# A Comprehensive Literature Review on the Role of Religion in Public Policy

Muhammad Andi Septiadi
UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Indonesia
Email: Septiadi.andi90@uinsgd.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

**Research Problem:** This comprehensive literature review addresses the intricate and multifaceted relationship between religion and public policy. It seeks to understand how religious beliefs, institutions, and actors influence the formulation and implementation of public policies across different societies and historical contexts.

**Research Purposes:** The primary purpose of this review is to critically analyze existing scholarly works to elucidate the complex interplay between religion, politics, and policy-making. It aims to examine the evolving dynamics of this relationship, explore key theoretical frameworks, and assess empirical findings to offer insights into the role of religion in shaping public policies.

**Research Methods:** Methodologically, this review draws from an extensive body of literature, including scholarly articles, books, and reports. It employs a critical analysis approach to synthesize existing research on the influence of religious beliefs, institutions, and actors on public policy formulation and implementation.

**Results and Discussion:** The review synthesizes existing research to provide insights into the enduring debates, controversies, and nuances surrounding the role of religion in shaping public policies. It discusses key theoretical frameworks and assesses empirical findings to elucidate the complex dynamics of the relationship between religion and public policy across various societies and historical contexts.

**Research Implications and Contributions:** This literature review contributes to a deeper understanding of the pivotal intersection between religion and public policy in the modern world. By critically analyzing existing research, it offers insights into the influence of religious beliefs, institutions, and actors on policy-making processes. Additionally, it highlights the enduring debates and controversies surrounding this relationship, paving the way for further research and discussion in this field.

**Keyword : Religion, Policy, Governance, Politics, Policy-making**

## INTRODUCTION

Nonbelievers' equal political participation rights and claims to a political justification of laws and public policies on terms they may accept as free and equal democratic citizens are weakened by state support of religion (Freeman, 2020). Culturalized religion is embedded in modern society's political and legal architecture in ways that we often do not recognise. However, legal scholars have demonstrated that these cultural encoding processes can result in a seamless network of links between culturalized religion as manifested in persons and institutions (Astor and Mayrl, 2020). By emphasizing that individual religious freedom depends for its realization on complex social ties, the concept of institutional religious freedom provides an important corrective to conventional and individualistic approaches to religious freedom and policymaking (Hefner, 2021). an in-depth exploration of the role of religion in public policy opens the door to deeper consideration of how we can recognize and respect individual religious freedom, while also considering its impact on society as a whole. As a country committed to the

principles of democracy and equality, we must continue to face the challenge of maintaining a balance between religious freedom and the rights of non-believers in political participation and legal justification and public policy.

By embracing a concept of religious freedom that includes its institutional dimensions, we can better understand how religion is cultural in modern society and how we can ensure that the rights and interests of all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs, are recognized and respected in the policy-making process (Kumar, 2020). As a final thought, the emphasis on the importance of complex social relationships in understanding religious freedom provides an important corrective to the conventional, overly individualistic approach to formulating public policy and brings us closer to the goal of true equality and democracy (Chater and Loewenstein, 2023). In Indonesia, religion has an important role in people's lives, and various regulations regulate the recognition and management of religion. Some regulations related to religious confessions in Indonesia are as follows:

1. UUD 1945 (1945 Constitution):
   a. Article 29: Guarantees freedom of religion for every citizen.
   b. Article 31: Recognizes official religions recognized by the state.
2. UU no. 1 of 1965 concerning Determining the Religion Adhered to:
   a. This law regulates the issue of recording religions adhered to by the Indonesian population.
3. UU no. 24 of 2004 concerning Religious Institutions:
   a. Regulates the establishment and operations of religious institutions in Indonesia.
4. UU no. 39 of 2014 concerning Amendments to Law no. 1 of 1965 concerning Determining the Religion Adhered to:
   a. Improving several provisions in Law no. 1 of 1965 regarding the recording of religious beliefs.
5. Government Regulation (PP) no. 63 of 2008 concerning General Leadership:
   a. Regulates general elections, including provisions regarding the election of legislative members and regional heads which include requirements for having a certain religion.
6. PP No. 54 of 2007 concerning Management of Religious Education and Religious Education:
   a. Regulates the management of religious education and religious education in educational institutions in Indonesia.
7. Presidential Decree (Keppres) no. 1 of 1965 concerning Implementing Regulations of Law no. 1 of 1965 concerning Determining the Religion Adhered to:
   a. Detailing the implementing provisions of Law no. 1 of 1965.

It is important to remember that Indonesia is a country with diverse religions and beliefs, and the principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (diverse but still one) is reflected in religious confessions that include major religions such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. The Indonesian state also respects the rights of individuals to choose and practice their own religion or belief in accordance with the principle of religious freedom guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution.

Several previous studies such as Hefner (2021) conducting research on the relationship between sociology and religion that occurs in Indonesia. Karjoko, Gunawan and Sudarwanto (2020) Indonesia's pharmaceutical sector patent policy, Subchi et al (2022), A study in Indonesia examines factors influencing religious moderation among university students. Religiosity, including intellect, ideology, and practices, was found to positively affect moderation. Socioeconomic factors like gender and parents' income also played a significant role in promoting religious harmony amid threats of intolerance and radicalism. Bourchier (2019), This article traces Indonesia's ideological shift from post-Suharto democratic ideals to conservative religious nationalism, influenced by factors like political elites' control and concessions to Islamist interests. In some of these studies, there are still shortcomings, especially in reviewing the literature regarding the role of religion in public policy. In our comprehensive literature review on the role of religion in public policy, this research seeks to discover that there has been a significant ideological shift in Indonesia over the last two decades. In the post-Suharto period, the state initially accepted democratic norms, but there was a shift towards a conservative and more inward-looking religious nationalism. These findings reflect the challenges in confronting the legacy of the Suharto-era Pancasila indoctrination project and the successful role of New Order-era conservative elites

in taking control of the democratic process after 2001. In addition, we highlight the recognition given to Islamist interests under the administration of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who gave Conservative Islam has an unprecedented level of power and legitimacy. This was manifested in the validation of the blasphemy law by the Constitutional Court, which transformed Indonesia into a country that openly applies religious values and conservative readings of local culture.

The research methods in this study include in-depth literature reviews, situational observations, and analysis of interview results from trusted media in Indonesia. We investigate ideological developments in the last twenty decades by exploring relevant sources of texts, articles and publications to understand the shift in ideological centrality from post-Suharto democratic norms towards more conservative religious nationalism. Situational observation is used to provide context in terms of social and political changes related to ideology. In addition, the results of interviews with trusted sources in Indonesian media provide additional perspectives on ideological changes and the factors underlying them in current Indonesian politics and society. and make the ITE Law a case study in this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Religion

Religion is a profound and complicated idea that has been at the heart of human experience throughout civilization's existence (Chater and Loewenstein, 2023). Religion is one of the most important components of human existence, influencing beliefs, values, culture, and society. In this article, we shall define religion in several dimensions, including features of belief, religious practise, moral system, community, culture, and the social and personal significance of religion on human existence. Belief in a transcendent entity is a key component in the concept of religion. Many faiths teach that there is a God or gods who rule over the universe (Quadri, 2021). These ideas form the basis of religious practise and are frequently a source of inspiration and optimism in daily life. In Christianity, for example, believe in the Triune God is important to the Christian religion, but in Islam, belief in Allah is a major component of aqeedah (beliefs).

Religious practises and rituals, in addition to ideas, are a significant aspect of religion. Prayers, offerings, ceremonies, and other rituals are examples of these practises, which are meant to communicate with or deepen the link between humans and transcendent forces (Ammerman, 2021). Muslims, for example, pray five times a day, whereas Christians observe sacraments such as the Eucharist and Baptism. Religion also often provides moral and ethical guidelines for its adherents (Gallego-Alvarez, Rodríguez-Domínguez and Martín Vallejo, 2020). This includes the rules of conduct, values, and principles that shape the way adherents live their lives. For example, in Hinduism, the concepts of karma and dharma are the basis of the moral system that regulates individual actions.

A religious community or church is a gathering place for religious believers to come together, worship, and give spiritual and social support (Büssing, 2021). This community also contributes to spiritual growth and the preservation of religious traditions. In many faiths, the community is also a location where people may study and strengthen their religious beliefs. Religion frequently has a significant effect on culture. Religious ideas frequently impact religious holidays, festivals, art, architecture, and yearly calendars. The most visible example is the Hindu holiday of Diwali, which is marked by bright lights and gatherings. The desire for meaning in life is a fundamental component of comprehending religion (Paloutzian and Park, 2021). Religion provides a framework for people to seek answers to fundamental concerns about their origins, fate, and eternity. Religious ideas frequently give an insight of the purpose of life that assists people in overcoming uncertainty and anxiety.

It is vital to remember that the globe is home to several religions, each with its own set of beliefs and practices (Ammerman, 2021). Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism are the major faiths, although there are also numerous historic religious traditions and personal beliefs (Kollar and Fleischmann, 2022). Religious variety represents the global range of human experiences and beliefs. Religion also has a tremendous influence on people's social and personal life. Religion may be a source of collective identity and conflict on the societal level, but it can also unite society around common values and aims. Religion may give moral support, hope, and significance in a person's life on a personal level. Religion, in many circumstances, also provides an ethical framework that directs people's activities

and shapes their moral choices. Religion, on the other hand, may be a cause of stress and conflict, especially when various ideas collide. Religious disagreements have caused several disputes and wars throughout history. As a result, knowledge and tolerance for other religious views is critical in sustaining peace and harmony in today's increasingly interconnected globe.

## Policy

Policy, in the context of government and management, refers to a set of statements or actions designed to achieve a specific goal or address a specific problem (Wickert et al., 2021). Policies can be written rules, rules, regulations, or decisions issued by a government, organization, or entity that has authority. A policy usually consists of several main components:

1. Goals: These are the results to be achieved through policy implementation.
2. Rationality: Justification or reason why the policy Religion and Policy Journal Vol.1 No. 1 2023
3. Strategy: The method or steps that will be taken
4. Stakeholders: Individuals or groups who will be affected by the policy.
5. Implementation: The process of implementing policies.
6. Evaluation: Assessment of the impact and effectiveness of policies.

The Role of Policy

1. Regulatory: Policies help regulate individual, organizational, and societal behavior within a desired framework.
2. Problem Solving: Policies can respond to and resolve problems faced by society or the government.
3. Decision Making: Policies are the basis for making decisions that have broad impacts, including in the economic, social and environmental fields.
4. Development: Policies can be used to plan and direct economic, social, and infrastructure development.
5. Protection of Rights: Policies are also used to protect the rights and interests of individuals and groups in society.

Policies cannot be separated from the social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which they are implemented (Bulmer, 2021). This context will influence policy creation, implementation and effectiveness. Various factors such as societal values, political pressures, technological developments, and economic and environmental conditions will shape the way policies are formulated and implemented. The policy process involves a series of stages, including problem identification, policy formulation, decision making, implementation, evaluation, and revision if necessary. This process often involves multiple stakeholders, including government, civil society, business, and experts.

Policy making is often faced with various challenges, such as rapid changes in the global environment, uncertainty, political pressure, and the existence of different interest groups (Head, 2022). Implementing effective policies often requires balancing various factors and considering long-term impacts. It is important to continue to evaluate the policies that have been implemented. These evaluations help assess the impact of policies and enable learning for future improvements. In conclusion, policy is a strong instrument in shaping and directing society and government. Understanding the meaning, components, role and context of policy is an important step in understanding how policy affects our lives and how effective policies can be formulated and implemented to solve complex social, economic and political problems.

## Religions and policy

Religion is frequently used to influence policy decisions (Castles, 2019). Religious ideals and principles may be reflected in current laws and regulations in some nations. Sharia rules, for example, may form part of the national legal system in many Muslim-majority nations (Kawangung, 2019). In contrast, in some Christian-majority nations, legislation prohibiting abortion or same-sex marriage may reflect Christian moral beliefs. Policies based on religion may have a profound influence on society. In certain circumstances, such measures may encourage the moral and ethical principles associated with a specific faith. However, such regulations can cause controversy and conflict with religiously diverse or non-religious groups or individuals.

Protecting religious freedom is crucial in policy terms. Individuals' rights to practise their own religion or beliefs are frequently protected by laws in democratic countries (Fukuyama, 2022). This includes the freedom from religion or belief. Religious freedom must be protected in order to sustain tolerance and diversity in a varied society (Modood and Sealy, 2021). Finding a balance between religious beliefs and secular ideals in governance is one of the problems of merging religion and policy. There is continual dispute concerning the extent to which religious principles should affect public policy, particularly in nations that promote church-state separation.

The use of religion in policymaking poses ethical concerns as well. Policymakers must assess whether a religious-based policy will be fair to individuals or groups with differing views (Maeckelberghe et al., 2023). This necessitates ethical concerns as well as the protection of human rights. Religion also has an influence on international diplomacy and bilateral ties. Political choices and disputes frequently have a strong religious component, and a thorough grasp of religion may aid in conflict resolution and peace promotion (Sulaiman et al., 2022). Religion's influence in policy is a complicated issue with far-reaching ramifications in society and politics. Religion may be a source of moral and ethical principles, yet it can also cause controversy and dispute. Understanding the role of religion in policy is critical, as is maintaining a balance between religious freedom, secular ideals, and ethical concerns in policy decision making.

### The Influence of Religion in Legal Policy Making in Indonesia

The "Blasphemy Policy," also known as "UU ITE (Electronic Information and Transactions Law) Article 27 Paragraph 3," is one case study that demonstrates the effect of religion in Indonesian legislation (Hudjolly et al., 2023). This regulation has sparked several discussions and issues in Indonesian culture since it has the potential to criminalise religious blasphemy. Article 27 Paragraph 3 of the ITE Law states that anyone who intentionally and without authorization distributes information or electronic documents that contain content that insults or insults religion, can be subject to a maximum prison sentence of 5 years and/or a maximum fine of IDR 100 million.

This policy acknowledges religion's impact, particularly in terms of protecting religion from desecration or abuse in the digital realm (Raharjo, Saefudin and Zulhuda, 2023). The majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, and the Islamic faith plays a vital role in daily life and people's culture. As a result, safeguarding religion from blasphemy is a sensitive and timely topic in Indonesian culture. This policy has sparked much debate. Some claim that criminal sanctions for blasphemy can be used to extort money or limit free speech and expression. They are concerned that this policy will be abused to restrict free expression and silence religious criticism.

Supporters of this approach, on the other hand, say that safeguarding religion against blasphemy is a justifiable attempt to ensure social peace and communal security. They say that religious blasphemy can cause conflict and stress between religious groups and that clear restrictions are needed to avert this possible conflict (Irawan and Adnan, 2021). This case study exemplifies the difficult issues of balancing religious beliefs with free expression, human rights, and justice principles in legal and policy situations. Balancing religious protection with freedom of expression is a challenging challenge for the Indonesian government.

Furthermore, there must be serious ethical thought in the implementation of criminal punishments relating to religious matters. The extent to which criminal punishments are proportionate to the offence must constantly be considered while developing and implementing such regulations. The case study of ITE Law Article 27 Paragraph 3 is an example of how religion may impact policy in Indonesia, resulting in numerous arguments and issues in regulating free expression, human rights, and the safeguarding of religious values.

### CONCLUSION

The significance of religion in Indonesian policy and legislation, particularly as exemplified by Article 27 of the ITE legislation, highlights the complexities of the interaction between religious values, freedom of expression, and human rights. The safeguarding of religious values is delicate in Indonesia's Muslim-majority culture, yet striking a balance between religious protection and freedom of expression is a difficult problem. The religious variety of Indonesia adds to this complexity, emphasising the significance of tolerance and respect for various religious viewpoints. In an increasingly connected global

situation, understanding the role of religion in policy is key in dealing with conflict and maintaining peace. However, it is important to always consider the ethical question of the extent to which religion-related criminal penalties are commensurate with the offense committed. A deep understanding of religion, protection of human rights, and balance between religious values and secular principles are important elements in making effective and sustainable policies.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ammerman, N. T. (2021) *Studying lived religion: Contexts and practices*. NYU Press.

Astor, A. and Mayrl, D. (2020) "*Culturalized religion: A synthetic review and agenda for research.*" Wiley Online Library.

Bourchier, D. M. (2019) "Two decades of ideological contestation in Indonesia: From democratic cosmopolitanism to religious nationalism," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. Taylor & Francis, 49(5), pp. 713–733.

Bulmer, M. I. A. (2021) *Social science and social policy*. Routledge.

Büssing, A. (2021) *Spiritual needs in research and practice: the spiritual needs questionnaire as a global resource for health and social care*. Springer Nature.

Castles, F. G. (2019) "On religion and public policy: Does Catholicism make a difference?," in *Religion and Politics*. Routledge, pp. 529–550.

Chater, N. and Loewenstein, G. (2023) "The i-frame and the s-frame: How focusing on individual-level solutions has led behavioral public policy astray," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 46, p. e147.

Freeman, S. (2020) "Democracy, Religion & Public Reason," *Daedalus*. MIT Press One Rogers Street, Cambridge, MA 02142-1209, USA journals-info …, 149(3), pp. 37–58.

Fukuyama, F. (2022) "A country of their own: Liberalism needs the nation," *Foreign Aff*. HeinOnline, 101, p. 80.

Gallego-Alvarez, I., Rodríguez-Domínguez, L. and Martín Vallejo, J. (2020) "An analysis of business ethics in the cultural contexts of different religions," *Business Ethics: A European Review*. Wiley Online Library, 29(3), pp. 570–586.

Head, B. W. (2022) *Wicked problems in public policy: understanding and responding to complex challenges*. Springer Nature.

Hefner, R. W. (2021) "Islam and institutional religious freedom in Indonesia," *Religions*. MDPI, 12(6), p. 415.

Hudjolly, H. *et al.* (2023) "Online Gambling Practices (Positive Legal, Social, And Religious Review)," *Riwayat: Educational Journal of History and Humanities*, 6(3), pp. 1568–1573.

Irawan, A. M. and Adnan, Z. (2021) "The Ahmadiyya, Blasphemy and Religious Freedom: The Institutional Discourse Analysis of Religious Discrimination in Indonesia," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*. De Gruyter, 18(1), pp. 79–102.

Karjoko, L., Gunawan, S. and Sudarwanto, A. L. (2020) "Patent policy on the pharmaceutical sector in Indonesia," *J. Legal Ethical & Regul. Isses*. HeinOnline, 23, p. 1.

Kawangung, Y. (2019) "Religious moderation discourse in plurality of social harmony in Indonesia," *International journal of social sciences and humanities*. ScienceScholar, 3(1), pp. 160–170.

Kollar, R. and Fleischmann, F. (2022) "Does religion foster prejudice among adherents of all world religions? A comparison across religions," *Review of religious research*. Springer, 64(4), pp. 627–653.

Kumar, S. (2020) "Relevance of Buddhist Philosophy in Modern Management Theory," *Psychology and Education*, 58(2), pp. 2104–2111.

Maeckelberghe, E. *et al.* (2023) "The ethical challenges of personalized digital health," *Frontiers in Medicine*. Frontiers, 10, p. 1123863.

Modood, T. and Sealy, T. (2021) "Freedom of religion and the accommodation of religious diversity: Multiculturalising secularism," *Religions*. MDPI, 12(10), p. 868.

Paloutzian, R. F. and Park, C. L. (2021) "The psychology of religion and spirituality: How big the tent?," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Educational Publishing Foundation, 13(1), p. 3.

Quadri, A. S. M. A. (2021) "Religion, a Historical Perspective," *CIFIA Global Journal*, 2.

Raharjo, A., Saefudin, Y. and Zulhuda, S. (2023) "Legal Protection for the Victims of Religious Hate Speech on the Internet," *Kosmik Hukum*, 23(2), pp. 189–199.

Subchi, I. *et al.* (2022) "Religious moderation in indonesian muslims," *Religions*. MDPI, 13(5), p. 451.

Sulaiman, S. *et al.* (2022) "Moderation religion in the era society 5.0 and multicultural society: Studies based on legal, religious, and social reviews," *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 6(S5), pp. 180–193.

Wickert, C. *et al.* (2021) "Management research that makes a difference: Broadening the meaning of impact," *Journal of Management Studies*. Wiley Online Library, pp. 297–320.