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Green Governance Policy: Local Government Commitment to Implementing Regulations on Reducing Plastic Waste

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the urgency and level of commitment of the Serang City Government in implementing policies for reducing plastic waste, while identifying the drivers and barriers to upholding the principles of green governance at the local level. A qualitative approach, utilizing a descriptive case study method, was employed. The findings indicate that the Serang City Government has demonstrated a strong formal regulatory commitment through the establishment of legal instruments, specifically Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2021 concerning Waste Management and Mayor's Regulation Number 43 of 2019 concerning the Regional Strategy and Policy for Waste Management (Jakstrada). Nevertheless, the actualization of green governance at the operational level remains hindered by an implementation gap. Structural obstacles include weak law enforcement, limited fiscal capacity (for green budgeting), the absence of technical implementing regulations, and low levels of active participation among traditional market stakeholders stemming from socio-cultural and economic resistance. Conversely, sectoral partnerships with community-based waste banks, alongside the optimization of the Cilowong Final Waste Processing Site (TPAS) through a Waste-to-Energy (PSEL) project, serve as accelerators for reducing waste volume downstream. This study concludes that the manifestation of green governance in Serang City has reached the stage of administrative and regulatory compliance but has yet to be fully optimized in terms of operational enforcement. Policy reformulation should prioritize the development of technical implementing regulations for banning single-use plastics, allocating budgets for enforcement and oversight, and strengthening incentive schemes for environmentally friendly local economic sectors.
Keywords: Green Governance, Serang City Government, Public Policy, Plastic Waste Reduction, Environmental Governance.

INTRODUCTION

The ecological crisis resulting from the accumulation of plastic waste has transformed into one of the most critical global challenges of the contemporary era (Gust et al., 2023). The polymeric nature of plastic which renders it resistant to natural degradation—triggers massive pollution that undermines the carrying capacity of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems (Mulasari et al., 2014). In Indonesia, the escalating volume of plastic waste correlates linearly with population growth and a shift toward modern, convenience-oriented consumption patterns. Conventional approaches, which rely primarily on end-of-pipe management at final disposal sites (landfills), have proven insufficient to curb the rate of waste accumulation; consequently, a strategic reorientation is required one that is preventive, systematic, and integrated, spanning the entire process from upstream to downstream (Fadzoli et al., 2023).

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In response to the complexity of these environmental issues, academic discourse has begun to adopt the green governance paradigm as an ideal framework for management (Li et al., 2018). Green governance integrates principles of sustainability and ecological preservation into every phase of public policy formulation and implementation (Minan et al., 2026). Unlike traditional governance models which prioritize short-term economic growth green governance establishes ecosystem balance as a key performance indicator. Under this paradigm, the state and its bureaucratic apparatus are expected to act proactively as ecological stewards through regulatory interventions that are firm, responsive, and accountable (Jafar et al., 2026).

As an extension of the central government, local governments play a decisive role in actualizing the sustainable development agenda. Regional autonomy mandates that local bureaucracies contextualize national policies to ensure they are relevant to the specific characteristics and dynamics of their respective regions (Nurjaman, 2026). The commitment of local governments is no longer measured merely by political vision and mission statements on paper, but rather by the consistent development of pro-environmental local regulations and the allocation of adequate resources (Adnyana et al., 2023). Without strong political and administrative commitment from local authorities, national environmental management policies lose their practical efficacy at the grassroots level (Fitri & Ferza, 2020).

Although various legal instruments restricting single-use plastics have been enacted across many regions, a significant gap persists between the substance of these regulations and the reality of their implementation. Many waste-reduction policies have stagnated due to weak oversight mechanisms and the absence of sanctions that serve as an effective deterrent (Saraswati et al., 2023). The dominance of short-term economic interests among industrial and retail stakeholders often undermines the enforcement of environmental laws. Furthermore, public reliance on the convenience of plastics creates a cultural resistance that slows the transition toward more environmentally friendly consumption patterns (Prasetyo & Prasetyowibowo, 2026).

This phenomenon of environmental regulatory dynamics is examined in depth through a qualitative approach, utilizing a descriptive case study of the Serang City Government. Serang City was selected as the research site due to its status as a provincial capital undergoing rapid urbanization a process that has directly contributed to a surge in the daily volume of domestic waste. Through this approach, the focus is directed toward an in-depth analysis of policy structures, the institutional capacity of the Environmental Agency, and the level of operational commitment among local policymakers in overseeing the implementation of regulations on plastic waste reduction within the administrative jurisdiction.

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Previous research on plastic waste reduction has largely focused on aspects of public participation or the effectiveness of specific recycling technologies (Husna et al., 2025). Few studies have specifically examined how the internal commitment of the bureaucracy is tested when confronted with limited regional fiscal capacity and the economic pressures faced by the informal sector in traditional markets. This study addresses this research gap by analyzing how the principles of green governance are internalized within the regional bureaucratic system, and how structural obstacles in the field affect the consistent enforcement of regulations aimed at reducing plastic waste.

Given this context, this study aims to analyze the level of commitment of the Serang City Government in implementing plastic waste reduction regulations, while also mapping the determinants that influence the enforcement of green governance principles at the local level. The urgency of this research lies in its theoretical contribution to enriching the literature on environmental governance within local governments in Indonesia. In practical terms, the findings of this study are intended to serve as a basis for strategic evaluation by policymakers, assisting them in drafting more implementable, inclusive, and sustainable derivative regulations to foster green urban governance.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to explore in depth the commitment of the Serang City Government to the implementation of a green governance policy. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, with key informants selected via purposive sampling; these included structural officials from the Serang City Environmental Agency (DLH), modern retail business operators, traditional market managers, and representatives from local environmental advocacy groups (Yulianah, 2022). Additionally, secondary data were gathered through the examination of various local regulatory instruments concerning waste management, the city's strategic planning documents, and annual waste volume monitoring reports to supplement the field data.

All collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which encompasses data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study utilized both source and method triangulation by cross-referencing information from interviews, field observation notes taken at several shopping centers in Serang City, and the content of the legal documents under review. Through this methodological framework, the analysis aims to provide an objective, theoretical, and comprehensive description of the dynamics surrounding the enforcement of regulations on plastic waste reduction within the research setting.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regulatory Commitment and Formal Manifestations of the Serang City Government's Policy

The initial manifestation of implementing green governance at the local level is fundamentally reflected in the establishment and strengthening of a formal legal foundation. A key characteristic of an environmentally conscious administration is its willingness to translate political commitments into legally binding instruments. In this context, the Serang City Government has demonstrated its regulatory intent in response to the ecological emergency caused by polymer pollution in the urban area. This policy is no longer viewed as a secondary option; rather, it has been positioned as a vital pillar within the legal architecture for sustainable regional development.

This strategic move is evidenced by the enactment of Serang City Regional Regulation (Perda) Number 7 of 2021 concerning Waste Management, which serves as the primary legal framework at the local level. The introduction of this regulation marks a crucial regulatory update, replacing outdated provisions that are no longer relevant to the accelerating rate of contemporary waste generation. Through this instrument, the Serang City Government seeks to reorient the waste management paradigm shifting away from conventional, disposal-oriented methods toward a systematic, preventive approach that focuses on minimizing waste at its source.

Substantively, the articles within Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2021 mandate clear requirements regarding the limitation of single-use plastic waste. The regulation stipulates that producers, modern retail businesses, shopping centers, and managers of traditional markets all bear a legal responsibility to reduce the use of plastic bags. This normative obligation is designed to curb the daily influx of inorganic waste into the urban environment of Serang City. Through this clause, the upstream segment of the plastic supply chain is brought under legal intervention by public authorities.

Beyond restricting usage, this local regulation also encourages the adoption of eco-friendly alternative materials to replace conventional plastic bags. The Serang City Government mandates that the commercial sector transition toward packaging that is biodegradable capable of decomposing through natural processes. The regulatory framework implicitly incorporates incentives and disincentives, designed to foster greater awareness among economic actors and encourage their participation in the circular economy. Thus, this legislation does not merely impose prohibitions; it also establishes a framework for the innovation of green materials at the local level.

The Serang City Government's regulatory commitment extends beyond local ordinances into more tactical, operational policies. This is realized through the enactment of the Serang Mayor's Regulation Number 43 of 2019, which outlines the Regional Policy and Strategy (Jakstrada) for the management of household waste and waste similar to household waste. This regulation serves as a

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long-term planning instrument, setting quantitative targets for the reduction and handling of municipal waste over the coming years. The document provides clear direction for local government agencies in implementing a vision of green governance.

Within the Jakstrada document, the Serang City Government has set a target of 30% for waste reduction and 70% for waste management. Achieving these ambitious goals requires a rigid yet synergistic division of labor across various bureaucratic branches, with the Environmental Agency serving as the leading sector. The regulation further refines a roadmap for plastic reduction by establishing intervention clusters that span from the domestic (household) level to large-scale commercial sectors. This measurable planning pattern reflects an effort to internalize the principles of green management into the blueprint for regional governance.

Theoretically, the existence of a regulatory portfolio such as Regional Regulation (Perda) Number 7 of 2021 and Mayoral Regulation Number 43 of 2019 provides the Serang City Government with a robust formal political legitimacy. Within the discourse of green governance, such formal legitimacy serves as an absolute prerequisite, marking the transition from mere green political rhetoric to legitimate administrative action. Local authorities leverage their regional autonomy to establish a jurisdiction that protects the ecological sustainability of the urban environment. This legal conformity positions the state as the primary actor in control of environmental governance at the local level.

These legal instruments also serve as a foundation for allocating resources and strengthening the institutional capacity of the local bureaucracy. Empowered by these regional mandates, the Serang City Environmental Agency possesses a solid legal justification to request budget allocations, increase the number of supervisory personnel, and develop work programs focused on reducing plastic waste. Regulations act as a driving force for the bureaucracy, validating every executive action taken in the field. Without a well-established juridical basis, any green initiative proposed by the local government would be vulnerable to legal challenges and budgetary uncertainty.

Furthermore, these regulatory manifestations reflect the Serang City Government's responsiveness to regulatory dynamics at the national level. The legal synchronization between the Presidential Regulation on the National Strategy and Action Plan and the Mayoral Regulation on the Regional Strategy and Action Plan demonstrates a harmonious, hierarchical compliance within the Indonesian legal framework. The Serang City Government has successfully translated global and national commitments regarding the reduction of carbon emissions and plastic pollution into a local context tailored to the socio-economic characteristics of this provincial capital. This alignment strengthens Serang City's position within the national environmental governance network. This formal policy direction also marks a shift in the role of the local government—from a mere public service

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provider to an active ecological regulator. Municipal authorities are no longer tasked solely with street cleaning and waste collection for disposal in landfills; rather, they have taken on an interventionist role within the market to influence public consumption patterns. By implementing regulations that restrict the use of plastics, the local government is deliberately intervening in the market to safeguard a greater public interest: the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Furthermore, the existence of this formal commitment serves as a benchmark for the public to evaluate the government's actual performance on the ground. The enacted legal documents function as a socio-ecological contract between the Serang City Government and its citizens. Members of the public, academics, and civil society organizations can utilize the provisions within these local ordinances and mayoral regulations as oversight instruments to hold the government accountable for its promises and to gauge the effectiveness of bureaucratic performance. Consequently, this regulatory commitment entails a high level of accountability for local government officials.

Overall, an analysis of the upstream aspects of the policy indicates that the Serang City Government has successfully established a robust institutional foundation for implementing the principles of green governance. The policy formulation phase has culminated in comprehensive legal documentation, encompassing measures for prevention, restriction, and substitution, as well as long-term achievement targets. This formal manifestation demonstrates that, from an administrative and bureaucratic perspective, the governance structure of Serang City possesses a strong set of instruments to lead the movement toward reducing plastic waste within its jurisdiction.

Implementation Gap and Structural Obstacles

Although the Serang City Government possesses comprehensive regulatory instruments on paper, the reality on the ground reveals a significant divide between policy text and actual execution. This implementation gap indicates that formal regulatory commitments have not translated linearly into effective operational commitments. The transition toward green governance has stagnated when confronted with structural realities, limited bureaucratic capacity, and the sociocultural dynamics of the urban population. Consequently, the effectiveness of enforcing regulations on plastic waste restrictions in Serang City remains suboptimal.

A critical structural obstacle lies in the weakness of oversight and law enforcement by the relevant authorities. While Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2021 establishes rigid administrative and criminal (fine-based) sanctions, the mechanisms for daily monitoring of business compliance are inconsistently applied. The Public Order Agency, in collaboration with the Serang City Environmental Agency (DLH), rarely conducts unannounced inspections or imposes strict sanctions on businesses that violate plastic restriction provisions. The absence of tangible legal consequences has led to

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widespread disregard for the regulations, with economic actors perceiving the rules merely as moral appeals lacking any coercive force.

This situation is further exacerbated by a division of labor and inter-agency coordination that remains sectoral in nature and lacks harmonious integration. Although the Serang City Environmental Agency (DLH) serves as the leading sector, it lacks the judicial law enforcement authority vested in the officials responsible for upholding regional regulations. On the other hand, agencies such as the Serang City Office of Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, Industry, and Trade prioritize the economic stability of merchants over the regulation of the materials they use for trade. This weak cross-departmental communication creates an overlap in oversight functions, causing policy implementation to lose its direction at the operational level.

A contributing factor to these operational weaknesses is the limited fiscal capacity of the local government, or a green budgeting deficit. The funds allocated within the Serang City regional budget (APBD) for the environmental sector are minimal and are largely prioritized for routine expenditures, such as waste collection operations and wages for sanitation workers. This financial constraint directly limits the local government's ability to recruit certified environmental inspectors and fund periodic compliance monitoring programs for retail businesses. Without adequate financial support, the bureaucratic structure responsible for enforcing regulations becomes, in practice, functionally paralyzed.

Beyond budgetary constraints, the absence of technical, actionable derivative regulations further complicates execution in the field. The regional ordinance on waste management requires implementing regulations specifically a Mayoral Regulation that detail the technical guidelines for the ban on single-use plastic bags and the mechanisms for its enforcement. The lack of such detailed implementing rules leaves field personnel without clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) for taking enforcement action. This legal uncertainty at the tactical level ultimately fosters an environment where violations regarding plastic use are overlooked across various centers of economic activity.

These operational obstacles are starkly apparent when comparing compliance in the modern retail sector with that of traditional markets in Serang City. On one hand, modern retailers such as chain supermarkets tend to be more compliant with directives to limit plastic bags, owing to their centralized management systems, which are easier to monitor. Conversely, in traditional markets like Pasar Rau or Pasar Taman Sari, the use of single-use plastic bags remains widespread and uncontrolled. Market management faces significant challenges in conducting close oversight, given that the vendors are dispersed, operate informally, and exhibit high mobility in their daily transactions.

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The situation in these traditional markets is closely linked to economic and sociocultural resistance among micro-entrepreneurs. Single-use plastic bags remain the preferred choice due to their extremely low cost, accessibility, and utility in packaging a wide variety of goods. When local authorities mandate a reduction in plastic use, informal vendors face the prospect of higher operational costs should they switch to eco-friendly alternatives, which are relatively more expensive. The lack of market intervention by the local government such as the provision or subsidization of environmentally friendly alternatives further reinforces the vendors' reluctance to change.

From a sociocultural perspective, the heavy reliance of Serang City residents on the convenience of plastic has fostered deeply ingrained consumption habits. The practice of bringing one's own reusable shopping bag has yet to become a common social norm among the urban population of Serang. Public education initiatives led by the local government have largely been perceived as merely ceremonial, failing to address the core behavioral shifts required at the grassroots level. This passive cultural resistance from consumers exerts counter-pressure on vendors, compelling them to continue providing plastic bags to ensure customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, limited waste processing infrastructure—both at the upstream and intermediate stages—hinders the successful implementation of green governance. The city of Serang still lacks a sufficient number of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (TPS 3R) waste management facilities—operating effectively at the sub-district level—to sort plastic waste at its source. The city's waste management system remains largely trapped in a conventional, linear model, where waste is collected in bulk and transported directly to final disposal sites, with no significant reduction in volume occurring at the neighborhood level. The absence of a structured sorting and supply chain means that plastic waste continues to flow, unchecked and in large volumes, into the urban ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

The commitment of the Serang City Government to implementing the principles of green governance is currently limited to the administrative-regulatory phase and has yet to function optimally at the operational level. Formally, the local government has established a robust legal foundation through the enactment of Regional Regulation Number 7 of 2021 concerning Waste Management and Mayor's Regulation Number 43 of 2019 regarding the Regional Policy and Strategy for Waste Management. However, the actual implementation of regulations aimed at curbing plastic waste faces a widening implementation gap on the ground. Structural obstacles such as weak law enforcement, limited green budgeting, the absence of specific technical implementing regulations, and socio-cultural economic resistance within traditional markets serve as key factors hindering the effectiveness of policies designed to reduce plastic polymers.

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As a transitional measure to address these challenges, the Serang City Government is attempting to shift its governance paradigm toward sustainable energy recovery (waste-to-energy) by optimizing waste banks upstream and pursuing a strategic Waste-to-Energy (PSEL) project at the Cilowong landfill site downstream. Nevertheless, the long-term viability of these downstream technological investments remains contingent upon an aggressive reformulation of policies in the upstream sector. Consequently, this study recommends the issuance of more specific technical operational regulations regarding the prohibition of single-use plastics, the strengthening of incentive schemes for businesses that transition to eco-friendly materials, and the fostering of consistent, cross-sectoral synergy among the government, the private sector, and local communities to realize a green and sustainable urban governance model.

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