

# Ethics of Regional Autonomy With Local Wisdom

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## ARTICLE INFO



ISSN: 2620-6196  
Vol. 6 Issues 2 (2023)

### Article history:

Received – September 09, 2023

Revised – September 15, 2023

Accepted – September 30, 2023

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### Keywords:

Local Autonomy Ethics, Local Wisdom, Public Services, Pancasila, Cultural Values.

## ABSTRACT

*Regional autonomy is a strategic instrument for building and empowering local communities in order to achieve equitable, civilised and humane economic development. This concept is synonymous with public services, so its implementation must be based on ethics. Ethics, including bureaucratic ethics, have a dual function: as a guideline for public bureaucracy in exercising its authority so that actions taken are considered good and commendable, and as a standard for evaluating bureaucratic behaviour that reflects integrity and professionalism. In this context, local wisdom is an important foundation because it contains noble values born from the life experiences of the local community, such as mutual cooperation, mutual assistance, diversity, and good character. These values have been a hallmark of Indonesian civilisation since the era of the archipelago's kingdoms until today. This study aims to examine the concept of regional autonomy ethics based on the local wisdom of the Indonesian people, with Pancasila as the highest moral guideline and philosophy of life. The study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive literature review approach, analysing relevant literature on the relationship between government ethics, regional autonomy, and local wisdom values. The findings indicate that integrating bureaucratic ethics with local wisdom can strengthen the legitimacy of regional policies, enhance public participation, and promote the creation of a clean, transparent, and public service-oriented governance system. The implications of this research underscore the need for the formulation of regional autonomy policies that consistently accommodate local cultural and moral values for sustainable development.*

## INTRODUCTION

As stated by James K. Feiblemen, philosophy is rational wisdom about everything related to human life. In living their lives, humans constantly face various problems, including economic, social, political, ideological, and other issues. In facing these problems, humans need genuine and rational wisdom, in the sense of *wisdom*. In order for humans to be able to solve problems wisely, they need a foundation of wisdom that generally comes from religion and their way of life.

The main objective of regional autonomy is to create a civil society. A civil society is a fertile social system based on moral principles that guarantees a balance between individual freedom and social stability. This society encourages individual enterprise and initiative, whether in the fields of thought, art, or the implementation of government based on law, rather than merely following personal desires or whims, thereby creating predictability and transparency in the system.

An ideal civil society is a modern society based on local wisdom. The Indonesian people have established Pancasila as the philosophical foundation (*philosophische grondslag*) of the state, which serves as a way of life in the life of the nation and state. However, since the reform era until now, the practical aspects of state administration have often not been based on the values of Pancasila, but have been influenced by liberal ideology and free market mechanisms. As a result, various state policies tend to place the people as objects, not as subjects of development. A modern state that seeks to uphold democracy should develop the principle of constitutionalism, which is effective in regulating and limiting government

power through laws. In this principle, the main basis is general agreement (consensus or general agreement).

As stated in Q.S. Al-Qashash verse 77, Islamic teachings emphasise that humans should seek happiness in the hereafter without forgetting their share of worldly pleasures, do good to others, and not cause destruction on earth. This moral message is relevant as a foundation for ethics in the implementation of regional autonomy. Currently, regional autonomy is often regarded as a 'sacred gift' or a magical concept for achieving community welfare, especially in rural areas. In many regions of Indonesia, regional autonomy is seen as the best solution for achieving the nation's aspirations, namely to enlighten the nation's life and advance general welfare.

However, the implementation of regional autonomy often obscures the meaning of human resource management as the subject of development and community participation. Regional autonomy is closely related to ethics, which leads to the formation of moral and good character.

Thus, regional autonomy is not the only solution to bridge the gap between the realisation of community welfare, but rather a concept of independent and open local government activities to realise the nation's ideals: to educate the nation and advance the general welfare in a just, civilised, and humane manner. For the Indonesian people, the value of the welfare state is reflected in the fifth principle of Pancasila. Therefore, justice is a core value in efforts to revitalise the values of Pancasila in the economic, socio-cultural, and defence and security fields. The values of Pancasila are essentially objective realities inherent in the Indonesian nation as accidents, namely the characteristics, values, and distinctive features that are tangibly present in this nation. This is the essence of a civil society based on Pancasila, when viewed from both ideological and sociological perspectives.

In line with this background, this study aims to examine in depth the concept of regional autonomy ethics based on local wisdom, analyse its relationship with the realisation of a civil society, identify obstacles and distortions of values in its implementation, and formulate a model for the application of regional autonomy that is ethical, sustainable, and in accordance with the socio-cultural characteristics of the community. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical benefits in the form of contributions to the development of political philosophy and constitutional law studies based on Pancasila, as well as enriching academic literature on the integration of local wisdom in the practice of regional autonomy. Practically, this research is expected to serve as a reference for local governments in formulating ethical, participatory, and culturally appropriate policies, promoting the role of the community as subjects of development, and providing policy recommendations to strengthen transparency and accountability in local governance for the achievement of just and civilised welfare.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Local Wisdom***

Local wisdom is a form of wisdom that is born, grows, and develops from the traditional culture of a community, particularly the cultures of ethnic groups in Indonesia. According to Sedyawati (2010), local wisdom is not limited to cultural norms and values, but also encompasses all elements of ideas that have implications for various aspects of life, such as technology, health, and aesthetics. In a broader context, local wisdom encompasses both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including proverbs, expressions, patterns of behaviour, and material cultural products.

Albert (1972, in Sulaeman, 2012) states that the concept of a cultural value system consists of various alternative values that form a comprehensive model for description and comparative study. Differences in the levels of values, rules, norms, ideals, and social sanctions form a complex value system.

Koentjaraningrat (1981) asserts that cultural value systems function as the highest guidelines in regulating human behaviour in society.

In addition, Sutrisno and Putranto (2005) argue that individuals have micro forces of expression that are reflected in their habits of thinking, feelings, actions, and value-forming systems. Individuals are the gateway to understanding the meanings scattered throughout society, whether they originate from reason, knowledge, aesthetics, or religion. The study of local culture is not only academically useful for the development of knowledge, but also has practical benefits, especially in supporting sustainable development (Poerwanto, 2010).

### ***Ethics in Regional Autonomy***

Regional autonomy is basically the authority given to regions to regulate and manage the interests of their communities independently in accordance with their potential and local wisdom. According to the principles of political ethics, regional autonomy must place the people as the subject of development, not merely the object of policy. Ethics in this context is understood as a set of moral norms that guide the administration of regional government so that it is fair, transparent, participatory, and accountable. Ethics in regional autonomy is also in line with the principles of good governance, which include accountability, transparency, the rule of law, community participation, and equality and justice (Dwiyanto, 2005).

The application of ethics based on local wisdom allows public policies to be in line with local cultural values, thereby preventing local governments from adopting policies that merely adopt free market models or liberal ideologies that have the potential to neglect the interests of grassroots communities.

From a regional development perspective, the integration of governance ethics and local wisdom can strengthen the legitimacy of public policies, build public trust, and encourage broader participation. This is important considering that the success of regional autonomy is not only measured by administrative and financial independence but also by the extent to which local governments are able to manage power ethically to achieve sustainable welfare.

### ***Local Community Personality***

Personality is defined by Ranjabar (2013) as the totality of an individual's mental qualities, including rational abilities, perceptions, ideas, habits, and emotional responses that are interconnected and form a complete configuration.

The personality of local communities is formed through interactions between cultural values, social systems, and the local natural environment, which together shape the collective identity of the community. Understanding the personality of local communities plays an important role in the formulation of public policy at the regional level.

The values, habits, and mindsets of a community influence how they receive, understand, and participate in development programmes (Ranjabar, 2013). Policies formulated without considering the character of the community are likely to encounter resistance, while policies that are in line with these characteristics will have a higher chance of success in achieving regional independence and prosperity.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, as its main focus is to explore, understand, and describe in depth the concept of regional autonomy ethics based on the local wisdom of the Indonesian people. The qualitative approach was chosen to obtain a comprehensive understanding of

cultural values, principles of bureaucratic ethics, and practices of regional autonomy oriented towards public service (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collection techniques were carried out through library research, namely reviewing relevant literature such as legislation, books, scientific journals, and official government documents related to regional autonomy, bureaucratic ethics, and local wisdom (Zed, 2014). Data were analysed using content analysis techniques to identify main themes, relationships between variables, and normative principles underlying the implementation of regional autonomy (Krippendorff, 2018). This study did not use a population and sample in a quantitative sense, but rather used literature sources as the main unit of analysis. Data validity is strengthened through *triangulation of sources* by comparing information from various relevant literature and regulations (Sugiyono, 2022). The results of the analysis are expected to provide a conceptual and normative description of an ethical, participatory model of regional autonomy that is in line with local wisdom values, so that it can be used as a reference in policy formulation and strengthening regional governance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Article 1(5) of Law No. 32 of 2004, regional autonomy is defined as the rights, powers, and obligations of autonomous regions to regulate and manage their own affairs and the interests of the local community in accordance with the laws and regulations. This normative definition emphasises that there are three key elements of regional autonomy, namely:

1. Rights.
2. Powers.

Obligations of autonomous regions.

These three elements form the basis for regions to regulate and manage their own government affairs and local community interests in accordance with applicable laws. In the context of rights, Article 21 of Law No. 32 of 2004 stipulates that in exercising autonomy, regions have the right to: regulate and manage their own government affairs;

elect regional leaders; manage regional apparatus; manage regional assets; collect regional taxes and levies; receive a share of the proceeds from the management of natural resources and other resources located in the region; obtain other legitimate sources of income; and obtain other rights as stipulated in laws and regulations. These rights provide a legal basis for regions to optimise their potential independently and responsibly.

In relation to authority, Article 1(6) of Law No. 32 of 2004 stipulates that an autonomous region is a legal community with territorial boundaries that has the authority to regulate and manage government affairs and the interests of the local community on its own initiative based on the aspirations of the community. Article 12 of Law No. 32 of 2004 stipulates that government affairs delegated to regions must be accompanied by funding sources, the transfer of facilities and infrastructure, and personnel in accordance with the decentralised affairs. Affairs delegated to governors must also be accompanied by funding in accordance with the devolved affairs.

Furthermore, government affairs related to regional autonomy are based on the principle of decentralisation, which is the transfer of government authority by the Government to autonomous regions to regulate and manage government affairs within the system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Article 1(7) of Law No. 32 of 2004). These government affairs are divided into mandatory affairs and optional affairs, each of which may be at the provincial or district/municipal level.

Mandatory provincial affairs (Article 13(1)) include: planning and controlling development; planning, utilising, and supervising spatial planning; maintaining public order and community peace;

providing public facilities and infrastructure; handling health issues; providing education and allocating potential human resources; addressing social issues across regencies/cities; labour services across districts/cities; facilitating the development of cooperatives, small and medium enterprises across districts/cities; environmental control; land services across districts/cities; population and civil registration services; general administrative services; cross-district/city investment administration services; provision of other basic services that cannot be carried out by districts/cities; and other mandatory matters mandated by laws and regulations. Optional provincial government affairs include government affairs that actually exist and have the potential to improve the welfare of the community in accordance with the conditions, characteristics, and potential of the region.

Mandatory affairs of regencies/cities (Article 14 paragraph 1) include: development planning and control; spatial planning, utilisation, and supervision; public order and community peace; provision of public facilities and infrastructure; health care; education; social problem handling; employment services; facilitating the development of cooperatives, small and medium enterprises; environmental control; land services; population and civil registration services; general government administration services; investment administration services; the provision of other basic services; and other mandatory affairs mandated by laws and regulations.

To carry out these authorities, Article 22 of Law No. 32 of 2004 stipulates the obligations of the region, including: protecting the community, maintaining national unity and integrity, improving the quality of life of the community, developing democracy, realising justice and equality, improving basic education services, providing health care facilities, providing adequate social and public facilities, developing a social security system, formulating regional planning and spatial planning, developing productive resources, preserving the environment, managing population administration, preserving social and cultural values, formulating regional regulations in accordance with their authority, and other obligations as regulated by laws and regulations.

### **Regional Autonomy Leadership**

According to legislation, issues of regional autonomy leadership can be analysed through five pillars of regional governance in the context of regional autonomy:

1. The pillar of democracy through regional elections

Regional autonomy policies grant significant authority to regions, reinforced by direct regional elections since 2005.

Elected regional heads gain strong legitimacy from the people, accompanied by high expectations for improved welfare.

2. Human Resources (HR)

Human resources are the actors and determinants of the success of regional autonomy. Human resources with good morality, leadership abilities, managerial skills, and technical skills are needed. Good morality is a prerequisite for clean governance free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism. Competence is also key, achieved through competency-based HR management, adequate compensation systems, a paradigm shift from ruler to public servant, and a proactive and responsive work culture.

3. Policy Pillars

Regional policies must be in the interests of the wider community, as outlined in regional regulations and regional head regulations, and based on the principles of sustainable and equitable development. Regional heads are required to formulate a Regional Medium-Term Development

Plan (RPJMD) in accordance with Law No. 25 of 2004 and Law No. 32 of 2004, which outline the vision and mission for the five-year term of office. The success of development can be measured by the fulfilment of five basic needs of the community: food, clothing, shelter, education, and health.

4. System Pillar

Government must be run based on systems, not figures. A strong system includes development planning, regional financial management, civil service, regional assets, decision-making, partner selection, service standards, and monitoring mechanisms, both manual and information technology-based. Information technology is an absolute necessity for efficient and effective governance.

5. Investment Pillar

Local government budgets are limited, so local governments need to partner with domestic and foreign investors. Regional heads must create a conducive investment climate so that infrastructure development and natural resource management can run optimally.

### **Principles of Local Government Management**

To oversee these five pillars, Article 20 of Law No. 32 of 2004 stipulates that the administration of government must be guided by the General Principles of State Administration, including the principles of legal certainty, order, public interest, openness, proportionality, professionalism, accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness. The central government applies the principles of decentralisation, assistance, and deconcentration, while local governments prioritise the principles of autonomy and assistance. These principles serve as the ethical and normative foundation to ensure that the implementation of local autonomy remains within the legal framework and democratic values.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the discussion, it can be concluded that local wisdom encompasses not only cultural norms and values, but also all elements of ideas that have implications for various aspects of life, such as technology, health care, and aesthetics. Individuals possess micro forces of expression that are reflected in their habits of thinking, emotional aspects, actions, and value-forming systems that originate from reason. Individuals are the gateway to understanding the meanings scattered throughout social life, ranging from common sense, science, aesthetics, to religion, as emphasised by Sutrisno and Putranto (2005). The cultural value system serves as the highest guideline in directing human behaviour (Koentjaraningrat, 1981). Thus, regional autonomy ethics with local wisdom encompasses the thoughts, behaviour, and culture of the community that become the *way of life* of the Indonesian people, which must be in harmony with the ideology of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as a manifestation of the nation's local wisdom. The application of this ethics must not contradict Islamic teachings so that the resulting regional autonomy policies can reflect justice, sustainability, and community welfare in accordance with the noble values of the nation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of research on the relationship between government ethics and local wisdom, particularly in the context of regional autonomy, and strengthens the theory that cultural values and local moral systems can serve as a normative foundation for the formulation of regional policies. In practical terms, the results of this study can be used as a reference for local governments in formulating policies that not only meet the principles of good governance but are also rooted in the values and norms that exist in the community. The integration of local wisdom and

government ethics is expected to increase public participation, strengthen policy legitimacy, and encourage the effective implementation of regional development programmes.

This study has several limitations that need to be noted. First, this study was conducted within a conceptual and normative framework and therefore does not include empirical analysis of field data. Second, the research focuses on values, ethics, and legal norms, and therefore does not discuss in depth the technical aspects of regional autonomy implementation in each region. Third, the local wisdom context raised in this study refers more to general cultural values in Indonesia, so there may be variations in local wisdom in various regions that are not specifically represented in this study.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies in various regions with different local wisdom characteristics to observe variations in the application of regional autonomy ethics. Additionally, it is important to develop measurement instruments that can identify the extent to which local wisdom values have been integrated into regional public policies. Further research is also expected to examine the relationship between the application of local wisdom-based regional autonomy ethics and indicators of development success, such as community participation levels, public service effectiveness, and perceptions of social justice, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of this concept on regional development.

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