Optimizing Public Policy Evaluation Using Data and Evidence-Based Approaches for Sunan Kuning Semarang, Indonesia Closure

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Abstract: Since the closure of the Sunan Kuning (Argorejo) localization area in Semarang in 2019, a range of secondary issues have emerged, including not only morality concerns but also impacts on economic cycles, public health, and social structures. The closure, part of a national initiative to eliminate prostitution, aimed to address moral and health concerns but unintentionally led to challenges such as the displacement of sex workers and the shift of prostitution to online platforms. This study aims to evaluate the policy surrounding closure using Robert E. Stake's Countenance Model (1967), which includes three stages: (1) antecedent, (2) transactions, and (3) outcomes. A qualitative approach was adopted, with purposive sampling to select stakeholders for Delphi interviews, supplemented by a literature review. Data analysis followed an interactive model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These processes were conducted simultaneously to enable structured and focused data collection. The findings indicated that the policy has not been optimally implemented. Key recommendations include the necessity of strong political will by the government in every stage of the policy process and the importance of incorporating insights from prior research and past policy experiences. The study's main contribution lies in developing innovative strategies for the systematic involvement of stakeholders, ensuring that public policy is both data-driven and responsive to the real-world challenges affected communities face. This research offers a novel framework for integrating qualitative policy evaluation with participatory stakeholder engagement in post-localization contexts.

Keywords: *Public policy evaluation; Evidence-Based policy; Policy optimization; Sunan Kuning Semarang*

INTRODUCTION

Policy evaluation does not merely stop at the implementation stage; it represents a critical phase within the policy cycle that ensures continuous learning and improvement. According to (Lasswell & Lerner, 1951), evaluation is an integral part of the policy process that provides feedback to decision-makers, facilitating adjustments and refinements. Sabatier (2007) further

emphasized that evaluation is essential in understanding policy outcomes within complex governance contexts. Amy & Julius (2005) asserted that the policy process includes five key stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Policy evaluation is a strategic feedback loop to ensure policy responsiveness, adaptability, and sustainability. Successful policy evaluation can be defined through multiple dimensions, including effectiveness (the extent to which policy goals are achieved), efficiency (the optimal use of resources to produce desired outcomes), and equity (the fairness of policy impacts across different social groups) (OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020). Without thorough evaluation encompassing these dimensions, policies risk failing to generate intended benefits and may lead to unintended consequences.

In 2015, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs, launched the "*Gerakan Nasional Bebas Lokalisasi Prostitusi*" to eradicate prostitution areas nationwide by 2019 (Sibuea, 2015). This policy was aligned with the global health agenda promoted by UNAIDS to eliminate HIV transmission by 2030. One major implementation of this policy was the closure of the Sunan Kuning localization area (Argorejo) in Semarang in October 2019 under Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2017 on Public Order *(Peraturan Daerah Kota Semarang Nomor 5 Tahun 2017 Tentang Ketertiban Umum, 2017)*. Before it was closed, data from the Semarang City Government stated that there were 485 commercial sex workers. It is estimated that there are 2,700 Patrons of commercial sex which results in a turnover of between 300-400 million rupiah a day (Pemerintah Kota Semarang, 2017).

However, the reality is that life in Sunan Kuning extended beyond prostitution activities. A local grassroots economy thrived in the area, supporting various livelihoods dependent on the daily functioning of the localization. Many individuals relied on this ecosystem for their income, including guesthouse operators, actors involved in prostitution, karaoke business owners and workers, and other small entrepreneurs such as restaurant owners, laundry services, and more. Data from *Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia* (PKBI) indicates that at least 225 families, 90 karaoke entrepreneurs employing 225 karaoke hostesses, 250 brothels with 625 sex workers, and 107 food stalls owned by residents were directly impacted by the closure of the Argorejo Resocialization Area.

During the closure process, the Semarang City Government provided financial compensation; however, this economic aid was directed solely toward the sex workers, excluding other affected parties. Furthermore, the compensation was deemed insufficient and lacked sustainable impact. Another issue involved moral rehabilitation, particularly among the sex workers, which was seen as a necessary but complex effort. Changing mindsets and lifestyles posed a major challenge for facilitators and trainers working with former sex workers (Sardini & Mukti, 2021). A significant number of them returned to sex work after the closure of Sunan Kuning.

After the disbanding of prostitution localizations, including Sunan Kuning, female sex workers relocated to scattered areas or solicited online, leading to increased safety risks and unregistered online prostitution activity in Semarang (Rezania Dewantary et al., 2023)

This study aims to evaluate the closure policy of the Sunan Kuning localization using a data- and evidence-based approach, applying Robert E. Stake's Countenance Model to systematically assess the policy's antecedents, processes, and outcomes. Through a qualitative design supported by empirical observations and stakeholder insights, this study seeks to answer whether the policy was implemented effectively and equitably and what lessons can be drawn for future public policy decisions.

This research contributes to the limited work on post-localization policy evaluation in Indonesia by integrating participatory stakeholder engagement and qualitative policy evaluation into a responsive, evidence-based framework. It offers a novel perspective on how government interventions in moral governance require more than normative assumptions—they demand structured policy learning grounded in the lived realities of affected communities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Localization areas are often considered high-risk places for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and other reproductive health issues (Sardini & Mukti, 2021). Therefore, the policy to close these areas was expected to reduce these negative impacts and improve the well-

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Vol 12, No 2 (2025): Page no: 223-235

being of the surrounding communities. However, over time, since the closure of Sunan Kuning, various secondary issues have persisted, not only related to morality concerns but also affecting the economic cycle, health, and social structures.

Several studies have shown that the closure of localization areas in certain regions has not automatically eradicated prostitution activities (Ratnasari, 2017). There has been an increase in the number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) following the closure of localization areas (Adam, 2020). Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs) who used to market their services at Sunan Kuning have now shifted to online marketing through social media platforms. The closure has merely displaced commercial sex practices to hotels, no longer occurring in the Sunan Kuning area (Mufrohim & Setiyono, 2021). The policy of closing localization areas has also introduced new challenges, particularly concerning social and economic impacts. The complexity of issues arising from the closure of the Argorejo Resocialization area has sparked discussions and debates on how prostitution policy should be formulated to prevent the emergence of additional problems due to the policy.

This study adopts the Countenance policy evaluation model by Robert E. Stake (Widiharti et al., 2019), which distinguishes three stages: (1) antecedent, (2) transactions, and (3) outcome (Nurkhasanah, 2023). In the antecedent stage, which refers to the pre-implementation phase, the focus is on the factors that prompted the Semarang City Government to close Sunan Kuning. In the transactions stage, or the policy implementation phase, attention is directed towards executing the Sunan Kuning closure policy and the challenges encountered. Meanwhile, in the outcome stage, which refers to the post-implementation phase, the focus is on the results of the policy's implementation. The following is an evaluation framework for the Sunan Kuning closure policy using the countenance model.
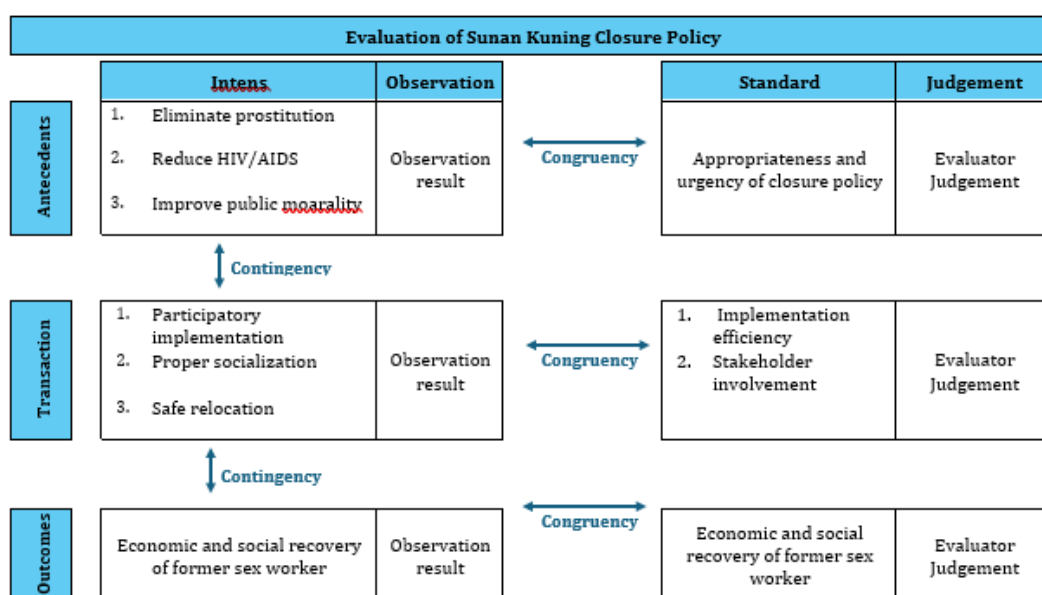

Figure 1. Countenance Model

Illustrates the framework developed by Robert E. Stake for evaluating policies. This model divides the evaluation process into three distinct phases: antecedent, transactions, and outcome; 1) Antecedent Phase: This stage focuses on the pre-implementation aspects of the policy. It involves understanding the context, background, and conditions that lead to the formulation of the policy. This phase is crucial for identifying the needs and problems that the policy aims to address. 2) Transactions Phase: This phase pertains to the actual implementation of the policy. It examines how the policy is executed, the activities involved, and the challenges faced. This stage is essential for assessing the fidelity of implementation and the operational aspects of the policy. 3) Outcome Phase: The final phase evaluates the results and impacts of the policy after its implementation. It assesses whether the policy has achieved its intended objectives and the overall effectiveness of the intervention Stake. The Countenance Model emphasizes the importance of understanding each

phase in the policy evaluation process to assess the policy's effectiveness and inform future decision-making comprehensively. This structured approach helps policymakers and evaluators to systematically analyze the various components and outcomes associated with public policies.

Policies related to prostitution must consider various factors and diverse perspectives, grounded in the process of 'unveiling values' and 'encompassing' many variables before making decisions (Riswanda et al., 2017). However, policymaking in Indonesia generally remains disconnected from policy research or social research findings (Asmara & Handoyo, 2015). Furthermore, (Prasetiamartati et al., 2018) added that decision-making in Indonesia is currently more driven by political interests and popular policies rather than research, which could lead to more effective policy outcomes.

The Deputy of Social Statistics at the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia, Jousairi Hasbullah, emphasized the importance of the policymaking concept, focusing on evidence as a foundation for policy formulation. One of the reasons for the failure of policy implementation is inaccurate or incomplete research. Several factors contribute to this gap, including the lack of validity in university research results, which diminishes the government's confidence in adopting the information (Darniyus & Warsono, 2020). Evidence-based research is one alternative that can be utilized in the policymaking process.

According to the Cabinet Office of Britain, as cited in (Marston & Watts, 2003), evidence includes "expert knowledge, published research, available statistics, stakeholder consultations, evaluations of previous policies, the internet, consultation outcomes, cost assessments of policy options, and economic and statistical modeling results. Amy & Julius (2005) stated that in monitoring and evaluation, it is important to ensure that the evidence is objective, comprehensive, relevant and effectively communicated in the ongoing policymaking process.

Table 1. Policy Process Components and Evidence Issues

Stage of Policy Process	Description	Different evidence issues
Agenda setting	Awareness and priority are given to an issue.	The evidence needed here is in terms of identifying new problems or building evidence regarding the magnitude of a problem so that relevant policy actors are aware that the problem is indeed important. A key factor here is the credibility of evidence and the way evidence is communicated.
Formulation	There are two keys to the policy formulation process: determining the policy options and then selecting the preferred option.	For both stages, policymakers should ideally ensure that their understanding of the specific situation and the different options is as detailed and comprehensive as possible – only then can they make informed decisions about which policy to go ahead and implement, including the instrumental link between an activity and an outcome as well as the expected cost and impact of an intervention. The quantity and credibility of the evidence is important.
Implementation	Actual practical activities.	Here, the focus is on operational evidence to improve the effectiveness of initiatives. It can include analytic work and systematic learning around technical skills, expert knowledge and practical experience. Action research and pilot projects are often important. The key is that the evidence is practically relevant across different contexts.
Evaluation	Monitoring and assessing the process and impact of an intervention.	The first goal here is to develop monitoring mechanisms. A comprehensive evaluation procedure is essential in determining the implemented policy's effectiveness and providing the basis for future decision-making. In monitoring and evaluation processes, ensuring that the evidence is objective, thorough, relevant and communicated successfully to the continuing policy process is important.

Source: (Amy & Julius, 2005)

Table 1 outlines the different stages of the policy process and the specific evidence-related issues that arise at each stage. The purpose of the table is to provide a clear framework for understanding how evidence is used across the various components of the policy cycle. The key elements are outlined below: 1) Stages of the Policy Process: This table identifies the main stages involved in the policy process, typically including agenda setting, formulation, implementation and evaluation. Each stage is critical in developing and implementing public policy (Whitford, 2012). 2) Description: For each stage, the table briefly summarizes the key activities and focus areas associated with that phase. This stage helps clarify what happens at each point in the policy cycle. 3) Different Evidence Issues: This table highlights the specific evidence needs and challenges that policymakers face at each stage. For example, Agenda Setting, which emphasizes the need for credible evidence to raise awareness of issues and prioritize them for action, a formulation that focuses on the need for detailed understanding and comprehensive evidence to inform policy choices and decisions, an implementation that emphasizes the importance of operational evidence to enhance the effectiveness of initiatives, an evaluation that emphasizes the need for monitoring mechanisms to assess policy impact and processes (Osborne, 2024).

Overall, the purpose of Table 1 is to illustrate the integral role of evidence in the policymaking process, emphasizing that effective policy development and implementation relies on comprehensive and relevant evidence at every stage. The structured approach in evidence-based decision-making aids policymakers by highlighting the significance of utilizing the best available information. It allows them to identify potential gaps in their understanding or application of evidence, ensuring they are informed by the latest research and practices (V Kurien et al., 2022)

In an era of rapidly advancing information, the need for evidence-based approaches and data utilization in decision-making has become increasingly urgent. Data in decision-making can reduce uncertainty and enhance the effectiveness of policies or actions taken. Utilizing data in public policy formulation enhances decision-making accuracy, addressing existing problems effectively. It advocates for an information platform to support scientific decision-making, ensuring solutions are based on empirical evidence rather than mere experience (An & Liu, 2023). Moreover, evidence-based approaches promote transparency and accountability, as decisions can be tested and evaluated based on existing evidence rather than mere assumptions or intuition.

In the era of globalization and rapid advancements in information technology, evidence-based public policy evaluation has become crucial in formulating and implementing effective policies. As the complexity of social and economic challenges grows, governments and other stakeholders urgently need to develop evaluation optimization strategies that provide valid, reliable, and relevant information (Osborne, 2024). This article seeks to leverage available evidence or data to optimize the evaluation process of the Sunan Kuning Semarang closure policy. By utilizing measurable data and conducting in-depth analysis, it is hoped that better decision-making can be guided, ensuring more efficient resource allocation and enhancing the outcomes and impact of public policies. This approach improves policy quality and supports transparency and accountability in public governance.

This study focuses on data utilization analysis, research methodology, and the integration of findings into the decision-making process to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the Sunan Kuning Semarang localization area closure policy. The novelty of this study lies in its unique approach to addressing the disconnect between policymaking and empirical evidence, as previously identified by (Sardini & Mukti, 2021). Unlike past research, this study integrates a detailed analysis of the socio-economic impacts on affected communities, an area overlooked in previous policies, as noted by Sarjito (2024). By incorporating data-driven insights and socio-economic considerations, this study provides a more holistic and sustainable framework for policy evaluation. Additionally, this research introduces an innovative model for the systematic involvement of stakeholders in the policy-making process, ensuring that future policies are informed by data and responsive to the real-world challenges communities face. This approach aims to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusivity of public policies in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to evaluate the impact of the closure of the Sunan Kuning localization area in Semarang City. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a detailed exploration of interview results from each respondent, which is crucial given that each individual may have different interpretations of the same issues raised by the researcher. This methodology involved data collection through in-depth semi-structured interviews, including expert interviews referred to as Delphi interviews (Naisola-Ruiter, 2022; Shariff, 2015).

The Delphi method was applied in an iterative process consisting of two rounds of feedback to gather expert opinions on the policy's impact. The first Delphi interview round involved open-ended questions to collect broad insights into the policy's economic, social, and cultural effects. Experts were asked to provide their initial perspectives on the closure's consequences and the policy's overall effectiveness. In the second round, experts were provided with a summary of the responses from the first round. They were asked to rank and comment on the most critical policy evaluation factors. This round aimed to refine opinions and achieve consensus on key aspects of the policy evaluation.

The experts were selected based on their significant expertise. The selection criteria were at least professional experience in analytical fields such as policy, social work, or local government and involvement in related issues such as public health and welfare. The panel consisted of 6 experts, including policymakers, academics, and representatives from NGOs working in social policy and community services, as well as a former manager of the Sunan Kuning area.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to gain insights into the social and economic dynamics that emerged following the closure. The review used academic articles, government reports, and case studies to examine previous research on stakeholder involvement, policy implementation, and socio-economic impacts. It helped frame the findings within the broader context of policy evaluation. The analysis technique employed is the interactive model, which consists of three components: data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Broman, 2021; Liu, S. et al., 2017). The figure below summarizes the flow of the research method used. The double-sided arrow between data collection and analysis indicates that these steps are carried out simultaneously (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).
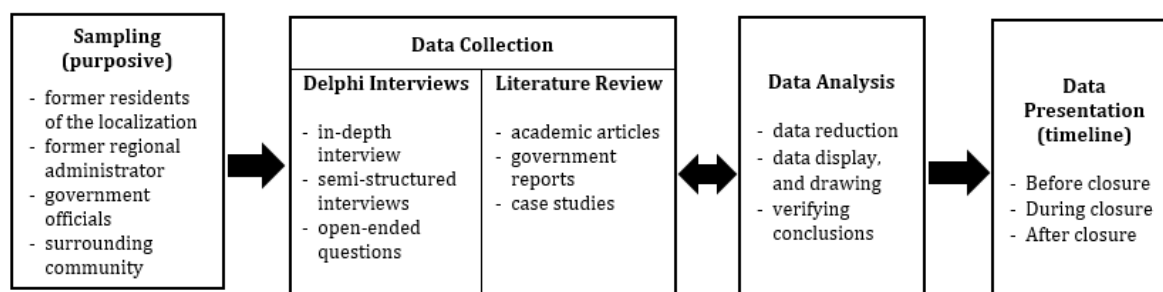

Figure 2. Research Methode

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Evaluation of the Sunan Kuning Area Closure Policy

The Countenance policy evaluation model by Robert E. Stake (Widiharti et al., 2019) divides the policy evaluation process into three distinct phases: (1) antecedent, (2) transactions, and (3) outcome. The antecedent phase refers to the pre-implementation stage, during which the policy's objectives are outlined, and preparations are made for its execution. The transactions phase refers to the policy's implementation stage. Finally, the outcome phase focuses on the results and impacts of the policy once it has been fully implemented. Stake's model is valuable because it helps describe these phases and evaluates the alignment between the intended and actual outcomes, using specific criteria to judge success or failure.

In the antecedent phase, the government outlined clear objectives aimed at reducing prostitution and mitigating the spread of HIV/AIDS through the closure of the Sunan Kuning area. These goals were articulated in the form of health screenings, resocialization programs, and alternative employment training for sex workers. However, there were challenges in clearly

communicating these goals to the local community, which led to confusion and resistance in the subsequent phases. The criteria for success during this phase included the number of individuals screened for STIs and the percentage of sex workers participating in resocialization programs. Health data, such as the Semarang City Health Office's VCT test data, showed an increase in HIV cases, particularly in 2017, indicating a gap between the intended outcome and the actual situation. Figure 3 below is data from the Semarang City Health Office in 2019 which shows VCT Test Data from Sunan Kuning (2014-2018).

Figure 3. VCT Test Data from Sunan Kuning (2014-2018)

At the transaction stage, the policy involved a significant amount of approval, so the planned closure from 2017 was delayed until 2019. Although the intention was for the closure to be implemented smoothly, the actual process involved protests and actions from local stakeholders, including historians, religious leaders, and community leaders. The main rejection came from sex workers in the area who considered the stipend given by the government to be insufficient for living capital after leaving sex work.

Moreover, the amount given did not match the promises made. The lack of communication about the policy's benefits and objectives also caused residents' doubts and fears. The criteria for assessing success during this phase focused on the duration of the policy, the level of resistance faced, and the level of community acceptance. Although the closure was finally carried out, its implementation was not smooth, reflecting a mismatch between the expected results (smooth and timely closure) and the actual results (delayed closure and strong local requirements).

Although initially, this policy sparked protests and dissatisfaction, particularly from those who relied on activities in Sunan Kuning for their livelihoods, the situation began to shift over time through the persuasive efforts of the Semarang City Government. Moreover, during that period, society was already adapting to the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced limitations on public activities. This situation further encouraged the community members who had initially resisted the policy to eventually begin accepting that policy (Wignjosasono, 2022).

In the outcome phase, the policy had mixed results. On the positive side, Sunan Kuning's closure helped protect community values. The intended outcome of moral improvement and public health protection was partially achieved, with reduced prostitution-related activities in the area. However, there were significant negative outcomes as well, including a decline in income for businesses unrelated to prostitution and the persistence of prostitution in new forms, such as online sex work. It indicates a misalignment between the intended outcome (complete eradication of prostitution) and the actual outcome (prostitution shifting to other venues, including online platforms). The criteria for success in this phase involved measuring the decline in local prostitution, the continued effectiveness of resocialization programs, and the socio-economic

impact on non-prostitution-related businesses. Despite efforts to close physical sites, the persistence of online prostitution highlights a failure to fully address the root causes of sex work and its adaptability in a networked society (Casañ & Ariño, 2025). Based on the three stages explained earlier, the researcher concludes that the evaluation of the Sunan Kuning area closure policy has not yet been fully optimized.

Evidence-Based Approach in Public Policy Evaluation

Head (2015), in his study 'Three Lenses of Evidence-Based Policy', provides a framework for knowledge and data lenses in the EBP (Evidence-Based Policy) approach, which can be viewed from three perspectives: First, political knowledge. This lens highlights that a policy must gain political support. Therefore, policymakers must have agenda setting, prioritization, and a clear understanding of the evolving political agenda. It is important to recognize that public policy is inherently a political process that cannot be separated from politics, and other aspects serve merely as supporting elements or sources of information (Darniyus & Warsono, 2020).

In the context of the Sunan Kuning area closure, the Semarang City Government announced in the mass media its intention to close the Sunan Kuning localization as early as 2018. However, the policy was only implemented in October 2019. From the political lens perspective, this delay can be linked to the political agenda of the local government, considering that this period was close to an election year (Muliawaty & Hendryawan, 2020). After the closure, the Semarang City Government largely neglected the former Sunan Kuning area, with no supervision or evaluation, leading to the continuation of prostitution practices (Sumiar, 2019). The success of public policy implementation is influenced by the government's commitment, particularly the political agenda of the local leadership.

Second, scientific research-based knowledge. Scientific knowledge provides input for policy innovations that have a positive impact. Research-based knowledge, grounded in interdisciplinary studies, offers a positive perspective by providing diverse viewpoints from various theoretical approaches (Cairney & Oliver, 2020).

The concept of evidence-based policy in Indonesia is not entirely new, as the government has already established that every policymaking process must be grounded in scientific research. Article 43, paragraph (3) of Law 12/11 reads, "An academic paper must accompany a Draft Law." An academic paper results from legal research or other scientific studies on a specific issue that can be scientifically justified (Indonesia, Law No. 12/2011). The first stage of drafting a law is the academic paper or data derived from research.

In the context of the Sunan Kuning area closure, the policy was part of a national initiative to eradicate prostitution, as stated by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2015 (Amrianto et al., 2023). It reflects a top-down approach rather than being based on local scientific data. It disregards the unique socio-economic dynamics of the Semarang community, even though it aligns with broader national objectives. The lack of regulation surrounding prostitution has been linked to public health issues, including the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Amrianto et al., 2023). Limited resources and inconsistent community involvement hindered previous efforts in governance and community rehabilitation (Sudarmo, 2019). The Indonesian government's policy on prostitution, including the closure of localization areas, is based on an ahistorical and unsubstantial view, lacking specific scientific data, leading to unfair treatment of sex workers and ineffective solutions to the issue (Priyanto, 2018). The sudden closure affected around 500 sex workers, disrupting their livelihoods without adequate support systems in place (Sudarmo, 2019). As a result, the policymaking process did not originate from specific scientific data related to the conditions in the Sunan Kuning area of Semarang City.

Third, practical implementation knowledge. This lens highlights that data sources from field practitioners or field officers who understand the situational landscape can also serve as recommendations in policymaking. In this case, field officers can provide insights into a policy's challenges, obstacles, and constraints, which can then be used as material for evaluation to achieve the best possible policy outcomes (Rossi et al., 2003).

When related to the Sunan Kuning area closure context, this practical knowledge aspect has not been fully maximized, as seen from the lack of involvement of various stakeholders, both before and after the closure. In fact, with the closure of the area, the former Sunan Kuning area has become increasingly neglected and beyond supervision, including by Semarang City Social Services (Mufrohim, 2020).

Evidence-based policy is public policy informed by objective evidence. An important aspect of evidence-based policy is using valid scientific research, such as randomized controlled trials, to identify programs and practices that can improve policy outcomes supported by relevant data. Good data, analytical capabilities, and political support are key elements in evidence-based policy (Cookson, 2005). Policymaking is a complex task, and policymakers need scientific evidence. Other factors, such as the values that govern the system, expert opinions, public opinion, and various other factors, also influence the final decisions of policymakers.

The dynamics involved in serving the public interest require timely and accurate decision-making. An important aspect of the public policy evaluation process is similar to other key aspects of the decision-making process. As with previous steps in the public policy process, the decision-making stage is influenced by the nature of the policy subsystems involved and the level of consensus the decision-makers face (Supriyanto & Saputra, 2022).

Evidence-informed decision-making offers several potential benefits, including adopting the most effective and cost-efficient interventions, the more prudent use of scarce resources, and better outcomes for individuals and society (Gabby, 2015). The contribution of data in the public sector is undeniably appealing, particularly throughout the policymaking cycle. In public policy, evidence-based decision-making increasingly relies on accurate and detailed data to produce effective and efficient policies.

Integrating Robert Stake's Countenance Model with the Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) framework offers a comprehensive approach to policy evaluation. While Stake's model systematically examines the policy's antecedent, transaction, and outcome phases by comparing intended versus actual results, EBP emphasizes the critical role of political, scientific, and practical knowledge lenses in shaping these phases. By combining Stake's focus on evaluative criteria and outcome alignment with EBP's multifaceted knowledge perspectives, evaluators can better understand whether a policy works and how and why it succeeds or fails within complex political and social contexts.

Policy goals are formulated at the antecedent stage, and scientific bases are prepared (academic lens). Stake's model requires evaluation to examine whether these goals are clear and supported by valid scientific evidence. Meanwhile, political agendas and societal values (political lens) heavily influence policy objectives. An evaluation must explore how political interests and moral values shape the goals—whether these goals are realistic, fair, and inclusive. Gaps in scientific evidence or dominance of narrow political agendas manifest as misalignments in the antecedent phase.

In the implementation phase, Stake assesses the processes and interactions of actors executing the policy. The practical lens highlights the importance of frontline knowledge and the involvement of implementers and communities. Evaluation should identify institutional barriers, bureaucratic silos, and capacity gaps that often impede implementation. Simultaneously, political power and elite interests can influence actual execution—such as delays or resistance—which must be analyzed as part of transaction phase evaluation. The interaction between politics and practice determines implementation effectiveness.

The outcome phase evaluates the alignment between intended goals and actual policy impacts, including effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. Evidence-based policy demands empirical evidence (academic lens) to assess outcomes, such as statistical data, surveys, and impact analyses. Outcomes should also be examined from the perspective of practitioners and beneficiaries (practical lens) to reveal social and ethical consequences, including unintended effects. Political context also shapes outcomes, for example, whether the public and elites accept or contest the policy results (political lens).

In recent years, the emergence of big data as a rich and complex source of information has provided new opportunities to understand societal dynamics and policy impacts more holistically. The use of big data in policy evaluation supports the entire policy-making life cycle, from agenda setting to evaluation (Verhulst et al., 2019). Big Data enables accurate and participatory policy analysis, enabling more tailored and responsive policy interventions (Shi et al., 2017).

In evaluating public policies related to the closure of localization areas, policymakers should be able to be one of the inputs that provide in-depth and diverse insights. Big data can be used to holistically analyze the closure's social, economic, and health impacts. It complements traditional data sources such as surveys and censuses, providing a more complete picture of the effects of the

policy (Aragona & De Rosa, 2019). Big data analysis also identifies long-term trends and changes that may occur after the closure of localization areas, helping the government make more accurate and evidence-based decisions for future policies (Giest, 2017). Thus, big data is a powerful evaluation tool and allows the government to adopt a more adaptive and responsive approach to managing complex public policies (Mergel et al., 2016).

From an Evidence-Based Policy perspective, this study recommends several key elements, such as the need for political will in executing each policy process. Political support is very important in any policy and cannot be separated. Political narratives and public opinion are critical in determining which issues are prioritized in policy discussions (Picard, 2020). The legitimacy of policies is intertwined with political support; effective policies require political backing and stakeholder consensus (Tomova, 2022). In addition, this study recommends that prior research be considered as a basis for policymaking, ensuring that evaluations provide valuable input to policymakers. Another recommendation is Prior research and scientific data are crucial in public policy evaluation as they inform the design, implementation, and assessment phases, ensuring that evaluations are based on objective evidence, which aids in making informed decisions and enhances the overall effectiveness of policies (Kilbourne et al., 2022; Pandey & Shukla, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the policy evaluation using the Countenance model by Robert E. Stake, the researcher concludes that the closure policy of the Sunan Kuning area has not been fully optimized. The continued practice of prostitution and the emergence of other social issues serve as evidence that the closure of Sunan Kuning has not been entirely successful. The evidence-based policy (EBP) perspective has not been maximally applied at each stage, namely antecedent, transactions, and outcome. Connecting the Countenance Model with Evidence-Based Policy allows for a more comprehensive and contextual evaluation of public policies. During the antecedent phase, using academic and political lenses helps assess whether policies are grounded in robust scientific evidence and realistic, inclusive political agendas. In the transaction phase, practical and political lenses are applied to identify barriers to implementation, resistance, and political dynamics that influence effectiveness. Finally, the outcome phase integrates all three lenses—scientific data, field experiences, and political analysis—to compare actual results with initial goals and evaluate success and social implications. This integrated approach enables policy evaluation to move beyond merely describing outcomes and toward understanding the dynamic interaction between scientific evidence, political interests, and practical experience throughout the policy cycle.

This study has several limitations. Focusing on a single locality limits the generalizability of the findings, and the qualitative approach may introduce biases due to participants' willingness to share. The short study period (July–October 2023) restricts the assessment of long-term impacts, while potential selection biases and subjective data affect validity. These factors suggest further research to understand the broader effects of localization closures better and improve policy responses. Future studies should consider comparative evaluations across multiple localization closures in different regions to identify broader patterns and policy implications. Mixed-method approaches combining longitudinal data, surveys, and ethnographic observation could enhance reliability and depth. Moreover, future research should explore models for inclusive compensation and post-closure community support to inform more equitable and sustainable public policy design. Recommendations for public policy evaluation should integrate the three lenses of Evidence-Based Policy using three stages of Stake's Countenance Model to ensure a comprehensive and critical evaluation. The active involvement of field practitioners and stakeholders is essential to identifying implementation barriers and ensuring the relevance of evaluation results.

Additionally, scientific data should be contextualized according to local conditions to avoid ineffective top-down policies. Evaluation should also apply holistic criteria, including effectiveness, efficiency, and equity, to align initial goals and policy outcomes. Finally, big data is recommended to provide a more complete picture of policy impacts and support evidence-based decision-making.

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