# IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPORTED THRIFTING POLICY IN BENGKULU CITY

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*Abstract. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the import ban policy on second-hand clothing (imported thrifting) in Bengkulu City and to reveal the gap between central government regulations and actual conditions in the field. The phenomenon of imported thrifting continues to flourish despite the official ban through Minister of Trade Regulation No. 40 of 2022. This research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Informants include traders, consumers, and representatives from the Bengkulu City Department of Industry and Trade. The findings indicate that the implementation of the imported thrifting policy in Bengkulu faces significant challenges, including the lack of local institutional involvement in policy formulation, the limited authority of the Department of Industry and Trade in law enforcement, resistance from business actors and consumers who depend on thrifting as an economic alternative, and the influence of geographical, socio-economic, and political conditions. This study concludes that there is a significant implementation gap between national regulations and local practices. A more adaptive, locally participatory, and institutionally strengthened policy is required to ensure the effective realization of the policy's objectives.*

*Keywords: Policy Implementation, Imported Thrifting, Public Policy, Local Regulation.*

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**Abstrak**. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi kebijakan larangan impor pakaian bekas (impor thrifting) di Kota Bengkulu dan mengungkap kesenjangan antara regulasi pemerintah pusat dengan kondisi aktual di lapangan. Fenomena impor thrifting terus marak meskipun telah ada larangan resmi melalui Peraturan Menteri Perdagangan No. 40 Tahun 2022. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Informan meliputi pedagang, konsumen, dan perwakilan dari Dinas Perindustrian dan Perdagangan Kota Bengkulu. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi kebijakan impor thrifting di Bengkulu menghadapi tantangan yang cukup signifikan, antara lain kurangnya keterlibatan kelembagaan daerah dalam perumusan kebijakan, terbatasnya kewenangan Dinas Perindustrian dan Perdagangan dalam penegakan hukum, resistensi dari pelaku usaha dan konsumen yang menggantungkan hidupnya pada thrifting sebagai alternatif ekonomi, serta pengaruh kondisi geografis, sosial ekonomi, dan politik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa terdapat kesenjangan implementasi yang signifikan antara regulasi nasional dengan praktik lokal. Kebijakan yang lebih adaptif, partisipatif secara lokal, dan diperkuat secara kelembagaan diperlukan untuk memastikan tercapainya tujuan kebijakan secara efektif.

**Kata Kunci**: Implementasi Kebijakan, Thrifting Impor, Kebijakan Publik, Regulasi Daerah.

## INTRODUCTION

*The phenomenon of thrifting, or the act of purchasing second-hand clothing, has rapidly grown in various regions of Indonesia, including Bengkulu City. This culture is influenced by a combination of economic factors, lifestyle changes, and increasing awareness of environmental issues. However, field realities indicate that most of the clothing sold through thrifting activities are imported goods that have entered the country illegally. The Indonesian government has explicitly banned the import of used clothing through Minister of Trade Regulation No. 51 of 2015, which was later reinforced by Regulation No. 40 of 2022. This prohibition aims to protect the national textile industry and prevent negative impacts on public health and the environment.*

*Although the prohibition policy has been issued at the national level, the practice of imported thrifting continues to flourish in various regions, including the Panorama Market in Bengkulu City. This situation highlights the existence of a gap between formal regulations and local policy implementation (implementation gap). The lack of supervision, absence of specific local regulations, and weak institutional capacity are the main causes of policy ineffectiveness. In fact, most traders and consumers in Bengkulu City perceive this activity as normal and not illegal, considering its contribution to household economies and access to branded clothing at affordable prices.*

*The policy implementation gap is further supported by empirical data showing an increasing trend in the volume of imported second-hand clothing into Indonesia from countries such as the United Kingdom and Taiwan. On the other hand, enforcement efforts by customs and trade authorities have not been able to curb the entry of these goods into local markets. Moreover, the absence of an official distribution and recording system for used clothing at the regional level results in weak control over this activity. According to public policy implementation theory, successful implementation is highly influenced by factors such as communication, resources, implementer disposition, and bureaucratic structure (Edward III, 1980). In the context of the imported thrifting policy, these four factors are not functioning optimally in Bengkulu City. This raises important questions for policy makers and implementers: How can local governments contribute to the implementation of national policies, and to what extent can local actors translate central regulations into concrete actions on the ground?.*

*Based on the above description, this study focuses on analyzing the implementation of the import thrifting ban policy in Bengkulu City, aiming to identify inhibiting factors, analyze implementation gaps, and provide more adaptive and contextual policy recommendations for local governments.*

**METHOD**

*This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research type. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation process of the imported thrifting ban policy in Bengkulu City and to uncover the factors influencing its success or failure. The main focus of the research is on the gap between national regulations and local policy practices.*

# IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPORTED THRIFTING POLICY IN BENGKULU CITY

*The research locus is Bengkulu City, with the primary concentration point at Panorama Market, which is a notable center of second-hand imported clothing sales. The research informants consist of five main categories: (1) imported second-hand clothing traders, (2) consumers or buyers of second-hand clothing, (3) officials from the Bengkulu City Department of Industry and Trade (Disperindag).*

*Data collection techniques were carried out through: In-depth interviews with key informants and primary field actors, direct observation of buying and selling practices in the market as well as the distribution of used clothing, and document studies of relevant regulations, media reports, and institutional data.*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Policy Quality

*Policy quality is a critical indicator for evaluating the effectiveness and success of public policies in achieving their objectives. A high-quality policy should offer relevant and targeted solutions to public issues, with strong public participation throughout the policy-making process not merely as a formality, but to enrich perspectives and increase government legitimacy and accountability.*

*This research reveals a gap in policy quality due to the lack of involvement from local agencies specifically, the Department of Industry and Trade (Disperindag) in the policy formulation process. The absence of Disperindag has led to several negative outcomes. First, without their knowledge of the local market, the policy fails to address practical and regulatory aspects, potentially harming both entrepreneurs and consumers. Second, weak supervision has allowed unhealthy business practices, such as the sale of illegal or poor-quality goods, to flourish. Third, the lack of a mediating body like Disperindag has created imbalances between traders' and consumers' interests. Lastly, the absence of local institutional involvement in monitoring and evaluation results in policies that are unresponsive to changes in market conditions or public needs.*

*Moreover, the current implementation of the thrifting policy at the regional level only adheres to national directives without substantive adjustments based on local characteristics. Disperindag merely follows national policy guidelines and does not contextualize the rules.*

Another crucial issue is the clarity of the policy's objectives. Two differing perspectives exist regarding the impact of the ban. Thrifting business owners argue that the policy does not protect the local textile industry effectively, as many new textile products especially from China also enter the market. They claim that selling second-hand clothes should not be seen as a threat to MSMEs. In contrast, Disperindag stresses that the ban is based on legality and the negative impact of illegally imported second-hand clothing on the local market. Additionally, they note that goods from China are imported through legal channels and are subject to taxes.

This contradiction reflects a broader tension between local industry protection and the reality of global free trade. Therefore, the lack of clarity in the objectives of the imported thrifting ban policy has led to confusion among stakeholders and widened the implementation gap.

### Accuracy of Instruments and Implementer Capacity

The accuracy of policy instruments and the capacity of implementers are crucial in the context of the imported thrifting policy, considering the complexity and dynamics occurring in the field. Policy instruments refer to the methods used by the government to achieve the objectives of the thrifting policy. In this case, the Department of Industry and Trade (Disperindag) serves as the primary institution responsible for addressing violations related to thrifting at the regional level.

However, limitations in the implementation of the thrifting policy in Bengkulu City present a major challenge for Disperindag. Although the agency holds supervisory responsibilities, it lacks the authority to impose sanctions or take legal action against violations. This results in ineffective oversight, allowing illegal transactions involving second-hand imported clothing to continue without clear consequences. In addition, the implementers' capacity is a key factor in policy enforcement. Disperindag cannot act independently and requires support from law enforcement and public order agencies to implement the policy. This inability has led to a public perception particularly among traders and consumers that violations will not lead to serious repercussions. This perception, in turn, encourages ongoing non-compliance with existing regulations.

Overall, the gap between the established policy and field reality, coupled with insufficient inter-agency collaboration, has caused fragmentation in law enforcement

*efforts and has hindered the intended objectives of the thrifting policy in regulating the trade of imported second-hand goods.*

### *Target Group Support*

*Given the increasingly complex conditions in the field, the thrifting policy must go beyond mere regulatory enforcement; active participation from the public becomes the most crucial factor determining whether the policy will be successfully implemented. This aspect assesses how the target groups of the policy specifically business actors and consumers respond to and understand the import thrifting policy.*

*In line with Purwanto and Sulistyastuti's (2015) definition, implementation is "the activity of delivering policy outputs carried out by implementers to target groups in an effort to realize policy objectives." A policy is expected to succeed when it is accepted and utilized by its target groups, thereby enabling the policy outcomes to be achieved over the long term.*

*This study found that although information regarding the ban on imported second-hand clothing has reached the public through various media channels, the responses from both business actors and consumers do not reflect the expected level of support. Traders express frustration over the ban, arguing that the trade in second-hand clothing has been their primary source of income for many years. They also feel that the government has not provided viable alternatives or solutions for them to sustain their businesses, despite the existence of legal sanctions.*

*On the other hand, consumers view second-hand clothing as a more economical and higher-quality alternative. Although they are aware of the policy, many still prefer to shop at thrifting markets due to the affordability and perceived value of the products. This indicates that the ban has failed to influence consumer behavior, who continue to prioritize practicality in meeting their clothing needs.*

*Overall, there exists a significant gap between government policy and public needs. The government's inability to fully understand and respond to these needs has led to weak policy implementation. Resistance from business actors and consumer indifference reflect the reality that policy success depends not only on regulatory enforcement but also on active public engagement and support. Therefore, it is essential for the government to conduct thorough evaluations and adjust policies by involving*

community members in the decision-making process. This inclusive approach will enhance public acceptance and ensure more effective policy implementation.


### Environmental Conditions

Environmental conditions significantly influence the success of policy implementation, particularly in the context of the imported thrifting policy. The geographical characteristics of certain regions make it easier for illegal goods to enter the market, such as through unregulated small ports ("pelabuhan tikus") and overland routes that are beyond the reach of government monitoring.

In addition, the prevailing socio-economic conditions play a major role in driving both business actors and consumers to choose imported second-hand clothing. This is largely due to the affordability of these goods compared to locally produced new clothing. From an economic standpoint, imported second-hand clothes are seen as the most accessible option, especially for lower-income households.

Moreover, the current political climate has drawn public attention to the thrifting policy, which is often viewed as a mere formality or a politically motivated agenda among elites. This perception has the potential to undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the policy in practice.

The imported thrifting policy in Indonesia faces major challenges driven by environmental factors, including geographic vulnerabilities and socio-economic constraints. As an archipelagic country surrounded by vast waters, Indonesia is particularly vulnerable to the smuggling of used clothing via unofficial maritime and land routes. Despite the Ministry of Trade's efforts, including the destruction of illegally imported second-hand goods worth over IDR 174.8 billion, consistent monitoring and enforcement remain difficult.

This situation illustrates a clear gap between formal regulations and on-the-ground realities. Many citizens, facing stagnant or declining incomes, turn to second-hand clothing as a practical and affordable alternative. For them, the policy appears inconsistent or symbolic, especially when locally made clothing is priced higher and imported second-hand goods continue to circulate freely in the market. This fuels the public perception that the policy primarily serves elite interests rather than addressing everyday needs.

*In conclusion, factors such as illegal entry routes, limited enforcement authority of Disperindag, socio-economic pressures, and political dynamics interact to shape the implementation of the thrifting policy. A more holistic and collaborative approach is therefore essential. Greater cooperation between the government, business actors, and communities is needed to develop solutions that go beyond formal regulations and reflect the socio-economic realities of the population. Only then can the thrifting policy be implemented effectively and sustainably.*

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

#### *Policy Quality*

*Based on the analysis of policy quality related to thrifting in Indonesia, particularly in Panorama Market, Bengkulu City, the formulation and implementation processes still face numerous challenges. Policy quality is greatly influenced by the clarity of objectives, stakeholder involvement, and understanding of local conditions. A policy developed democratically and involving regional institutions such as the Department of Industry and Trade (Disperindag) is essential to produce relevant and effective regulations. However, this study found that Disperindag was not actively involved in the policy formulation process, resulting in regulations that overlook market realities and relevant regional regulatory frameworks.*

*The clarity of policy objectives is also a major point of concern. There are differing perspectives on whether the thrifting ban genuinely protects local industries. While Disperindag officials argue that the policy aims to protect the domestic textile sector, some believe that the sale of second-hand clothing does not necessarily pose a threat to local MSMEs, especially given the continued influx of imported products from China under free trade agreements.*

*This uncertainty regarding policy goals and the exclusion of local input in the formulation process has caused confusion among the public. Therefore, it is crucial for central government bodies to involve local institutions in policy-making and ensure that regulations are not merely formalistic but also*

*substantive and locally relevant. Only then can thrifting policies provide optimal and sustainable benefits for both society and regional economies.*

### *Accuracy of Instruments and Implementer Capacity*

*The analysis of this aspect revealed that the implementation of the imported thrifting policy faces serious challenges at the local level, particularly for Disperindag as the primary implementer. The agency's limited authority to act on violations and its dependence on support from law enforcement agencies have led to ineffective oversight. This gap allows illegal second-hand clothing transactions to continue without serious consequences for offenders.*

*Furthermore, Disperindag's inability to act independently has fostered a perception among traders and consumers that enforcement is weak and inconsistent. This situation not only hinders policy objectives but also highlights the lack of inter-agency collaboration necessary for a comprehensive law enforcement framework. To improve the effectiveness of thrifting policy implementation, Disperindag's authority must be strengthened and institutional capacity enhanced, along with stronger and more consistent collaboration with law enforcement.*

### *Target Group Support*

*This study found that the thrifting policy introduced by the government has not been well-received by the public. Despite official communications regarding the ban, both business actors and consumers have expressed skepticism and dissatisfaction. Traders who are the primary target group feel uncertain about the future of their businesses, citing a lack of viable alternatives or support from the government. As a result, resistance to the policy persists.*

*Consumers, on the other hand, show general indifference toward the ban and continue to favor second-hand markets due to the affordability and quality of the products. This indicates a clear gap between the policy's intent and the practical needs of the public. The government's failure to understand and address these needs has contributed to the policy's poor implementation.*

*To address this, it is imperative for the government to evaluate and revise existing policies by involving the public in the decision-making process. The success of a policy relies not only on legal enforcement but also on public participation and support. Without synergy between the government and the people, thrifting policies will continue to face obstacles in their implementation.*

### Geographic and Environmental Conditions

*The analysis of the thrifting policy in Indonesia shows that its implementation is hindered by a variety of interconnected factors regulatory, socio-economic, and political. First, illegal distribution routes via informal ports and land paths create significant challenges for monitoring and enforcement, worsened by Disperindag's limited authority. Second, socio-economic pressures push consumers toward second-hand clothing as a more affordable option, placing the government in a dilemma between enforcing regulations and meeting public needs. Third, political dynamics have created the perception that the policy is more symbolic than functional, especially when enforcement actions such as destroying illegal goods contrast with the continued presence of these goods in local markets.*

*These issues illustrate a wide gap between policy implementation and societal realities. To achieve the intended outcomes of the thrifting policy, a more holistic and collaborative approach is needed. Government, business actors, and the public must work together to find solutions that are not only regulatory but also responsive to economic realities. With such an inclusive and adaptive framework, the thrifting policy can be implemented effectively and sustainably, benefiting all stakeholders involved.*

## Suggestions

### Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement

- *The government must actively involve a broader range of stakeholders, including business actors and the general public, in the policy-making process. Organizing public discussions or consultations can help policymakers better understand the perspectives and needs of the policy's*

*target groups. This participatory approach will also foster greater legitimacy and acceptance of the policy.*

### *Clarifying Policy Objectives*

- *It is essential to clearly define the objectives and measurable outcomes of the thrifting policy. Effective public communication about the goals and intended benefits of the policy should be prioritized to reduce the gap in understanding and skepticism among both business actors and consumers.*

### *Strengthening the Authority and Capacity of Disperindag*

- *The Department of Industry and Trade (Disperindag) should be granted greater authority to enforce regulations related to thrifting activities. In addition, capacity-building programs and training for Disperindag officials and relevant law enforcement personnel must be carried out to ensure they can perform their duties effectively.*

- *Establishing stronger cooperation between Disperindag and other relevant institutions—such as the police and public order agencies—is also critical to creating synergy in enforcement and supervision processes.*

### *Policy Evaluation and Adjustment*

- *Regular evaluations of the existing thrifting policy should be conducted to assess its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Adjustments must be made based on feedback from stakeholders, including both the public and business actors, to ensure the policy remains relevant and sustainable.*

- *The government should also adopt a more holistic approach, one that not only emphasizes legal enforcement but also provides alternative support for local business actors. This may include skills training, access to markets, or the development of new business models that are both legal and economically viable.*

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