



JLPH:
**Journal of Law, Politic
and Humanities**

E-ISSN: 2962-2816
P-ISSN: 2747-1985

<https://dinastires.org/JLPH> dinasti.info@gmail.com +62 811 7404 455

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/jlph.v5i6>
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Pros and Cons Perspectives on the Amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Caning Law in Aceh

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Abstract : This study examines in depth the changes in the implementation of caning in Aceh following the issuance of Aceh Governor Regulation Number 5 of 2018, which shifted the location of caning from public places to correctional facilities. This change has become a controversial issue because it is considered to shift the values of Islamic law that have long been the legal and cultural identity of the Acehnese people. Prior to this regulation, caning was carried out openly in front of the public, such as in mosque courtyards, with the aim of providing a deterrent effect and serving as a moral lesson for the community. However, after the enactment of the Governor Regulation, caning is carried out in prisons to maintain the dignity of the perpetrator, avoid psychological trauma, and prevent the spread of the convict's identity on social media. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a juridical-sociological approach, where data is obtained through interviews with residents in Lhokseumawe City and analysis of relevant legal documents. This approach not only examines the normative aspects of the regulation but also examines how these legal norms interact with the social reality of society. The results of the study indicate two main views in society: The pro-candidate group supports this change because it is considered more humane and in accordance with human rights principles, while the opposing group believes that implementing caning in public places is more effective in providing a deterrent effect and has educational and symbolic value in enforcing Islamic law. Overall, the changes in the implementation of caning in Aceh reflect an attempt to compromise between enforcing Islamic law and demands for legal modernization oriented towards humanitarian values. However, this policy still needs to be evaluated so that its implementation does not eliminate the meaning of Islamic law and the moral values of Islamic law itself.

Keywords: Caning Law, Islamic Sharia, Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018, Aceh.

INTRODUCTION

Customary law, which originates from God's law, plays a crucial role in shaping the legal norms applicable in Indonesian legislation. According to Paul Vinogradof, the relationship

between social norms and legal norms forms a social foundation that ensures the survival of society. (Stella, 2023) In the context of Aceh, the implementation of customary law rooted in Islamic values is realized through Aceh Qanun No. 6 of 2014 concerning Jinayat Law, which officially makes caning a punishment part of the positive law applicable in the Aceh region. This policy demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh is not only moral and customary, but also has binding legal force. (Pradana & Muhammad Roy Purwanto, 2023).

However, the implementation of caning in Aceh continues to generate controversy. Although the purpose of this punishment is to uphold Islamic law and provide a deterrent effect to perpetrators, several human rights organizations consider caning to be an act of violence that violates humanitarian principles. They consider this punishment inconsistent with universal human rights values because it involves elements of physical torture and public humiliation of the perpetrator. On the other hand, some Acehnese view caning as an integral part of their cultural and religious identity that must be preserved. They believe that caning serves not only a punitive purpose but also an educational and preventive function to encourage people to refrain from immoral acts. (Fitri, 2021).

The debate intensified when Aceh Governor Irwandi Yusuf issued Aceh Governor Regulation (Pergub) No. 5 of 2018. This regulation regulates the change in the location of caning punishments, from previously carried out in public places such as mosque courtyards, to correctional institutions (prisons) or detention centers. The main purpose of this change is to maintain the dignity of convicts and prevent the implementation of caning from negative attention, both nationally and internationally. The central government, particularly President Joko Widodo, had previously issued directives to ensure that the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh does not create a negative impression in the eyes of the world. In a press conference at the Aceh Regional Potential Office on April 12, 2018, Irwandi Yusuf explained that canings can still be witnessed by the general public, but not by minors. (Pradana & Muhammad Roy Purwanto, 2023).

This Governor's Regulation was then officially ratified on February 28, 2018, and became a new reference in the implementation of criminal law in Aceh. Article 30 paragraph (3) states that Correctional Institutions, Detention Centers, and Detention Center Branches can be interpreted as "open spaces" in the context of implementing caning. According to Irwandi Yusuf, this policy was also motivated by economic and investment considerations. He believes that implementing caning in public places has the potential to create negative perceptions that could hinder investment in Aceh. By moving the implementation location to prisons, it is hoped that the investment climate will become more conducive and Aceh's image in the eyes of the international community will improve.

However, the change sparked strong reactions from various parties. From the first days after its ratification, several Islamic organizations, community leaders, students, and council members protested. They believed the policy diminished the Islamic propagation value and eliminated the social aspect of caning. Demonstrations were held in several cities, including Lhokseumawe, demanding the revocation of the gubernatorial regulation. Opponents argued that public canings had a strong symbolic meaning, enforcing Islamic law in public. Therefore, the change in location was seen as a compromise that weakened the identity of Islamic law in Aceh. (Whip & Prison, 2021).

However, some other parties supported this policy. They considered the amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 a progressive step, demonstrating Aceh's ability to align the implementation of Islamic law with human rights principles and economic development interests. (Jufriзал, 2025) Caning carried out in prison remains legally valid, but it better protects human dignity. Furthermore, carrying it out in a closed setting is thought to protect children from the trauma or negative effects of witnessing physical punishment directly. (Syarif, 2022).

Overall, the pros and cons of the amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 reflect the social, political, and religious dynamics in Aceh. This debate touches not only on

legal aspects but also on cultural identity, public morality, and the relationship between Islamic law and human rights. Examining public responses, particularly in Lhokseumawe City, is crucial to understanding the extent to which this policy change has been accepted or rejected by the public, and how their views can inform the future implementation of Sharia law.(Fitri, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to analyze and understand the pros and cons of the Lhokseumawe City community regarding the changes to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 concerning the implementation of caning law in Aceh. This study seeks to identify the reasons, values, and social, cultural, and religious factors that influence public attitudes towards this policy. In addition, this study also aims to provide a comprehensive picture of how the community interprets changes to the implementation of caning law in the context of the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh, so that it can serve as material for evaluation and consideration for the local government in formulating policies that balance Islamic values, humanity, and social development in the future.

METHOD

This research uses a juridical-sociological approach, which combines legal analysis with social studies to understand legal phenomena within the context of community life. This approach was chosen because the amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Caning Law in Aceh relates not only to the normative aspects of the law but also to the social, cultural, and religious values of the Acehnese people. Therefore, this research not only examines legal provisions textually but also seeks to examine how their implementation is understood and accepted by the community at the local level.(Febriana et al., 2023).

From a legal perspective, this research focuses on analyzing regulatory changes in Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018, which regulates the implementation of caning punishments from public places to correctional facilities. The analysis was conducted to assess the extent to which the regulation aligns with the principles of criminal law, qanun (Islamic law), and national legislation. This study also considers normative aspects of the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh as part of the region's special status as stipulated in the Aceh Governance Law (UUPA).(Batubara, SA, Tanwin, MS, Yosephine, 2021).

Meanwhile, from a sociological perspective, this study seeks to understand how the Acehnese people, particularly in Lhokseumawe City, responded to these changes. Public perception is crucial in determining whether the implementation of caning in closed spaces is considered in accordance with Islamic sharia values and prevailing social norms. Public responses, whether supportive or opposed, reflect the extent to which these legal norms are accepted and internalized in social life. Therefore, this study views law not only as a set of written rules but also as part of a system of values that lives within society.

The primary data in this study is primary data obtained through direct interviews with residents of Lhokseumawe City. Furthermore, the study also utilized analysis of legal and non-legal documents, such as the text of the Gubernatorial Regulation (Pergub), the Qanun Jinayat (Islamic Law), news reports, and local government policy reports. Through this combination of legal and sociological approaches, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how the changes to Pergub No. 5 of 2018 affect the implementation of caning laws in Aceh and how social dynamics are shaped in response to these changes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of the Caning Law in Aceh

The implementation of caning in Aceh is a concrete manifestation of the implementation of Islamic law, officially regulated through the Qanun Jinayat (Islamic Law). This law not only

has a theological basis but is also interpreted as a symbol of the Islamic identity of the Acehese people, a practice that has been ingrained since the days of the ancient Islamic kingdoms. Over time, the implementation of caning has undergone dynamic developments, both from a legal, social, and political perspective. Each change reflects the local government's efforts to balance the implementation of Islamic law with the ever-growing demands of modernity in society. (Syarif, 2022).

Historically, the implementation of caning in Aceh can be divided into three phases: pioneering, broadening, and declining. These three phases are not isolated, but rather reflect the long journey of enforcing Islamic law in Aceh, characterized by various adaptations to the social and political conditions of the time. These three phases also demonstrate how caning has become part of the dynamics of regional policy and the ever-changing public perceptions.

In the pioneering phase, the basis for implementing caning is regulated by Aceh Governor Regulation Number 10 of 2005 concerning the Technical Implementation of Uqubat. In this initial phase, caning is carried out openly in public places, such as mosque courtyards, fields, or other public spaces where the public can witness the punishment. The primary purpose of this open caning is to deter the perpetrator and serve as a moral lesson for the community to prevent similar acts from repeating. The caning process is supervised by prosecutors, medical personnel, and officially assigned executioners to ensure compliance with sharia principles and health regulations.

The implementation model in the pilot phase emphasized the social and educational functions of caning. This law was seen not merely as a repressive tool to punish violators, but also as a means of preaching and a reminder to the community. Implementing it in open spaces was interpreted as a manifestation of the transparency of Islamic law, which upholds morality, thus becoming part of the Islamic message that lives within Acehese society.

Entering a phase of expansion, the implementation of caning has become increasingly well-known, both within and outside Aceh. The punishment remains carried out in public, but with a number of adjustments. The local government has issued additional policies regarding its implementation, such as establishing a distance between the convict and the public, and prohibiting children under 18 from witnessing canings. Despite public awareness campaigns, monitoring the presence of children at the caning sites remains ineffective. Many child advocates and human rights organizations have criticized this situation, believing it has the potential to have negative psychological impacts on children who witness it.

Criticism from human rights groups intensified when national and international media highlighted public canings. Some argued that the footage portrayed Aceh as a harsh and inhumane region. However, the majority of Acehese people maintained that public canings were a form of obedience to religious injunctions and Islamic sharia values. This tension between local views and external pressures has given rise to discussions about reviewing the caning procedures in Aceh.

The declining phase was the most crucial in the history of caning law enforcement in Aceh. In 2018, the Aceh Provincial Government, under Governor Irwandi Yusuf, issued Aceh Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 concerning the Implementation of Criminal Law. This policy moved caning punishment from public places to correctional facilities or detention centers. This change was driven by political, social, and economic considerations, including a desire to maintain Aceh's image in the international community and promote a more conducive investment climate.

Governor Irwandi Yusuf explained that the change was a strategic step to adapt the implementation of Islamic law to global conditions. He noted that public canings often lead to misunderstandings among investors and the international community. Furthermore, the distribution of caning videos on social media has also raised new issues in the form of public humiliation for the perpetrators and their families. Therefore, canings carried out in correctional

facilities are considered more orderly, humane, and maintain individual dignity without diminishing the legal value of caning itself.

However, this policy has not been smooth sailing. After Gubernatorial Regulation No. 5 of 2018 was passed, various reactions emerged from religious scholars, Islamic organizations, council members, students, and the general public. They argued that carrying out canings in closed spaces diminished the meaning of Islamic teachings and the moral values inherent in Islamic law. Several Islamic organizations even held demonstrations in various regions, including Lhokseumawe, demanding that canings continue to be carried out publicly as before.

Public resistance demonstrates that the policy change has not been fully understood and socially accepted. For most Acehnese, caning is not merely a form of punishment, but a symbol of upholding Islamic law, which has long been a part of the region's identity. Changing its implementation without considering local values is seen as a violation of long-standing commitments to Islamic law. This demonstrates the gap between government policy and public aspirations.

On the other hand, there are also community groups who support this change. They believe that carrying out canings in closed places is more in line with human rights principles and can reduce social pressure on perpetrators. Carrying them out in correctional institutions is considered not to reduce the validity of the law, because it still fulfills the element of "openness" as stipulated in Article 30 paragraph (3) of the Qanun Jinayat, which interprets "open places" as spaces that can still be accessed by the public with limited supervision. For this group, Pergub No. 5 of 2018 is a form of social *ijtihad* to adapt the implementation of Islamic law to contemporary realities.

However, the reality on the ground shows that canings in Aceh are still often carried out in public places. This is due to differences in interpretation and implementation in each region. Several district and city governments, including in Lhokseumawe, still adhere to the principle that canings in public spaces are an integral part of Islamic propagation. As a result, this policy is not implemented uniformly, sometimes even causing confusion among implementing officials.

This phenomenon demonstrates that the application of Islamic law cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of society. The change in caning policy through Gubernatorial Regulation No. 5 of 2018 reflects a clash between Islamic values, humanity, and political interests. The government seeks to adapt the law to current developments, while the community wishes to maintain deeply rooted traditional values. This tension has made caning in Aceh not only a legal instrument but also an arena for debate over the identity and moral legitimacy of the Acehnese people.

Therefore, this study seeks to deeply analyze the pros and cons of the Lhokseumawe City community regarding the amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 and how these legal norms influence the implementation of caning laws in Aceh. Using a juridical-sociological approach, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between legal policy, social reality, and public perceptions of the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh in the current context.

Pros and Cons of Changes to the Implementation of the Caning Law in Aceh

The change in the location of caning in Aceh from open spaces to correctional facilities, through Governor's Regulation (Pergub) Number 5 of 2018, has sparked considerable public debate. As a region that practices special autonomy based on the application of Islamic law, every policy concerning the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh always attracts public attention. Caning itself has long been considered a symbol of religious identity and morality in Acehnese society, so changing the location of its implementation is considered not merely a technical matter, but also touches on aspects of faith, social values, and legal politics. This Pergub stipulates that caning will no longer be carried out in public, but rather in prisons, with

the aim of maintaining the dignity of the convict and avoiding public spectacles that are considered unedifying.

However, this policy has drawn mixed reactions. Some view the government's move as a modernization of Islamic law enforcement that is more oriented toward humanitarian values, while others consider it an attempt to obscure the meaning of sharia and diminish the social impact of caning. This debate has given rise to two major camps: those in favor (pro) and those against (con). Each has strong rationales and reasons, from legal, social, and religious perspectives.(Pradana & Muhammad Roy Purwanto, 2023).

Parties in favor of the Change to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018

1. Groups supporting the change argue that carrying out caning in closed settings is a more humane form of law enforcement and in accordance with the principles of human rights protection. The primary purpose of caning, they argue, is not to publicly humiliate the perpetrator, but rather to deter and uphold justice. By carrying it out in prison, the perpetrator avoids excessive shame that could impact the psychological and social well-being of his or her family.
2. Furthermore, the implementation of caning in correctional facilities is believed to prevent the spread of images or videos of punishments on social media, which could potentially create negative stigma against perpetrators and the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh. Supporters also view this policy as a strategic step by the government to adapt the implementation of Sharia law to the global context and international pressure, which often criticizes the practice of open caning as a human rights violation.
3. They believe that changing the location of the caning does not diminish the value of sharia law, as the most important thing is that the substance of the caning law itself remains in accordance with Islamic law. For this group, Gubernatorial Regulation No. 5 of 2018 reflects Islamic law's ability to adapt to changing times without losing its moral essence. This change is also seen as an effort to maintain Aceh's image as religious, yet modern and open to universal human values.

Parties Against the Change to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018

1. On the other hand, groups opposing this change believe that carrying out canings in closed settings diminishes the moral and educational value of caning itself. In their view, public canings have strong religious and social value, serving as a warning to the public to avoid sinful behavior. Moving them to prisons significantly diminishes this educational value and deterrent effect.
2. Opponents also argue that public flogging is part of the propagation of Islam and a concrete manifestation of the implementation of God's law on earth. Therefore, concealing it from public view removes the transparency and openness essential to the implementation of Islamic law. They fear that closed flogging could open the door to irregularities, such as improper implementation or even complete omission.
3. Furthermore, this policy was deemed hastily implemented without considering the readiness of correctional facilities. Some believe the government has too readily adjusted Sharia law policies to foreign pressure without conducting in-depth consultations with religious scholars and traditional leaders. They argue that public caning has become part of Aceh's identity and a social tradition that not only upholds the law but also fosters a religious and Islamic-minded society.

Overall, this debate demonstrates a clash of values between preserving Islamic law, respecting human rights, and the political demands of modernizing regional policies. The Aceh government is attempting to find a compromise between maintaining the region's image at the national and international levels while maintaining its Islamic identity as the legal basis for the region. However, this effort is challenging, as it involves balancing religious norms, cultural values, and diverse public perceptions. The struggle between these two camps also

demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic law cannot be separated from the dynamic and ever-changing social context of society.

Ultimately, the amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 concerning the implementation of caning in Aceh has opened up a space for deep reflection for all parties to review how Islamic law is applied in a modern context. The application of the law requires not only normative justice but also social justice that takes into account societal conditions and developments. Constructive dialogue is needed between the government, religious scholars, and the community to find a balanced solution between the implementation of sharia and respect for human rights.

This study aims to analyze the pros and cons of the public regarding the amendment to Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018 and to understand how this policy affects the implementation of caning in Aceh. Through a juridical-sociological approach, this study is expected to contribute to understanding the social, political, and religious dynamics underlying the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh, as well as offer a more comprehensive perspective in formulating legal policies that are just, civilized, and remain grounded in essential Islamic values.

CONCLUSION

Through the Qanun Jinayat and the implementation of caning, Aceh has asserted its identity as a region based on Islamic sharia values. However, the change through Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018, which moved the location of caning from public places to correctional facilities, has given rise to quite complex social dynamics. Some support this change because it is considered more humane, maintains the dignity of the perpetrator, and protects children from uneducational viewing. On the other hand, some oppose it because they believe that caning in public places has important moral values and social functions as a means of education and propagating Islam. This difference demonstrates that the implementation of sharia law in Aceh is not only related to legal aspects, but also reflects the struggle between religious traditions, social values, and the demands of modernity.

Therefore, wise steps and open dialogue are needed between the government, religious scholars, traditional leaders, academics, and the community to review the implementation of Governor Regulation No. 5 of 2018. A participatory and communicative approach will help find a balance between the firm enforcement of Islamic law and respect for human values. The government needs to ensure that the implementation of caning, both in public and private, remains guided by the principles of justice, transparency, and the welfare of the community. This way, the implementation of Islamic law in Aceh can continue to be civilized, just, and in accordance with the moral spirit that underlies Islamic law itself.

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