods, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the legal and

social issues under investigation. The outcomes of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to academic literature as well as to legal practices and public policy.

### **Legislative Conflicts on Religious Regulations**

#### **a. Social and Political Dynamics of Society: Impact of Religious Regulations on Minority Groups**

Rule of law states find a prominent place in the framework of law and justice, which forms the basis for safeguarding the welfare and rights of citizens. Justice for all is not an abstract virtue but a precondition for common happiness and prosperity in society. This basic tenet underscores the need to establish and maintain a robust legal system that would uphold the supremacy of law and thereby ensure fair treatment to every citizen in society. At the heart of an ideal society, therefore, lies the inculcation of good moral sense into its citizens. It has absolutely nothing to do with mere enforcement of laws but rather calls for inculcation in every human being of the proper knowledge of ethical behavior and civic responsibility. A society that instills the values of integrity, compassion, and respect for other persons in its citizens will go a long way to raising a citizenry that not only obeys the law but participates in development-related activities in their societies. In the same breath, legal regulations are not effective if they do not mirror some principles of justice and equality in all social interactions. Thus, arbitrary or discriminatory laws not only weaken citizens' trust in the rule of law but also lay the grounds for injustice and unrest in society. Consequently, a legal order's legitimacy finds its true test in the capacity to ensure equality before the law and justice for all: poor or rich, low or high in status, or from this or that race. Basically, the rule of law state means not a mere existence of a set of laws but a commitment to justice and equality for all its subjects. It is that which gives hopes for the repair of grievances, saves from tyranny and oppression, and impetus to progress and prosperity. In the very near future, nations will chart the path forward by upholding the principles of law and justice so that opportunities to live a successful life in a society founded on principles of equality, dignity, and human rights are within reach. (Kusnardi & Ibrahim, 1983, p. 158)

South Kalimantan is a province rich in religious and cultural diversity, reflecting the plurality of Indonesian society in general. In this province, the population consists of various religious groups, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, coexisting in daily life. This diversity creates a complex social dynamic where each group has its own unique traditions, beliefs, and religious practices. The majority of South Kalimantan's population is Muslim, which significantly influence

not only social life but also the political landscape in the region.(Muttaqin, 2020, p. 288)

The religious diversity of the people of South Kalimantan is visible in social aspects of community life. Religious holidays such as Idul Fitri, Christmas, Galungan, and Vesak are carried out solemnly for members of each religious community. However, most are followers of Islam. Nevertheless, the major religious holidays of other religions also receive respect and often even involve cross-religious participation, which shows the spirit of tolerance. But there is also a challenge in managing such a relationship across the belief groups.(Fathullah, 2020, pp. 60–61)

The impact of the majority as Muslims is very dominating in the social sphere of life. Social norms, practices, and moral codes are highly influenced by Islamic jurisprudence. It can be observed in attire, modes of worship, and even in family and societal structures. To the Muslim community, these religious values help in guiding their lives. These values, in the forms of application local regulations take, however, sometimes become to the non-Muslim minority groups an infringement to freedom: the rules about wearing a hijab at school, or the prohibition of certain activities at a particular time, e.g., become sensitive issues.(Muttaqin, 2020, p. 297)

Politically, the Muslim majority influences the lawmaking and public policy. As a result, policymakers in South Kalimantan are often pressured to accommodate the interests of the dominant religious group in an effort to gain political support. For instance, it is evident when it is reflected in the local legislation that highly moves with Islamic values. On one side, these laws are aimed at creating a more ethical and moral society in accordance with the teachings of the majority religion. The downside of this, however, is that it can discount or even alienate small minority groups with other beliefs and religious practices.(HS, 2013, p. 2)

The implication of religion in the making of laws is very tangible to minority groups. They tend to feel shunned, and their rights as citizens are not considered. For example, limitations on constructions for worship places belonging to minority religions or laws demanding assimilation into the majority cultures generate a lot of grievances that can be very destabilizing. These social tensions do not always disturb social relations but also have the potential to destabilize political order in the region.(Na'imah & Mardhiah, 2016, p. 163)

These local regulations in South Kalimantan are often permeated with Islamic religious values, causing social tension, particularly for non-Muslim communities. In fact, provisions made in reference to majority norms may not be suitable or may even appear to be discriminatory for minority groups. For

instance, regulations on dress codes demanding the use of hijab attire in public places may bring a sense of discomfort to non-Muslim women unaccustomed to such rules. This might make a person feel that their freedom to dress the way they see fit, according to their beliefs, has been violated.(Na'imah & Mardhiah, 2016, p. 164)

Other challenges and restrictions touching on the operating hours of the entertainment venues, especially in the case where the places are forced to close at certain times of the year like the month of Ramadan, a time when Muslims fast, are simply challenging. The closing of businesses for some time during the Islamic holy month is a limit non-Muslims face who do not participate in fasting; hence, they lack services and entertainment during that time. This amounts to not just a social constriction but an economic one as well, since their revenues rely on business operations all day long.(Firdaus, 2018, p. 141)

There is a feeling of unfairness when these laws are applied to minority populations. More often than not, the minorities will feel like the government's legislation is for the betterment of the majority and at the expense of the rest. This indeed catalyzes the lack of trust between the government and the legal system, which seems non-representative and unfair. It may refer to the unincreased minority involvement in political and social processes and higher rates of social schism in a society.(Hasan, 2012, p. 4)

In addition, they are apt to promote institutional discrimination, subsequently causing enhanced social segregation. Marginalized groups tend to withdraw from communicating with the majority, which eventually escalates the tension and reduces the possibilities for better social cohesion. This sets in an environment where prejudice unfolds and suspicion develops extensively—that eventually results in a breakdown of the social cohesion and the decline in the social adhesive, which holds a coherent community stronger.(Hasan, 2012, p. 13)

Discriminatory religious regulations in South Kalimantan escalate polarization in society. For most people, such regulations could well simply be ways of upholding cultural identity and uplifting the morals of society in accordance with their religion. This is defending the traditions and social order the majority believes in. However, for the minorities, they usually threaten exclusion from leading a fair and equal social and political life.(Na'imah & Mardhiah, 2016, p. 164)

The rights of minority groups as fronted by the citizenry are not satisfactory. They feel like second-rate citizens because they have to conform to rules that do not reflect their beliefs or needs. For instance, strict dress modes based on Islamic teachings are going to be really hard for non-Muslim women, who have a choice and freedom of choosing their attire based on their own



religious belief system. Likewise, limitations on business operations during particular times out of respect for Islamic worship practices can have an impact on economic and social activities of the minorities that do not hold to such practices.(Hasan, 2012, p. 13)

It is not only on the individual level that the effect of such injustice comes about, but it would affect the whole social fabric. Feelings of neglect and discrimination are likely to germinate and spread among the minority groups. It can be a potential reason for enriching the tensed relations between majority and minority, widening the gap, and channeling communication and cooperation between them. The social polarization that keeps increasing obstructs all the efforts to build harmonious and inclusive South Kalimantan, puts at stake social stability, and eases the process of building an integrated community.(Hasan, 2012, p. 14)

Moreover, the polarization that comes along with the discriminatory judgments could result in the negative implications at the grass-roots level of social and political integration. In addition, the minority groups are likely to become indifferent to or even abandon some social and political activities as they generate a feeling of not being part of the policy process. This is because policies are designed to suit the majority, meaning that their voices are worthless and participation has no use. That kind of apathy—reducing the voice diversity in public discourse and democratic processes—eventually may undermine the legitimacy of local governance.(Hasan, 2012, p. 15)

The political dynamics in South Kalimantan have a significant influence on the legislative process of religious regulations in the region. Policymakers, including government officials and legislators, are often swayed by the dominant religious groups to gain political support and maintain power. In this context, religiously nuanced regulations become a crucial tool for politicians to demonstrate their commitment to the values of the majority, which in turn is expected to bolster their political support base.(Ibrahim, 2008, p. 114)

The dominant religious group, in this case, the Muslim community, which constitutes the majority in South Kalimantan, wields significant influence in shaping public policy. Religious leaders, community figures, and religious organizations often have strong networks with policymakers, allowing them to affect the legislative process. Pressure from these groups can push policymakers to enact regulations that align with Islamic values, even if it compromises the rights of minority groups.(Hasan, 2012, p. 14)

Politicians who wish to preserve or extend their popularity may, on the other hand, find it "necessary" to demonstrate that they will uphold and further the religious values of the majority. This can be done through increasingly restrictive

dress codes, restrictive legislation relating to Ramadan observance, or even limitations on freedom of expression for any group failing to keep out of a particular norm of the majority.(Na'imah, 2016a, p. 28)

Within this layaway, policymakers in South Kalimantan must be able to apply justice and inclusivity in each and every decision they will make. They have to include all groups of the community in the consultation and policymaking process by making sure that the minority's voice is heard and listened to. Such an approach will not only decrease social tensions but also enhance social cohesion and political stability in the region. (Asshiddiqie, 2006, p. 148)

Overcoming this would require building better trust and cooperation among the communities by local government in South Kalimantan, such that an atmosphere is created wherein all groups in the community alike feel valued and recognized. At the end of the day, this will help develop a society that is harmonious, fair, and peaceful within the region and strengthen the foundation of true democracy at the local level. Politicians and local government officials should, however, attempt to achieve a balance in policies for the majority and those for the minority. They will have to avoid policies that exclusively benefit the majority group and strive instead towards solutions that give respect and take into account religious and cultural diversity in the province.(Na'imah, 2016a, p. 28)

First of all, efforts directed at the building of an inclusive and democratic society in South Kalimantan need to start with respect for religious and cultural diversity. Without a guarantee that the voices of all will be heard and their considerations taken into account, strong support cannot serve the policymaking process and provide a solid foundation for peace and harmony in this diverse community. This may foster dissatisfaction with the discriminatory regulations, whose effects may also threaten political stability in South Kalimantan. This dissatisfaction of government policies from the minority groups may escalate and take on the form of protests and social movements that lance the demand for justice and change. If their aspirations do not find a place in public policy, it may create unsettled social tensions. These impacts could basically disturb political stability and security in the area. Intensive protests or mass movements may lead to broader social instability, affecting economic activities and general social welfare. Violence or conflict that might arise from these tensions could worsen security conditions, disrupt public order, and further threaten peace within South Kalimantan. Both parties therefore have the responsibility to address these issues through inclusive policies and respectful dialogues in order to prevent such outcomes and achieve a cohesive and peaceful society.(Asmar, 2019, p. 66)

Furthermore, conflicts often arise due to irreconcilable differences between two or more factions within society. Professor Johan Galtung and Ruge

(1965) distinguish between conflict and violence, stating that violence occurs when conflicting factions choose to force a resolution to the conflict at hand. Galtung and Ruge classify violence into three types: direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Direct violence includes full-scale wars; structural violence encompasses institutional dysfunction such as uneven distribution of power, social disparities, and institutional tyranny; and cultural violence roots in figurative environments that reinforce stereotypes and maintain existing structures. They argue that the absence of overt violence cannot be considered as peace. Galtung (1998) refers to this as "negative peace," inherently vulnerable, whereas "positive peace," seen as equality, justice, and fair distribution of power, is the path toward a harmonious society. Galtung's (1998) model presents four main indicators of war (violence, propaganda, elites, differences) and peace (peace, truth, people, solutions). As an alternative to traditional practices that focus on war and violence, propaganda, elites as peacemakers, and victory, peace now suggestively focuses on peace and conflict, truth, people as peacemakers, and solutions. (Ullah, 2018, p. 124)

Therefore, efforts to achieve social harmony and political stability in South Kalimantan require an inclusive and dialogical approach in designing public policies. This approach should consider the complex dynamics between the majority and minority groups and integrate principles of social justice and equality into every aspect of community life. This includes addressing issues such as poverty and unemployment, which can trigger conflicts and exacerbate social instability. (Shah et al., n.d., p. 56)

It is, therefore, very important for local government to accept and consider the concerns and aspirations of minority groups. More inclusive and dialogical public policies should be designed to help reduce the extent of tension within groups and create the chance of cooperating with one another. In the meantime, considering all the real voices in the policy decisions is the way to build a stable, fair, and peaceful society in South Kalimantan. It should also build open and transparent processes for public involvement based on respect for democratic values and human rights in all decisions taken. In the process, they will be enhanced in legitimacy in the eyes of all citizens, proven social cohesion, and do not provoke the possible conflicts that would continue further threatening the safety and political stability of the region. With just and inclusive policies, South Kalimantan can be a shining example for other regions in managing diversity harmoniously. There must be a combined effort coming from the government with all other stakeholders so that policies could be framed that will cater to all religions and cultures, with equal status, so that every entity gets the right to exercise their religious or cultic belief without any discrimination. Only

then is there social harmony in this region of political stability and this sustainable and inclusive development of South Kalimantan.(Mudzakkir, 2017, p. 150)

**b. Religious interests and politics**

The relationship between religious interests and politics in South Kalimantan has reflected a complex dynamic in social and political life. This is explained by the fact that, with the greater majority of its population being Muslim, religion tends to be one of the influential factors on the general directions taken toward public policy and, overall, the political process. Religion in the political domain is more likely to manifest in terms of political support offered to individuals, religious leaders, and organizations within the Muslim community who hold the reputation of upholding the values of Islam. The role of religion in South Kalimantan politics can be seen through various policies proposed or enacted based on religious values, regulations about religious practice, the enforcement of Shariah law violations, and regulations related to Muslims' daily lives. This goes on to prove that religious identity does not affect individual political preference but overall agendas pursued by political parties and local leaders.(Purnomo, 2014, p. 2)

The interaction between religion and politics is not free of controversy, however. In the case of South Kalimantan, while dominated by the majority population of Muslims, it also contains minority communities like Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists. A lot of policies tend to accommodate Islamic values and thus create tension with these minority groups who feel somewhat neglected or not represented at all in the political process and decision-making. This can have a deepening effect on social cleavages in society with respect to religious identity-based political polarization. Many times, political or economic platforms alone cannot predict support for a particular political candidate or party; rather, religious identity generally does so. This will provoke more competitive politics between different groups identified with different religious identities and hence affect political and social stability at the local level. Given that South Kalimantan holds the majority as Muslims with religion-based policies applied to the province, their influence over the process of legislation and public policy is very huge. The key community figures, religious leaders, and various religious organizations do gain access to and influence in policymaking at the local and national levels. They often use such access to influence policymakers to promote policy issues in line with certain Islamic values deeply upheld by the region's Muslim community.(Purnomo, 2014, p. 11)

Such policies often reflect the pressure from these groups, which generally include regulations in dress codes, ensuring decency and religious adherence; restrictions in a variety of activities during Ramadan to ensure respect for fasting practices; other regulations concerning religious practice; provision for facilities to worship; and respect for halal standards of food and beverages. For the

South Kalimantan Muslim population, these policies are very instrumental in preserving and fostering religious identity in their daily lives. The relationship between religious interests and politics in South Kalimantan shows complicated dynamics in social and political life. Accommodating policies on Islamic values may put minority groups under tension who feel overlooked or unrepresented within the political process and decision-making. Beall reveals that most of the members of religious minority groups normally become victims and are overlooked based on their identity, leading to hostility and conflict between different religious groups, resulting in many minorities migrating from their homes. Dominant social stratification, inequality, and indifference from the majority lead to weak and almost nonexistent social contacts among these minorities. Hence, whenever the minorities try to partake and join the mainstream struggle towards changing their subordinate status, they are considered threats to the socio-cultural set-up of the majority, which generates suspicion and dissonance. Therefore, mostly, they can't integrate with the majority, creating more barriers towards social harmony in a region. (Alam et al., 2020, p. 133)

Religion-based policies are not applied controversially. At times, they lead to frictions with religious minorities or those who profess and express the religion differently. This in itself underpins the sensitive and all-inclusive nature of designing public policy in a formidable way that will be able to accommodate religious diversity without discriminating against or overlooking the rights of an individual. It is common practice for politicians in South Kalimantan to frequently bank on the interests of the majority religion to help shore up their political legitimacy. For instance, in a province with a Muslim majority, winning support from the Muslims will definitely be vital in gaining office and holding political position. Hence, politicians respond to this and try to accommodate the values of the majority religion within their platforms and policies. (Noor, 2012, p. 151)

In line with this political interest, politicians might support or even advocate policies that reflect the Islamic values followed by the majority population of South Kalimantan in order to win Muslim people's hearts. It could manifest in the form of approving regulations or activities increasing religious identity, from efforts to improve worship places' infrastructure to providing halal food and beverage services or even social or educational activities upholding moral values in religion. These are strategies not only to gain electoral support but also strong political legitimacy before the public. By showing commitment to the values of the majority religion, politicians try to establish an emotional bonding process and therefore trust with voters in order to secure their places within the competitive political landscape at local and national levels. Although Indonesian law constitutionally guarantees religious liberty to all its citizens, this often turns

out to be very difficult to apply at the local level. One key challenge is that local regulations accommodate a number of the majority religion values that tend to limit religious freedom in general for minority groups.(Noor, 2012, p. 159)

Concrete examples of such limitations toward religious minorities in many areas, including South Kalimantan, are the dress code rules or operation restrictions during specified periods. For example, dress code rules with norms or values from the majority religion could create a dilemma for a minority group with beliefs or practices different from those of the majority group in matters of attire. This includes business operation restrictions at certain times—like Ramadan or days sacred to the majority religion. These rules, in trying to respect and save the values subscribed to by the majority, most often infringe upon the daily activities and religious freedom of the minority with different needs or preferences. It is proper to identify that freedom of religion does not simply relate to the expression of religious belief but also the capacity of the bearers of such beliefs to practice them in their daily lives without discrimination or undue hindrance. If the local rules are set to be geared towards the values of the majority religion, which disregards the religious pluralism in society, injustice and social tension could arise. It can also lead to an imbalance in human rights protection at the local level, which is supposed to guarantee that each person's right to profess and practice his religion without fear or unjustified obstacles is protected. The involvement of religion in politics often brings significant impacts on social justice in communities. Injustice can therefore ensue, with probable social tensions detrimental to minority groups, whenever public policies or legislation tend to be blind to religious diversity and favor the values of the religion that holds the majority.(Noor, 2012, p. 163)

In Indonesia, and especially in South Kalimantan, with the majority being Muslims, policies that tend to incline or bend toward regard for Islamic values normally attract massive support. However, this can also go against the principle of social justice if it does not consider religious diversity that may exist within society. For instance, local dress code regulations, activities during Ramadan, or other religious practices may be influenced by local regulations and hence impact the day-to-day lives of minority groups with other religious beliefs or practices. In this respect, policies that do not consider religious diversity result in injustices like discrimination against or limitation of minority rights. The contribution of the local authorities is core to ensuring that each policy has regard for issues of justice and inclusiveness. In other words, public policies ought not to respect citizens' rights in such a manner that they may directly or indirectly discriminate against any of them, including on grounds of religion or belief. By embracing this approach, the potential for social tensions is reduced through the

leading by local authorities toward a society that is fairer in its dealings. In policy-making, there needs to be very great consideration attached to religious diversity as part of efforts toward ensuring that the human rights of every person are fully respected. The idea of social justice requires that awareness of diversity and protection of minority rights are constituent elements of democratic and civilized society. Political leaders and civil society in South Kalimantan should, therefore, be developing an inclusive approach in designing public policies so that social harmony and justice are maintained. This includes ensuring that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of all residents without prejudice to religion or beliefs. Setting up a more robust framework for interfaith dialogue, tolerance advocacy, and promotion of pluralistic values will help achieve this noble end of a unified and respectful society within the framework of religious diversity in South Kalimantan.(Anwar, 2011, pp. 207–209)

It has to be underpinned, too, that although religion-based policies can strengthen religious identity and foster moral values within society, there is an equally critical balance to be struck between religious interests and principles of equality and individual freedom. Among the prime roles that governments and legislative bodies in South Kalimantan should play is ensuring that policies not only achieve the aspirations of the religious majority but also uphold the rights of minorities and foster harmonious religious life within the province.(Azhary, 1995, p. 42)

This approach may further create controversy or tension with minority groups or people with different religious beliefs or practices. It is thus a call on duty to politicians to execute their duties with care, understanding how the policies they feel should be implemented would affect all aspects of society, not forgetting the elements of pluralism and equality within the framework of religious freedom.(Galeotti, 2004, p. 114)

Overall, a political approach that accommodates and responds to the interests of the majority religion can be an effective strategy in building strong support bases in South Kalimantan. However, this also demands that politicians possess skills in implementing sensitive and inclusive policies while maintaining a balance between the aspirations of the majority religion and the needs and rights of minorities. Therefore, it is crucial for local governments and relevant institutions to ensure that implemented regulations not only strengthen the values of the majority religion but also consider and respect religious diversity and minority rights within society. Open dialogue among the government, religious communities, and minority groups can help achieve the right balance between respecting the values of the majority religion and protecting the religious freedoms of all Indonesian citizens. To maintain social harmony and political stability in



South Kalimantan, local governments need to adopt an inclusive and dialogical approach in designing public policies. This is particularly important given the complexity of religious and cultural diversity in the province, where the majority of the population is Muslim but there are also other religious minorities.(Anwar, 2011, p. 210)

First and foremost, it is important to promote active and open interreligious dialogue. This dialogue can foster deeper understanding among religious groups, reduce misconceptions, and build trust among different communities. Local governments can facilitate regular interreligious dialogue forums, inviting religious leaders and community leaders to participate in discussions that promote tolerance and appreciation of differences.(Ven, 2010, p. 121)

In addition to the above point, the promotion of community participation in decision-making processes strengthens and helps in the establishment of the notion of legitimacy for public policy. To do the same, the representatives from the various community groups are included within the consultation process and the process of decision-making, which ensures that policies emerging from such a process are supposed to better cater to the needs and aspirations of the common societal group comprising most of the minorities, including minorities of religious faith. Further, finally, the public policies included in the process should work in the long term to advance the values of justice. Justice doesn't only connote fair distribution of resources and public services but steps further to include human rights, among them the freedom of religion. Policies shall reflect these values in such a manner that each citizen will be at liberty to practice his or her religion without any encumbrances or discrimination. These measures will help in decreasing the potential for social conflicts and act as an anchor on which the basis for social harmony and political stability in South Kalimantan can be fortified. In adopting a dialogic approach, the local government can set the stage for inter-religious cooperation in the construction of a more harmonious and integral society.(Muhtada, 2016, p. 8)

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between religion and politics in South Kalimantan is complex, with the Muslim majority significantly influencing public policies and political processes. While religious leaders and organizations often support candidates who uphold Islamic values, this can lead to tensions with minority communities, such as Christians, Catholics, Hindus, and Buddhists. These dynamics can exacerbate political polarization and threaten local stability.

Politicians in South Kalimantan often leverage the interests of the Muslim majority to gain political legitimacy, leading to religiously influenced policies. While these policies reflect the significant influence of religious leaders, they can provoke conflict with minority groups, particularly through restrictions that limit religious freedom. Such actions undermine social justice and human rights, raising tensions. To ensure social harmony and stability, local governments must adopt an inclusive approach that emphasizes interfaith dialogue, community participation, and justice, fostering a society that respects religious diversity and protects minority rights.

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