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Research Article

Government Oppression Through Tax Increases in Pati Regency: A Critical Analysis Review of Public Administration

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Abstract

This study critically examines the manifestation of government oppression through tax increase policies in Pati Regency within the framework of critical public administration analysis. The research explores how state power is exercised by employing fiscal instruments to control and marginalize citizens, particularly those belonging to vulnerable social groups. A critical ethnographic methodology was applied, combining in-depth interviews with 25 affected citizens, government officials, civil society activists, and public administration scholars. These interviews were further supported by policy discourse analysis and participatory observation to capture multiple perspectives on the policy process. The findings reveal that tax increase policies in Pati demonstrate systematic patterns of government oppression. Four major characteristics were identified: (1) authoritarian policy formulation implemented without meaningful public consultation, (2) a regressive fiscal burden that disproportionately affects the poor and working-class communities, (3) administrative power used as a tool to silence public dissent and criticism, and (4) the use of taxation mechanisms as instruments of social control. Taken together, these dynamics show that fiscal policies are employed not as instruments of public service but as tools of domination. The study thus provides empirical evidence of how taxation in post-authoritarian Indonesia operates to reproduce structural inequalities and weaken democratic practices.

Keywords

Government Oppression, Tax Policy, Critical Public Administration, State Domination, Indonesia, Fiscal Authoritarianism

1. Introduction

Government oppression of citizens in the context of modern states often no longer employs direct physical violence, but rather through administrative instruments that appear legal and rational. Tax increases as one of the fiscal instruments can become systematic tools of oppression when used to transfer economic burdens from elite groups to ordinary citizens while strengthening exploitative power structures.

Pati Regency, as one of the regions with a majority population dependent on the informal sector and small-medium enterprises, becomes a real arena where government oppression practices through fiscal policies can be empirically observed. The implementation of tax increases conducted without considering the socio-economic conditions of local communities demonstrates how government uses its administrative authority to perpetuate domination over citizens.

In his concept of hegemony explains that modern

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oppression is not only carried out through direct domination (dominio), but also through intellectual and moral leadership (direzione) that makes oppression appear reasonable and acceptable [1]. In this context, tax increase policies wrapped in narratives of "development" and "national interest" become forms of hegemony that disguise oppressive practices.

This research aims to expose the mechanisms of government oppression hidden behind tax increase policies in Pati Regency, and to analyze how public administration structures are used as instruments of state domination over civil society.

1.1. Problem Formulation

How does the Pati Regency government use tax increase policies as instruments of oppression against citizens?

What oppression mechanisms are used by the government in implementing fiscal policies in Pati Regency?

How do public administration structures in Pati Regency perpetuate government domination over civil society through fiscal instruments?

1.2. Research Objectives

This research aims to: (1) identify and analyze government oppression mechanisms through tax increase policies in Pati Regency, (2) expose hidden domination structures within local public administration systems, and (3) formulate theoretical frameworks for understanding the relationship between fiscal authoritarianism and civil society oppression in contemporary Indonesian context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Critical Public Administration Theory

Critical Public Administration as an alternative paradigm offers different perspectives in understanding the role and function of public administration. Box explains that critical public administration focuses on identifying and transforming oppressive power structures within government administration systems [2].

In the context of fiscal policy, critical public administration theory views taxation not only as an economic instrument, but also as a power mechanism that can be used to perpetuate domination of certain classes [3]. When tax policy implementation is conducted without considering distributive justice, public administration transforms into an instrument of oppression [4].

2.2. Concept of Oppression in Public Administration

Administrative oppression can be defined as the use of administrative power to impose disproportionate burdens on certain community groups, while providing benefits to dominant groups [5].

Young identifies five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence [6]. In the context of public administration, oppression can manifest through: (1) exclusion from decision-making processes, (2) imposition of unfair burdens, (3) disregard for community economic capacity, and (4) abuse of administrative authority.

2.3. Distributive Justice in Fiscal Policy

Rawls's in theory of distributive justice emphasizes that the distribution of burdens and benefits in society should advantage the least advantaged position. In the taxation context, this principle requires progressive tax structures that consider ability to pay principle [7].

Sen adds capability perspective in understanding distributive justice, where public policies should be assessed based on their impact on individuals' ability to achieve basic life functions [8]. Fiscal policies that reduce community basic capabilities can be categorized as forms of structural oppression [9].

2.4. Demonstration as Political Response

Social movement theory explains that demonstrations are forms of non-conventional political participation that emerge when formal political channels are considered ineffective [10]. In the context of public policy, demonstrations often become important feedback mechanisms for government [11].

McAdam et al. identify three main factors affecting the emergence of protest movements: political opportunity structures, resource mobilization, and collective framing [12]. These three factors are relevant in understanding Pati demonstration dynamics.

2.5. Taxation Policy in Indonesia

Indonesia's taxation system has undergone various reforms from the New Order era to the reform era. Research from Brondolo shows that despite significant improvements in tax administration, challenges related to compliance and public acceptance remain major issues [13].

Nasution and Sari's study on public perception of tax policies in Indonesia shows that the level of public trust in tax fund usage and government transparency becomes a key factor in determining fiscal policy acceptance [14].

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach with case study methods to understand in depth the phenomenon of Pati demonstrations in the context of P2 Tax (Rural and Urban Land and Building Tax (PBB-P2) increase policies. A phenomenological approach is used to explore the experiences and perceptions of involved actors. The research was conducted in Pati Regency, Central Java, focusing on areas where demonstrations occurred. Data collection was carried out from July to August 2025, covering pre- and post-demonstration periods to obtain more comprehensive reflections. Research informants were selected using purposive sampling technique with criteria: (1) demonstration participants or actors, (2) government officials involved in policy formulation, (3) taxation experts, and (4) local community leaders. Total informants numbered 25 people consisting of: 10 demonstration participants from various professional backgrounds, 5 regional and central government officials, 5 academics and taxation practitioners, 5 community leaders and organizational leaders. Data were collected through: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews, (2) participatory observation of post-demonstration dynamics, and (3) analysis of policy documents, media reports, and demonstration-related materials. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques with stages: (1) transcription and coding, (2) identification of main themes, (3) data triangulation from various sources, and (4) interpretation within relevant theoretical frameworks.

4. Results and Discussion

The Pati demonstration occurred on August 15-17, 2025, involving approximately 200,000 participants from various community elements. This action was triggered by the implementation of P2 Tax increase policies considered burdensome to lower-class citizens and middle class. The demonstration proceeded peacefully but firmly, with main demands for revocation or revision of tax increase policies.

Analysis shows that the P2 Tax increase of 15% from previous rates was felt to be very burdensome, especially for small and medium communities still in the process of recovery post-COVID-19 pandemic. Informant IK-03, a small entrepreneur, stated:

"We are still struggling to rise from the pandemic, why are taxes increased again. This is like adding burden to an already aching back."

Data from Pati Cooperative and SME Office shows that 67% of SMEs in the region experienced decreased turnover during the tax increase policy implementation period.

Research findings reveal that the socialization process for P2 Tax increase policies was considered inadequate. Of 25 informants, 20 stated they never received direct socialization from government before policy implementation.

A Directorate General of Taxation official (informant PJ-02) acknowledged weaknesses in socialization aspects: *"We indeed acknowledge that socialization was not optimal due to limited time and resources."*

Demonstrators viewed tax increase policies as forms of injustice, considering that large sectors and corporations did not experience proportional rate increases. This created perceptions that fiscal burdens were more imposed on ordinary citizens.

The demonstration mobilization process began from social media, particularly WhatsApp groups of traders and SME actors. The use of digital communication technology enabled effective coordination without rigid formal organizational structures.

Initial regional government response tended to be defensive, emphasizing that policies originated from the center. However, as demonstrations progressed, government began opening dialogue and showing willingness to convey community aspirations to central level.

Policy Implications

The Pati demonstration successfully pushed government to cancel the implementation of P2 Tax increase policies, with tax increase cancellation expected to make government more responsive to community economics.

This case became valuable learning about the importance of participatory and inclusive policy formulation processes [15]. Government began adopting more systematic public consultation mechanisms in fiscal policy formulation.

From public policy theory perspective, the Pati demonstration case shows the importance of agenda setting and policy formulation stages involving stakeholders. Failure in this aspect can result in resistance at the implementation stage.

From social movement theory standpoint, the Pati demonstration meets [12] criteria regarding political opportunity structures (existence of gaps in government response), resource mobilization (trader and SME networks), and collective framing (economic injustice narratives).

5. Conclusion

This research identifies three main factors triggering the Pati demonstration: (1) economic burden considered excessive due to P2 Tax increases, (2) inadequacy of policy socialization processes, and (3) perception of injustice in fiscal burden distribution. The demonstration successfully pushed for policy revision and changes in government policy formulation approaches. This research contributes to understanding fiscal policy dynamics and community responses in Indonesian context. Findings show that policy legitimacy depends not only on economic rationality, but also political processes and social justice perceptions. Based on research findings, it is recommended: (1) implementation of systematic public consultation mechanisms in fiscal policy formulation, (2) strengthening policy socialization programs with more personal and easily understood approaches, and (3) development of real-time fiscal policy social impact monitoring systems. This research is limited to specific cases in Pati focusing on P2 Tax increase policies. Future research can explore similar cases in other regions or analyze the effectiveness of public consultation mechanisms implemented post-Pati demonstration.

Abbreviations

Tax PBB-P2	Rural and Urban Land and Building Tax (PBB-P2)

Author Contributions

Aminullah is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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