EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY IN THE FORMULATION OF LOCAL REGULATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE RIAU PROVINCE HOUSING AND SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

Housing and settlement issues in Riau Province continue to increase in line with population growth, urbanization, high housing backlog rates, and the existence of slums and disaster-prone areas. The Riau Provincial Government has formulated the RP3KP as an effort to meet the need for decent housing and organize settlement areas, but the formulation process has not fully applied the principles of evidence-based policy. This study aims to examine the application of EBP in the Riau Province RP3KP through three main aspects: the commitment of policy actors, the use of data and scientific knowledge, and the organizational readiness for implementation. The study uses a post-positivist qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews and documentation studies. The analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results show that political support for the RP3KP is relatively strong, but the involvement of non-governmental actors is still limited. Scientifically, the drafting of the RP3KP has utilized primary and secondary data, but the integration of local empirical findings is still weak. From an implementation perspective, institutional capacity and cross-sector coordination are not yet fully ready, especially in relation to synchronization with the Spatial Plan (RTRW). These findings emphasize the need to strengthen EBP so that the RP3KP is more adaptive, contextual, and effective in addressing the complexity of housing issues in Riau.

INTRODUCTION

Settlements and housing are among the targets of sustainable development or SDGs as part of efforts to create sustainable cities and settlements, but they remain a major challenge in Indonesia's development. The unplanned growth of residential areas and limited access to decent housing are issues that must be resolved by the government as the

regulator or decision maker (Brown, 2003). The central government has taken measures to regulate housing and residential areas by enacting Law No. 1 of 2011, which stipulates the obligation of local governments to formulate a Housing and Residential Area Development Plan (RP3KP).

The province of Riau faces challenges in providing adequate housing and settlements for its citizens. Population growth, due to both urbanization and natural growth, has led to an increase in the need for adequate housing. Based on data from the Riau Province Central Statistics Agency, the current population has reached 6,642,874, with an annual growth rate of 1.34% per year (Riau Province Central Statistics Agency, 2025). Urbanization from rural areas to cities, especially to the city of Pekanbaru, has put significant pressure on the provision of decent housing. The need for housing in Riau Province can be seen from the backlog figures for home ownership and occupancy. Based on data collected by BP2P Sumatera III (2021), the ownership backlog in Riau Province reached 377,508 units, while the occupancy backlog reached 357,837 units. The backlog (housing demand) is predicted to increase in line with the population growth rate in Riau Province. Housing and settlement issues in Riau Province are not only related to housing needs but also to the phenomenon of investment houses, where one individual owns more than one house. This creates inequality in access to housing, adding complexity to housing planning, where one house can be occupied by several generations or used for investment purposes.

As housing needs increase, various housing problems have emerged in Riau Province. One of the main issues is the existence of uninhabitable houses, slums, and illegal settlements, especially along riverbanks. Data from Riau Province housing statistics show that 23.20% of households are uninhabitable and slums are under provincial authority and have been stipulated in the 2019-2014 RPJMD (Regional Medium-Term Development Plan) as covering 249.27 hectares. This condition not only affects the quality of life of the community, but also increases health and safety risks. In addition, a number of settlements are located in disaster-prone areas, such as floods or landslides, which require special mitigation strategies. The total number of houses affected by disaster-prone areas is estimated at 346 units (PUPRPKPP). The Regulation on Housing and Settlement Development and Development is the answer to housing and settlement problems in cross-district/city areas where coordination between regions in the provision of housing and supporting infrastructure has not been optimal, resulting in an imbalance between housing needs and land availability.

To address these issues, the Riau Provincial Government has formulated a Regional Regulation on Housing and Settlement Development Plans (RP3KP). This regulation was drafted to address issues related to the provision of decent housing, the restructuring of slums, the mitigation of disaster-prone areas, the optimization of land use, and the accommodation of investment properties. The RP3KP aims to create a balance between the quantity, quality, and affordability of housing, while ensuring that housing development is in line with the community's financing capacity.

However, the formulation process of the RP3KP is not yet fully evidence-based. Many of the resulting policies are still normative or top-down in nature, paying little attention to empirical data on housing needs, the distribution of slums, disaster risks, and the financing capacity of the community. Head (2008) emphasizes that evidence-based decision-making requires a comprehensive understanding of field issues through political data, academic research results, and professional experience. Cookson (2005) adds that evidence-based policy emphasizes policies that are in line with facts and community needs.

In the context of the RP3KP, this means that data related to the number of housing needs, the area of slums, the number of RTLH, the area of disaster-prone areas, and community financing capacity must be the basis for policy formulation.

There is still a large gap between the needs of local governments and academic research. Prasojo (2019) states that political considerations, bureaucratic capacity, and institutional agendas often influence policy formulation more than data or empirical research. Farazmand (2023) adds that scientific knowledge is important for improving the effectiveness, rationality, and fairness of public policy, especially in an era of high complexity. Thus, the application of evidence-based policy principles is crucial for RP3KP to be able to address complex issues related to housing, ranging from the quantity of dwellings, the quality of houses, disaster risk mitigation, strategic area management, to the affordability of financing.

In addition, the issue of housing is not only about quantity, but also quality and distribution. The phenomenon of investment houses and extended families has resulted in some houses not fully fulfilling their basic residential function. This problem is further complicated by the existence of settlements on riverbanks and in disaster-prone areas. Thus, the RP3KP must be able to design policies that balance quantity, quality, safe location, and affordable financing, while taking into account the needs of a heterogeneous community.

Research on the application of evidence-based policy in RP3KP is very important. EBP-based analysis can evaluate the extent to which empirical data is used in policy formulation, how relevant actors are committed to evidence-based principles, and the readiness of organizations to implement policies. With this approach, the resulting policies are expected to be more targeted, effective, and sustainable.

This study aims to examine the application of evidence-based policy in the RP3KP of Riau Province with a focus on three main aspects: (1) the commitment of relevant actors to evidence-based policy, (2) the use of scientific data and information in policy formulation, and (3) organizational readiness to implement policies. The results of this study are expected to provide input for improving the quality of evidence-based housing policies, while also helping local governments design more effective interventions to address complex issues related to housing and settlements in Riau Province.

METHOD

This study uses a post-positivist qualitative approach. Using this method, researchers begin with a theory, collect data that supports or refutes the theory, and then make the necessary revisions and conduct additional tests (Creswell, 2017). The use of this method aims to seek a deep understanding of the process of social phenomena because the interest in a qualitative study is in process rather than outcomes (Maxwell, 2013). With the understanding that a qualitative approach is carried out by researchers to understand the process of various events and actions. In this case, some consider that what is interesting in qualitative studies is not only the study results (outcomes) but also the process, namely the process that leads to the results (outcomes).

Data collection was carried out using in-depth interview techniques and literature studies. The interviews were semi-structured, and the author determined the informants purposively, where the informants selected were in accordance with the needs and objectives of the study. The informants were determined to obtain the necessary data. The consideration in determining the informants was because they were parties involved in the formulation of regional regulations on Housing and Settlement Development in Riau

Province. The stages of data processing and analysis used an interactive data analysis model consisting of four simultaneous activities: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, Huberman, Saldana, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Political Knowledge

From an evidence-based policy perspective, political knowledge plays an important role in bridging the gap between scientific evidence and decision-making processes that are fraught with vested interests. As explained by Head (2008), this dimension not only includes political support from government actors, but also the ability of policy makers to build consensus among various interest groups that have an influence on the direction of public policy. In the context of the preparation of the Riau Province Housing and Settlement Development Plan (RP3KP), this dimension is evident in the process of negotiating interests between the government, business actors, the community, and the legislature. The political process in the preparation of the Riau RP3KP began with a regulatory mandate as mandated by Minister of Public Works and Public Housing Regulation No. 12 of 2014 concerning Guidelines for the Preparation of RP3KP, which requires each province to have a long-term planning document in the field of housing and settlements.

Political knowledge encompasses the extent to which the policy process considers political interests, inter-actor support, and power dynamics in the process of formulating and establishing public policy. Political knowledge is not solely related to ideology or party orientation, but also concerns the capacity of government actors to understand, manage, and negotiate political forces to ensure that policies can be passed and implemented effectively (Cairney, 2016).

In the context of the formulation of the Riau Province Housing and Settlement Development Plan (RP3KP), the political aspect was strong in the process of passing the RP3KP Regional Regulation Draft (Raperda), mainly because this document is part of the strategic objectives in the 2025–2029 Riau Province Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD). This means that housing and settlement issues have been explicitly placed as a political priority of the local government, which is oriented towards improving the quality of settlements and eradicating slums. From a public policy theory perspective, the link between the RP3KP and the RPJMD shows the political commitment of the Riau Provincial Government to make the housing sector part of its development agenda. However, in the formulation stage of the RP3KP Draft Regulation, the pattern of policy actor participation was still very limited.

Based on interviews and document reviews, the formulation process only involved executive actors (the Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlement Areas and Land), the legislature (the Riau Provincial House of Representatives), and consultants who drafted the academic paper. There was no significant involvement from non-governmental actors such as developers, local academics, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been active on the issue of public housing. The lack of actors involved reflects the low level of interest heterogeneity in the policy formulation process. This reinforces Dunn's (2018) finding that public policy formulation that only involves bureaucratic groups tends to produce technocratic and less inclusive policy products. With the government dominating as the main actor, the process of formulating the RP3KP Draft Regulation can be said to be homogeneous in terms of interests. Policy decisions and substance are largely determined by the local government, especially by the Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlements and Land as the policy lead

agency. In this situation, the political knowledge that emerges is more in the form of institutional knowledge, namely an understanding of the rules, procedures, and political legitimacy between government actors, rather than plural knowledge resulting from the interaction of various social interests (Colebatch, 2018).

In the legislative process, the political dynamics between the legislature and the executive were relatively conducive due to strong political support for accelerating the ratification of the RP3KP Regional Regulation. The Regional House of Representatives and the Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlements and Land shared the view that the RP3KP was necessary as a legal basis for the development of sectoral housing and settlement policies. The coalition between these two institutions reflects a situation in which shared political orientation is a major factor in facilitating the policy legislative process (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Strong legislative support for the RP3KP shows that political support for this policy has been secured, even though the technical aspects are not yet fully perfected.

However, it is precisely at this point that structural problems arise. One of the most crucial issues is the lack of synchronization between the RP3KP Draft Regulation and the Riau Province Spatial Plan (RTRW). Based on the principles of national spatial planning, all derivative documents such as the RP3KP must refer to and be adjusted to the RTRW as the parent spatial policy (Law No. 26 of 2007 on Spatial Planning). However, until the discussion process of the RP3KP Draft Regulation took place, the Riau Province RTRW Draft Regulation had not been passed. Normatively, this creates a policy anomaly, because the RP3KP was drafted and pushed for approval without a definitive spatial basis. This situation illustrates how political considerations can dominate technical and scientific considerations, when the need to demonstrate political performance is considered more urgent than procedural consistency between policy documents. Although policy actors were aware of this potential inconsistency, the Riau Provincial DPRD continued to push for the accelerated approval of the RP3KP Draft Regulation, considering that any delay would hamper the implementation of the housing program planned in the RPJMD.

This attitude shows that policy decisions are driven more by short-term political logic than long-term policy logic (Lindblom, 1959). In this context, political knowledge becomes a strategic instrument for reading the direction of political forces, understanding the urgency of the legislative momentum, and balancing the idealism of planning with the reality of power. Another limitation that emerged was the absence of a cross-actor deliberative forum that would allow for more participatory policy discussions. According to Head (2010), evidence-based policy requires not only data and research, but also a space for political deliberation where evidence can be negotiated and interpreted jointly by various stakeholders. In the case of the Riau RP3KP, such a forum was not established. Substantive discussions only took place between the Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlements and Land and the Regional House of Representatives, while local civil society groups and academics were not meaningfully involved. As a result, the resulting policy tended to represent the interests of the government rather than the broader public interest.

Nevertheless, the government's dominance in the formulation process did not necessarily eliminate the political value of the policy. In fact, the success in pushing for the passage of the RP3KP Draft Regulation amid the unfinished RTRW shows the adaptive ability of government actors in reading and utilizing political space to accelerate strategic policy agendas. According to Cairney (2016), this is referred to as political astuteness,

which is the ability of public officials to understand political dynamics and use strategic information to achieve the desired policy outcomes.

Thus, the dimension of political knowledge in the formulation of the Riau Province RP3KP shows two different sides. On the one hand, there is political coordination between the legislature and the executive that supports the acceleration of policies that reflect stability and effectiveness in decision-making. However, on the other hand, the limited involvement of non-governmental actors and the lack of synchronization with the Spatial Plan (RTRW) indicate a weakening of the principles of openness and cross-sectoral policy synchronization. This means that the political knowledge used in this process is more instrumental in facilitating approval than deliberative in strengthening policy quality.

Scientific Knowledge

One of the main elements in the evidence-based policy framework (Head, 2008) is the use of scientific or research-based knowledge in the policy formulation process. This element emphasizes that public policy should not be formulated solely based on bureaucratic experience or political pressure, but must be based on empirical findings, research results, and systematic data analysis. In the context of formulating the Housing and Settlement Development Plan (RP3KP) in Riau Province, this indicator is important for assessing the extent to which the policy process is truly based on scientific evidence and not merely on administrative norms or short-term interests.

In the framework of evidence-based policy, the dimension of scientific knowledge refers to the extent to which the policy formulation process is based on empirical evidence, valid data, and analysis derived from a scientific and systematic approach. In the context of formulating the Riau Province Housing and Settlement Area Development Plan (RP3KP), an evidence-based approach was used through the use of primary and secondary data collected by the Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlement Areas and Land (PUPRPKPP) in collaboration with relevant technical agencies.

Substantively, the process of formulating the RP3KP began with the collection of primary data through field surveys and mapping of the existing conditions of housing and residential areas in all districts/cities. These activities included mapping uninhabitable houses (RTLH), slums, illegal settlements on riverbanks, and disaster-prone areas. In addition, policy formulation also relied on secondary data sourced from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), particularly to strengthen the analysis of demographics, population density, and the level of need for decent housing in Riau. The integration of primary and secondary data shows that, methodologically, the RP3KP drafting process has adopted the basic principles of evidence-based policy, namely the use of factual data as the basis for identifying policy issues. In addition to data collection, the RP3KP drafting process also included analysis used to identify the distribution of decent housing needs, priority areas for handling, and the relationship between housing areas and regional spatial structures. The use of spatial analysis shows that the drafting of the RP3KP not only places housing as a sectoral issue, but also as part of an integrated urban system.

To strengthen the scientific basis for the preparation of the RP3KP, the Riau Province Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlement Areas and Land appointed an external consultant to prepare an academic study (academic paper) as one of the prerequisites for the preparation of the RP3KP Regional Regulation. The consultants involved have a strong track record in preparing similar documents in several other provinces in Indonesia, as well as specializing in housing and settlements. The presence of these consultants enriches the methodological aspects and strengthens the academic

legitimacy of the policy formulation process. However, the consultants are not from Riau Province and are not from local universities, so the use of empirical research results specific to the social, economic, and spatial context of Riau is relatively limited. In other words, although the academic paper is methodologically sound, the empirical roots that reflect the local characteristics of Riau are still underrepresented.

This condition illustrates that knowledge in policy formulation is dominated by actors from outside the region who have high technical capacity but lack understanding of the local socio-political and cultural context. This phenomenon is not new in planning practices in Indonesia, where the policy formulation process often involves national consultants rather than local universities (Widianingsih & Adi, 2020). As a result, the process of scientific knowledge collaboration between local governments, local academics, and the community has been less than optimal. This indicates that the scientific knowledge dimension in the RP3KP policy is procedural and not yet fully reflective. Limited collaboration with local academics and the dominance of external consultants mean that this policy is still weak in terms of contextual validity. According to Parkhurst (2017), effective evidence-based policies must consider the suitability of scientific evidence to the social and institutional context in which the policy is implemented.

Despite its limitations, conceptually, the Riau Province RP3KP has implemented an evidence-based policy approach as proposed by Head (2008), namely through the stages of data collection, scientific review, analysis of alternatives, and the legislative process. The roadmap for drafting the RP3KP Regional Regulation shows that this policy goes through a series of systematic stages, including: (1) literature study and field data collection, (2) preparation of academic studies as a basis for scientific knowledge, and (3) the process of discussion until the enactment of the RP3KP Regional Regulation at the legislative level. These stages are in line with the principles of EBP as described by Nutley et al. (2007), namely the use of evidence throughout the policy cycle: problem identification, policy formulation, and policy legitimation. Thus, procedurally, this policy has integrated scientific evidence into every stage of public policy formulation.

However, it should be noted that the application of scientific evidence in policy formulation is not always directly proportional to the level of evidence utilization (Head, 2016). In practice, the use of research results and scientific data is often more symbolic in nature to fulfill administrative requirements rather than being the main basis for substantive decision-making. In the context of the Riau RP3KP, an evaluation mechanism is still needed to ensure that the data and study results compiled are truly internalized into the substance of the policy, rather than merely serving as technocratic legitimation.

Overall, scientific knowledge in the formulation process of the Riau Province RP3KP can be said to be formally and procedurally present, but not yet fully substantive and reflective. The use of data and academic studies demonstrates the adoption of evidence-based policy principles, but the quality of its integration into policy decisions still needs to be strengthened through capacity building for local actors, the involvement of local universities, and more participatory and transparent scientific verification mechanisms. Thus, an evidence-based approach in the formulation of the RP3KP will not only serve as administrative legitimacy but will truly become an instrument to ensure adaptive, contextual, and equitable housing policies.

Professional Practices

Within the framework of evidence-based policy as proposed by Head (2008), practical or implementation knowledge is an important component in ensuring the effectiveness of public policy. This element emphasizes the importance of institutional capacity, cross-sector coordination, technical readiness, and the support of other policy instruments to ensure that policies can be implemented effectively in the field. Without thorough implementation readiness, scientifically designed policies risk remaining mere documents. Implementative knowledge emphasizes the ability of policy actors to plan, prepare, and execute policies technically in the field. This includes human resource capacity, inter-agency coordination, administrative mechanisms, information systems, and fiscal readiness to support policy implementation (Head, 2008; Cairney, 2016).

In the context of the Riau Province RP3KP Regional Regulation, the main technical actor is the Riau Province Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlements and Land, which works closely with the housing offices at the district/city level. Technically, the Riau Province RP3KP serves as a guideline for districts/cities in formulating local RP3KPs, so that policies at the provincial level must ensure the alignment of cross-regional housing strategies. Provincial authority, as stipulated in the Government Regulation on housing and settlements, focuses more on: (1) housing and settlement areas located in border areas between districts/cities, and (2) slums with a certain area, for example 10-15 hectares, which require strategic intervention at the provincial level (Bappenas, 2020; Ministry of PUPR, 2021).

In terms of human resources, the Office of Public Works, Spatial Planning, Housing, Settlement Areas and Land has officials with functional positions who are technically competent in the field of housing and settlements. The existence of these human resources enables the management of housing data, mapping of priority areas, and the use of settlement information systems and housing databases as a basis for operational decision-making. In line with the literature, the technical capacity of the bureaucracy is an important factor in ensuring the effectiveness of evidence-based policy implementation, because the quality of human resources determines the ability to manage information and translate policies into concrete actions (Lipsky, 1980; Hill & Hupe, 2002).

In terms of budget, the implementation of RP3KP still faces limitations because funding comes only from the provincial budget, without any mechanism for collaborative financing with district/city governments or the private sector. This poses the risk of low implementation capacity, especially in handling slum housing and priority area development projects, which require a large allocation of funds. Research on policy implementation shows that fiscal constraints can hinder the alignment between policy planning and execution in the field (O'Toole, 2000; Matland, 1995).

In addition to budget constraints, synergy between provincial and district/city governments remains low. This is a major challenge, given that the effectiveness of RP3KP implementation is highly dependent on cross-regional coordination, especially for the preparation of district/city RP3KP, which must refer to provincial guidelines. Without good collaboration, the potential for program duplication or regional disparities becomes high, in line with the findings of Hill and Hupe (2002) that multilevel government coordination is one of the determinants of successful public policy implementation. Additional problems arise from the lack of synchronization of planning documents. The current RP3KP Regional Regulation is based on the old Spatial Planning Regional Regulation, while the new Spatial Planning Draft Regional Regulation is still being formulated.

With the enactment of the latest RTRW Draft Regulation, the RP3KP Regional Regulation must be revised to remain in line with the latest provincial spatial planning, so that the policy does not cause planning conflicts and technical errors in the field. This illustrates the implementation complexities that often arise when sectoral policies are influenced by master planning documents that are not yet final (Head, 2010). Overall, the indicators of implementation knowledge in the Riau Province RP3KP show: (1) the existence of competent technical actors, (2) the availability of information systems and housing databases as implementation tools, (3) budget constraints dependent on the regional budget (APBD), (4) low synergy across local governments, and (5) the need to adapt policies to changes in spatial planning documents. This dimension is a critical foundation for ensuring that policies that have been designed scientifically (scientific knowledge) and supported by political considerations (political knowledge) can be implemented effectively in the field.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the formulation of the Riau Province RP3KP reflects a complex interaction between three dimensions of knowledge: Scientific: evidence and systematic analysis are available, but locality is still limited. Political: strong legislative and executive support, but minimal non-governmental participation, resulting in a policy orientation that is more technocratic than deliberative. Implementative: technical capacity and information systems are available, but budget constraints, synergy, and document synchronization hinder optimal implementation. This synthesis shows that the effectiveness of the RP3KP is not only determined by the reliability of scientific evidence, but also by the ability of actors to understand the political context and implementation readiness. These three dimensions of knowledge influence each other: scientific knowledge without political and implementation support will be difficult to internalize, while political support without scientific evidence or technical readiness can result in suboptimal or unsustainable policies. Therefore, strengthening local capacity, cross-actor collaboration, and policy evaluation and adaptation mechanisms are key to ensuring that the Riau Province RP3KP can become an effective, contextual, and equitable instrument for housing and settlement development.

Acknowledgment

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