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Algorithmic Morality and Local Value Anchors: How ABS–SBK Mediates Digital Populism in Indonesia’s Regional Politics

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Abstract

This study explores the intersection between social media discourse in West Sumatra and formal governmental processes, focusing on the cultural idiom Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS–SBK). This Minangkabau moral framework is analyzed as a highly "amplifiable" tool within algorithmic media environments. Utilizing digital discourse analysis and online trace mapping, the research examines how moral emotions expressed online are magnified by media gatekeeping and subsequently integrated into formal policy deliberations. Theoretically, the study introduces "local-value-anchored digital populism" to explain how localized idioms become institutionally actionable within Indonesia’s regional politics. Data sources include social media content from key figures, user interactions, news reports, and official documents. The findings reveal a recurring affective-institutional pattern: digital emotions are amplified by news media and then translated by local authorities and customary institutions into formal regulations or initiatives. This dynamic emerges from the convergence of three forces: public emotions, social media algorithms, and institutional structures. When used as a moral frame, the ABS–SBK idiom bridges public affective responses with state procedures, transforming local values into policy language and sources of political legitimacy. Consequently, digital populism in West Sumatra serves as a form of symbolic power construction. It reconfigures the relationship between religion, customary authority, and the state within the digital public sphere, moving beyond mere value-based communication to influence formal institutional channels like bylaws and customary councils.

KEYWORDS

digital populism, ABS–SBK, affective–institutional resonance, algorithmic mediation, local democracy, West Sumatra.

Introduction

Since Indonesia’s democratic transition, Islamic populism has expanded rapidly in parallel with the liberalization of political participation and the rise of identity-based competition (Hadiz, 2018; Mietzner, 2015). Within this broader national trend, West Sumatra offers a distinctive configuration: the Minangkabau philosophical idiom Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS–SBK)—literally “custom based on Islamic law, and Islamic law based on the Qur’an”—functions as a collective moral reference that routinely shapes public responses to socio-political issues, ranging from investment disputes to debates over religious attire and halal cultural identity. The historical and philosophical foundations of ABS–SBK have long shaped the cultural and political life of Minangkabau society (Azra, 2002; Navis, 1984).

As a normative system that harmonizes adat and Islamic law, ABS–SBK functions not only as a moral compass but also as a framework for social organization and communal authority. Over time, socio-economic transformations—such as modernization, migration, and the erosion of traditional custodianship—have repositioned ABS–SBK from a cultural principle into a flexible political resource. Decentralization after Reformasi

further expanded institutional opportunities for its reinterpretation, enabling local governments, customary councils, and religious actors to invoke ABS–SBK in debates over public morality, regional regulations, and identity-based governance. This historical trajectory provides the foundation for understanding how ABS–SBK later becomes rearticulated within digital spaces as a symbolically potent and politically mobilizing moral idiom. The debate over Law No. 17/2022, which institutionalizes the ABS–SBK maxim, and the viral controversy over “rendang babi” (pork rendang) exemplify how this cultural-religious symbol has been repurposed as an instrument of moral mobilization within the digital public sphere (D et al., 2024; Rohidin, 2023; Zulfadli et al., 2024).

This trajectory is embedded in the longer history of post–New Order Islamist movements in West Sumatra. Zainal (2014) notes that the consolidation of dakwah groups, religious organizations, and campus networks played a key role in fusing moral agendas with local political articulation. This trend continues in the contemporary period, where the influence of Islamic civil organizations often determines the outcome of strategic policy debates. A striking example is the public opposition to the Lippo Group’s Siloam Hospital project in Padang, which revealed a tight interconnection between moral narratives, religious identity, and economic anxiety (Barat, 2013; Zulfadli & Arrasuli, 2017).

Socio-economic transformations have further reinforced these tendencies. Processes of modernization and out-migration have eroded the traditional authority of the mamak (maternal uncles) and weakened the communal economic base of tanah ulayat (clan land) (Kato, 1982; von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2001). This kaosocio-economic shift created new arenas—particularly digital platforms—where moral authority is increasingly contested, negotiated, and publicly performed. As traditional custodianship declined, moral leadership became more dispersed, enabling political elites, religious figures, and digitally active middle-class groups to assert ABS–SBK as a mode of public moralization in both offline and online settings). Within this vacuum, the Muslim middle class—especially traders and entrepreneurs—has emerged as a key actor sustaining social solidarity while simultaneously serving as the moral engine of populist mobilization (Hadiz, 2018). Their activism is driven not only by social and financial capital but also by a pervasive sense of middle-class insecurity: anxiety in facing intensified competition, value transformation, and political uncertainty. This insecurity stimulates more assertive participation in moral-religious campaigns. Field studies by Lestari (2023) reveal that Muslim entrepreneurs in West Sumatra have built cross-clan alliances, activated dakwah channels and digital communities, and provided organizational as well as financial resources for religious–political initiatives. Thus, middle-class insecurity operates as a mobilizing force linking economic restructuring with the moral politicization of ABS–SBK.

The decentralization of power after Reformasi has also created institutional opportunity structures for the translation of ABS–SBK-based moral discourse into formal regulations. In West Sumatra, local governments have issued various sharia-inspired ordinances—ranging from mandatory hijab regulations in public schools to anti-vice bylaws—grounded in alliances among ulama, politicians, and business elites (Buehler, 2008; Bush, 2008; Hefner, 2011). Simultaneously, moral mobilization by religious organizations and dakwah communities has occupied the public sphere through demonstrations (such as anti-LGBT campaigns and demands for local ordinances) and declarations of moral resistance (Irawan, 2024; (Padek), 2022; Tirta.id, 2019). In this context, digital ecosystems act as a conveyor belt linking grassroots moral emotions with media amplification and institutional translation—transforming social media affect into policy

resonance.

Building on this configuration, the present study investigates how local-value-anchored digital populism operates through affective circulation intertwined with institutional channels. Across several cases—including the Lippo/Padang Landmark investment dispute (2013–2017), the “pork rendang” controversy (2022), the hijab policy debate (2021), and anti-LGBT mobilization (2018–2025)—moral emotions such as anger, disgust, and pride (marwah Minang) are first produced on digital platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube/TikTok), then amplified by media outlets, and finally translated by elites (local government, parliament, LKAAM, MUI, and religious leaders) into policy responses (DPRD recommendations, joint ministerial decrees, Supreme Court rulings, and draft bylaws such as the Raperda P4S).

Existing research explains why such patterns persist. The concept of affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015) posits that publics are bound more by shared emotions than by rational deliberation. Experimental studies demonstrate that moral anger (Brady et al., 2021) and out-group cues (Rathje et al., 2021) enhance content visibility and engagement. Within frameworks of digital or algorithmic populism (Gerbaudo, 2018, 2022; Maly, 2018), platform algorithms reward moral clarity and emotional intensity, making ABS–SBK’s binary moral framing (right/wrong, halal/haram, honorable/disgraceful) highly competitive in algorithmic environments—easy to viralize, media-quotable, and quickly translatable into policy discourse. Indonesia’s media ecology—with its portalized news model and message-app-based networks—further facilitates this migration of emotion into policy (Jurriëns & Tapsell, 2017; Lim, 2017).

Empirically, actors occupy differentiated roles in this resonance chain. Andre Rosiade dominates the halal–marwah Minang discourse (e.g., the “pork rendang” controversy, 2022); Fauzi Bahar functions as a moral node in the hijab–ABS–SBK debate (viral Facebook video, January 24 2021); and Jel Fathullah (Jelita Donal) represents the extension of religious representation to the national level (DPD 2024–2029). In LGBT issues, moral regulation unfolds through multiple layers: Nasrul Abit (2018–2019) at the executive level, DPRD Sumbar via legislative proposals (2019), LKAAM through customary legitimacy (Supreme Court ruling on hijab, 2021), and Mahyeldi via the Raperda P4S and “value education” programs (2023–2024). Together, these nodes demonstrate a cross-level reinforcement among state, religious, and communal institutions.

Despite the growing body of research on Islamic populism in Indonesia, most studies remain focused on structural dimensions—class politics, state–religion relations, or the proliferation of sharia regulations (Buehler, 2008; Bush, 2008; Hadiz, 2018; Lim, 2017)—while the mechanisms of value-based digitalization that connect platforms, media, and institutions remain underexplored. To fill this gap, the study introduces the concept of local-value-anchored populism, defined as a form of digital populism that grounds its moral claims in localized cultural values (here, ABS–SBK) while exploiting interactive digital ecologies (leader posts, community reproductions, media amplification) to generate political resonance culminating in institutional echoes.

Operationally, this framework posits three interrelated mechanisms:

1. local values simplify moral conflicts into binary oppositions (proper/improper, halal/haram);
2. platform affordances and algorithmic incentives propel diffusion and engagement; and
3. cross-actor interactions (leaders, netizens, media) create a resonance cycle that often results in institutional responses (meetings, decrees, bylaws, or court decisions).

Accordingly, this study pursues three objectives:

1. To analyze how ABS–SBK is framed in the social media

- posts of public figures (moral diction, out-grouping, use of religious–customary symbols) across platforms;
2. To map how these discourses are reproduced in comment threads and subsequently migrated into online news coverage; and
 3. To explain the conditions and pathways through which digital resonance intersects with institutional agendas (meetings, regulations, official statements) and the implications for pluralist local democracy.

Methods

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative design that integrates digital discourse analysis with trace-based network mapping and triangulation of media and policy documents. This combination was chosen to capture the dynamic circulation of ABS–SBK across digital platforms, news environments, and institutional arenas, enabling the analysis to follow how moral meanings shift and are rearticulated across interconnected sites.

The corpus was constructed through event-based purposive sampling (Rogers, 2019; Marres, 2017) covering four major controversies: the Lippo/Padang Landmark conflict (2013–2017), the SMKN 2 Padang hijab incident (January–May 2021), the “pork rendang” debate (June 2022), and anti-LGBT mobilizations (2018–2025). Across these event windows, the dataset includes social-media posts from key political and religious figures, associated comment threads, local and national online news reporting, and official institutional documents relevant to each episode. While qualitative in emphasis, the dataset spans several hundred data points distributed across these four cases, allowing cross-platform triangulation and historical comparison.

Inclusion criteria required publicly accessible materials with verifiable timestamps that explicitly referenced ABS–SBK or related moral dichotomies (e.g., halal–haram, proper–improper). Unverifiable or private content was excluded. The analysis combined Fairclough (1995) critical discourse approach with Krippendorff (2019) qualitative content analysis to identify ABS–SBK markers, moral lexicons, out-grouping, crowd alignment, elite cueing, media reframing, and policy hooks. Validity was ensured through triangulation across platform, news, and institutional layers, alongside chronological cross-verification (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2018), whereby a claim was retained only when supported by at least two independent sources. This approach facilitates the mapping of discourse–policy co-evolution within Indonesia’s interconnected media ecology (Lim, 2017; Rogers, 2019).

Result and Discussion

The following RESULTS AND DISCUSSION section integrates the empirical cases with the study’s theoretical framework by tracing how each episode unfolds within a consistent affective–institutional cycle. To maintain conceptual clarity, the analysis adopts the single term cycle throughout, avoiding interchangeable labels such as loop or circuit. The discussion draws on direct quotations from social media posts, comment threads, and news headlines to substantiate key analytical claims, demonstrating how ABS–SBK-based moral framings circulate across platforms, gain media traction, and intersect with institutional responses.

The Lippo Mall Protest: Institutionalizing Moral Affect

The proposed construction of the Lippo Group’s integrated complex along the Khatib Sulaiman corridor—popularly known as the Superblock project comprising Siloam Hospital,

Aryaduta Hotel, schools, and a shopping center—triggered significant resistance in Padang beginning in 2013. While initially promoted as a “modern investment that would transform the city,” the project provoked widespread moral and cultural anxiety among residents and religious organizations, who viewed it as a threat to Minangkabau social order, traditional economy, and religious–cultural values.

This opposition was not merely an “anti-investment” stance but was framed as a collision between the *marwah* (honor) of Minangkabau culture and the symbols of modern capitalist intrusion deemed inconsistent with the *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK) moral framework. Qualitative studies examining the protest by religious organizations against the Siloam Hospital project emphasize that moral–cultural framing—interwoven with concerns over Christianization, economic displacement, and urban spatial order—produced strong moral and affective resonance within the digital public sphere (Zulfadli & Arrasuli, 2017).

Citizen Viralization and Digital Circulation

The movement was initially mediated through citizen media and religious organizational channels, later evolving through user-generated digital content. A pivotal moment occurred with the release of a YouTube video titled “Peaceful Demonstration: Minangkabau People Reject RS Siloam/Superblock Lippo” (28 November 2013). The video documents a long march from Nurul Iman Mosque to the DPRD Padang office, displaying banners and speeches demanding the revocation of Lippo Group’s investment permit. As one of the earliest citizen-recorded visual artefacts of the protest, the footage illustrates how expressions of moral anger and spatial belonging began to crystallize into a shared evaluative stance. This shift was observable in the subsequent digital circulation of the video—through supportive comments, endorsements, and reposts—which collectively articulated a sense of communal obligation to defend *marwah* and *akidah*. Rather than a literal transformation, this “conversion” refers to the emergence of an affectively aligned public whose moral judgments became increasingly uniform across interactions.

The narrative gained amplification through ANTARA Sumbar’s coverage (28 November 2013), which reported that “thousands of protesters rejected the Siloam project” and highlighted the march to DPRD Padang. Local outlets such as InfoSumbar noted that the DPRD’s investment committee had supported the project “with certain conditions,” sparking disappointment among the MUI Sumbar. This tug-of-war between economic pragmatism and religious authority illustrates the elite cueing logic of moral populism: the struggle over who possesses the legitimate voice of “the people.”

Elite Mediation and Policy Responses

The moral discourse soon entered the realm of formal politics. A Merdeka.com article (June 10, 2013) titled “Behind Padang Mayor’s Anger: Lippo Mall and Hotel Permits Granted” quoted Mayor Fauzi Bahar expressing disapproval of the project’s approval process, stating that his administration “never endorsed developments that might provoke social unrest.” His remarks confirmed how local politicians rearticulated citizens’ moral sentiments as political legitimacy. The framing of the controversy as a matter of public morality rather than economic policy demonstrates the elasticity of ABS–SBK as a symbolic resource: it allowed political actors to claim alignment with popular religio-cultural sentiments while positioning themselves as defenders of communal ethics.

Institutionalization by Friction

“Institutionalization by friction” refers to the process through which sustained public contestation compels formal institutions to absorb, respond to, or symbolically accommodate circulating moral claims. Rather than resulting

from deliberate policy design, institutional change emerges through repeated tensions among citizens, media actors, and administrative bodies. In the Lippo case, the prolonged contestation between 2013 and 2014 produced precisely such dynamics.

The prolonged contestation between 2013 and 2014 led to what may be termed institutionalization by friction—a process in which sustained moral conflict forces formal institutions to symbolically absorb popular affect. Reports indicated delays in construction, revisions to environmental permits, and eventually, the project's rebranding as "Padang Landmark Mall & Aryaduta Hotel." Online forums such as SkyscraperCity documented public interpretations of this rebranding as an attempt to reconcile investment goals with moral expectations.

Legal documents and subsequent litigation records suggest that the dispute between PT Surya Persada Lestari (Lippo Group affiliate) and surrounding communities persisted for years, evolving from street-level protest into administrative and judicial conflict. This trajectory illustrates how moral affect—anger, fear of losing marwah, pride in defending local values—was institutionalized through procedural friction and bureaucratic delay. The opposition shifted from a binary "citizens vs. corporation" frame to a moralized opposition between "civilized people" and "unrestrained capital." Within this discursive economy, ABS-SBK functioned as an affective shorthand: a compressed moral code that transformed complex economic issues into legible moral dichotomies of "proper" versus "improper."

The Affective-Institutional Cycle

This case reveals a clear sequence of affective-institutional circulation:

1. Citizen Media Production: Protest videos and orations articulated collective moral outrage in digital form.
2. Media Amplification: Local outlets adopted a "moral protest" frame that legitimized the movement as an expression of communal values.
3. Elite Cueing: Religious authorities and local officials validated the protests, claiming to represent "the moral voice of the people."
4. Institutional Response: Administrative and legal institutions translated these affects into procedural revisions—permit delays, rebranding, and symbolic accommodation.

Through this process, digital emotion acquired political and bureaucratic substance. Rather than radical confrontation, what emerged was a slow negotiation between moral legitimacy and economic interest. The Lippo/Padang Landmark episode thus represents an early archetype of moral populism in West Sumatra: digital emotions, grounded in the ABS-SBK idiom, pressured institutions to respond not by prohibition but by symbolic recalibration.

In this sense, the case demonstrates how moral affect becomes institutionalized through symbolic adjustment, a process that transforms social media outrage into administrative moderation. The outcome was neither total rejection nor full approval, but an equilibrium of legitimacy—where local authorities maintained moral credibility while preserving investment possibilities. This hybrid accommodation typifies the moral populist logic of West Sumatra's regional politics, in which affective resonance and bureaucratic elasticity coexist within a shared symbolic order.

"Pork Rendang" and the Politics of Marwah (2022–2024)

The identity trigger emerged in June 2022 when a non-halal culinary brand, "Babiambo," promoted a "pork rendang" menu. The controversy quickly escalated across platforms as users debated whether the label "Minang" could be legitimately attached to non-halal food. In response, Padang

Ekspres (Padek) published a headline quoting Andre Rosiade: "Minangkabau cuisine is identical with ABS-SBK; there is no pork." The statement anchored Minangkabau culinary identity in Islamic norms (ABS-SBK), establishing a symbolic boundary between what is "authentic" and what is "deviant." On the same day, Radar Sumbar circulated similar cues, including proposals for Minangkabau cuisine certification by the Minang Family Association (Ikatan Keluarga Minang, IKM). Through such framing, ABS-SBK was articulated as a communal standard rather than merely a personal religious preference.

The controversy subsequently diffused from social media into national news circuits. iNews broadcast primetime segments titled "Furor over Pork Rendang-What's Wrong? Andre Rosiade Responds" (11–12 June 2022), demonstrating how a culinary dispute was reframed as a public morality issue. Simultaneously, DetikNews curated a sequence of "facts" around the case, emphasizing the association of Minangkabau identity with halal consumption and quoting political as well as bureaucratic authorities. At this stage, mainstream media normalized the equation of "ABS-SBK = regional norm," thereby multiplying references to political actors and elevating the dispute to a policy-adjacent controversy involving labeling, certification, and regional identity governance.

Entering the phase of elite cueing, Andre—acting within IKM—positioned himself as a translator of the "Minangkabau voice," advocating the removal of the "Minang" label from non-halal menus and advancing the idea of culinary certification. Other figures (e.g., members of parliament, local officials) supplied policy signals (clarifying regulatory authority, suggesting label enforcement). Amir (2022) further consolidated the master phrase that Minangkabau cuisine is "identical with halal in accordance with ABS-SBK," converting a culture-war flashpoint into the language of public ethics and consumer governance.

Platform Dynamics and Engagement Differentials

Two years later, on 27 January 2024, the pattern intensified in Andre Rosiade's Instagram posts, which reiterated calls to defend marwah (Minangkabau-Islamic honor) and reject practices perceived as incongruent with adat and syarak. Public response was robust: comments overwhelmingly endorsed moral protection ("Agreed, this is clearly maksiat—marwah Minang must be upheld") and mobilized out-group labels ("People like that are not truly Minang; they don't know adat basandi syarak").

Manual coding of the Instagram dataset indicates that explicitly moralized content—invoking ABS-SBK, marwah, and syarak—consistently outperformed routine political posts (e.g., social assistance, district visits) in engagement metrics. For instance, the 27/01/2024 marwah-halal post registered the highest-liked comment clusters, while non-moral administrative posts from 20–25 January showed markedly lower comment volumes and thinner interaction depth. Similarly, identity-inflected campaign messages (e.g., "Prabowo's second homeland is West Sumatra," 26/01/2024) generated substantially higher likes and comment counts than standard constituency updates.

These differentials align with experimental findings that moral emotions—particularly anger—facilitate diffusion via social learning pathways (Brady et al., 2021), and that out-group cues power engagement in large-scale networks (Rathje et al., 2021). In algorithmic terms, the ABS-SBK idiom functions as a compressed signifier—a dense, easily replicable moral code that is richly rewarded by ranking and recommendation systems.

From Crowd Morality to Media Legibility

The interactional layer visible in comment threads illustrates the formation of crowd morality: users who assert communal norms obtain higher social reinforcement

(likes/replies), which in turn produces a pseudo-consensus around moral judgments. This dynamic legitimizes elite actors as spokespersons for a righteous public, consistent with moral-populist elite cueing (Yilmaz & Morieson, 2022). Mainstream media subsequently institutionalized these cues as headline frames—“Minangkabau cuisine is identical with ABS-SBK”—thus converting platform affect into media legibility and, by extension, policy-relevant salience.

The Affective-Institutional Circuit

The pork rendang case exhibits a compact affective-institutional circuit:

1. Identity Trigger: Non-halal usage of “Minang” prompts moral boundary-policing.
2. Platform Amplification: Viral reposts and comment-driven reinforcement escalate visibility.
3. News Normalization: Headlines crystallize ABS-SBK as a regional moral standard.
4. Elite Cueing: Political and associational elites claim representation of Minangkabau moral voice.
5. Policy Signaling: Proposals for certification/labeling and administrative clarifications indicate a regulatory horizon.

Within this circuit, ABS-SBK functions dually: as an algorithmic anchor in digital space (short, affect-rich, replicable) and as a normative anchor in policy discourse (legitimizing public ethics and consumer governance). The synergy of these anchors renders the ABS-SBK frame not only culturally resonant but also administratively actionable.

The Hijab Controversy and the Juridical Translation of Digital Affect (2021)

Within this ecosystem, former Padang Mayor Fauzi Bahar emerged as a moral node who linked the hijab debate to the ABS-SBK nexus of adat and syarak. In a Facebook Watch interview posted on 24 January 2021, he asserted that the hijab is “not merely clothing but part of the Minangkabau identity and marwah (honor).” The video’s comment thread displayed a preponderance of affirmative reactions—e.g., “ABS-SBK must be upheld,” “this is our Minangkabau dignity”—signaling the formation of an affective public bound by pride and duty rather than deliberative argument (Papacharissi, 2015). In short, the hijab was discursively re-signified from a religious garment into a communal identity marker.

Two dynamics consolidated this affective alignment. First, organizational endorsement: on 2 February 2021, news reports documented that LKAAM (Lembaga Kerapatan Adat Alam Minangkabau) and several local notables publicly backed Fauzi’s stance. This endorsement aligned with observable patterns in the digital data, including the predominance of supportive comments, repeated invocations of marwah Minang, and the absence of sustained counter-discourse, indicating that online sentiment had become recognizable to customary authorities as a legitimate communal concern. This development shifted the issue from platform-level contention to forms of institutional resonance, later reflected in the issuance of the Joint Ministerial Decree (3 February 2021) and the Supreme Court Decision No. 17 P/HUM/2021.

Second, national media reframing: Kompas.com (2021) published “Viral Kasus Siswi Non-Muslim Dipaksa Berjilbab, Ini Penjelasan Wali Kota Padang” and Tempo.co (2021) ran “Kisruh Aturan Jilbab di Padang: Kasus Ini Harus Jadi Koreksi Bersama.” Both outlets reframed the controversy as a national moral-regulatory dispute, portraying West Sumatra as a morally exceptional region whose local order grounded in ABS-SBK was in tension with uniform state regulations. This reframing extended the issue beyond regional boundaries and established a broader template contrasting local moral order with national governance norms.

The escalation culminated in a juridical translation of digital affect. On 3 February 2021, the central government issued the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB 3 Menteri) regulating school uniforms and religious attributes, effectively prohibiting schools from mandating or forbidding religious attire. LKAAM then petitioned the Supreme Court, arguing for the protection of local cultural-religious autonomy. On 10 May 2021, the Court’s Decision No. 17 P/HUM/2021 partially granted the petition and instructed the government to rescind the SKB’s binding effect, thereby returning regulatory discretion to regional authorities.

The decision did more than resolve a policy dispute. It institutionalized a moral claim birthed in social media by layering it with customary authority and judicial imprimatur. Empirical work at Universitas Andalas (Istiqlal, 2024) corroborates the guardian role of customary and religious elites in maintaining ABS-SBK as a public moral filter across both digital and policy spheres. The sequence—identity trigger → affective consolidation → media reframing → legal adjudication—illustrates a complete affective-institutional cycle, whereby digital emotions acquire juridical substance. In the post-decision discourse, ABS-SBK was reproduced not only as a cultural principle but as a justiciable norm guiding regional governance.

LGBT Mobilization in West Sumatra: A Layered Affective-Institutional Trajectory (2018–2025)

The LGBT issue in West Sumatra evolved into a paradigmatic arena of moral-political articulation involving governmental, customary, and religious actors. Rather than remaining a civil-rights debate, it became a moral boundary object that reasserted the distinction between “a society of adat and faith” and values perceived to contravene ABS-SBK. The trajectory unfolded in five phases:

- (1) 2018–2019: Executive moral stance and legislative opening.

In November 2018, Vice Governor Nasrul Abit declared that LGBT practices were incompatible with the province’s adat-agama order and encouraged regulatory responses down to the village (nagari) level. Concurrently, the Gerindra faction in DPRD Sumbar proposed that an LGBT-oriented ordinance be placed on the 2019 legislative program (Propemperda), shifting the controversy from moral persuasion into legal agenda-setting. While the final 2019 package did not codify an explicit anti-LGBT bylaw, repeated calls in 2019 signaled durable legislative intent. These twin developments—executive denunciation and legislative scheduling—created a resonance loop between moral signaling and legal feasibility.

- (2) 2019–2021: Moral-populist articulation by religious figures.

During this period, Fauzi Bahar positioned himself as a spokesperson of communal morality, linking the perceived LGBT threat to the revival of public piety programs (e.g., didikan subuh, Asmaul Husna). The viral January 2021 hijab episode further consolidated the discursive link between communal identity and moral guardianship. LKAAM’s endorsement functioned as a customary relay, converting dispersed digital emotions into institutionally legible claims.

- (3) 2021–2025: Administrative consolidation under Mahyeldi.

Under Governor Mahyeldi Ansharullah (2021–present), the moral-prevention framing migrated into administrative planning. On 17 November 2023, the provincial government prepared the Draft Regional Regulation on Prevention and Control of Sexual Deviance (Raperda P4S)—widely discussed in public discourse as an anti-LGBT measure. By September 2024, speeches on “value education” (pendidikan nilai) tied to adat and religion reiterated a pedagogical governance approach: preventing

“deviant behavior” through normative socialization, thereby extending moral discourse into bureaucratic programming.

(4) 2024–2025: Expansion to national representation.

The election of Buya Jel Fathullah (Jelita Donal) as a DPD RI member (2024–2029) for West Sumatra symbolized the vertical extension of provincial moral politics to the national stage. His position as a religiously inflected representative consolidates a center–periphery channel that can relay provincial moral priorities into national fora.

(5) Affective–institutional synthesis. Viewed collectively, these developments reveal a multi-layered trajectory through which digital affect moves across social, media, and institutional domains. This trajectory can be analytically distinguished into three interrelated layers:

- Affective layer (2018–2021): moral outrage and collective shame at perceived deviance are recursively converted into communal pride (marwah Minang) via public piety discourse and the ABS–SBK frame.
- Digital–media layer (2018–2023): local declarations and official statements are portalized into national relevance, simplifying moral oppositions for mass legibility.
- Institutional layer (2021–2025): moral claims are translated into administrative templates (bylaw pipelines, draft regulations, value-education programs).
- Reinforcement: ABS–SBK is repeatedly repositioned as the ethical foundation of provincial governance, in aggregate, the LGBT case materializes the study’s central proposition: local-value-anchored populism operates through affective compression-binary moral codes that travel efficiently across platforms-and institutional expansion, where digital affect is translated into procedural and pedagogical forms of governance. The mobilization represents a sustained process rather than a one-off reaction, developing through recurring interactions among emotive publics, media normalization, political cueing, and administrative decision-making within a continuing affective–institutional cycle. The empirical cases reveal a coherent pattern in which digital resonance in West Sumatra emerges from the interplay of citizens’ moral emotions, platform logics, and bureaucratic responses. This trajectory reflects a continuous cycle rather than a linear progression, demonstrating how digital populism rooted in Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS–SBK) becomes both algorithmically amplified and institutionally sustained.

From Moral Framing to Algorithmic Visibility

Digital engagement begins when political or religious figures frame public issues through the moral idiom of ABS–SBK. Posts such as Andre Rosiade’s (27 January 2024) exhortation to defend marwah Minang–Islam and Fauzi Bahar’s (24 January 2021) declaration that the hijab is integral to Minangkabau identity demonstrate how everyday concerns—culinary labeling, school discipline, social behavior—are moralized into value crises.

These framings lower the cognitive threshold for participation by simplifying judgment into binary oppositions (halal/haram, proper/improper, honorable/disgraceful). As Papacharissi (2015) and Brady et al. (2021) note, such moralized language intensifies affective alignment, transforming opinion into instinctive solidarity. Algorithmic systems further privilege this communication mode: platforms reward emotional clarity and high-arousal affect, boosting the visibility of moral content (Rathje et al., 2021). The result is a feedback loop of amplification in which ABS–SBK serves as

an algorithmic shorthand—a locally meaningful yet globally legible sign of moral certainty.

Comment Fields as Affective Engines

In comment sections, users reaffirm these cues through agreement, repetition, and out-grouping (“not true Minang,” “against adat and syarak”). Likes and replies become micro-rewards that stabilize communal emotion. The cumulative outcome is a crowd morality (Cover et al., 2022): a collective emotional field that feels consensual because the algorithm surfaces congruent sentiments while suppressing dissent. This crowd morality provides elites with the appearance of a pre-existing moral mandate—an affective legitimacy that can be mobilized for policy or electoral ends.

Media as Affective Transducers

When engagement peaks, online news portals convert digital emotions into public narratives. Outlets such as Padang Ekspres, Radar Sumbar, and Detik act as affective transducers, re-encoding emotive posts into news frames intelligible to broader publics (Tapsell, 2018). Headlines equating “ABS–SBK = regional norm” or “protecting marwah Minang” validate online emotions as legitimate political discourse. The media’s quest for virality dovetails with platform incentives, ensuring that emotionally charged local stories attain national visibility and political salience.

Once moral discourse achieves media legitimacy, institutional actors respond through policy hooks that allow affect to enter bureaucratic channels.

- In the hijab case, viral debate preceded the Joint Ministerial Decree and subsequent Supreme Court ruling.
- In the LGBT debate, recurring online outrage informed the drafting of the P4S bylaw and “value-education” programs.
- In the pork rendang controversy, media framing prompted elite proposals for halal certification and labeling schemes.

These responses show how affective salience becomes administrative priority. Yet the process is not purely top-down: each institutional action is re-amplified online, renewing public emotion and reinforcing the perception that ABS–SBK has prevailed. Thus, resonance between digital and institutional arenas is reciprocal—policy legitimizes emotion, and emotion sustains policy relevance.

Ambivalent Democratic Consequences

From a democratic standpoint, this affective–institutional loop is deeply ambivalent.

On one hand, it enhances responsiveness: local authorities monitor and address online sentiment, narrowing the distance between citizen emotion and bureaucratic reaction.

On the other hand, the same mechanisms compress deliberation. The algorithmic privileging of outrage favors majoritarian emotion over reasoned pluralism, sidelining minority voices and complex argumentation (Waisbord, 2020)). What emerges is a form of affective majoritarianism—a politics of resonance rather than reasoning—where being emotionally audible becomes tantamount to being democratically legitimate.

Consequently, digital populism in West Sumatra cannot be reduced to moral rhetoric alone. It represents a communication infrastructure of morality, a techno-cultural formation in which ABS–SBK serves simultaneously as an algorithmic keyword, a journalistic frame, and a policy reference. The intertwining of these layers explains the persistence and elasticity of moral discourse across electoral cycles and policy domains.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that local-value-anchored digital populism in West Sumatra operates through a self-reinforcing affective–institutional circuit. The idiom Adat Basandi Syarak,

Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS–SBK) functions as a dual anchor: (1) an algorithmic anchor—a concise, emotionally charged sign that travels efficiently through social-media recommendation systems; and (2) a normative anchor—a moral framework that legitimizes bureaucratic and legislative action.

This study shows that local-value-anchored digital populism in West Sumatra operates through an affective–institutional cycle in which digital emotions gain media visibility and subsequently shape institutional responses. The idiom *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK) functions as a dual anchor: an *algorithmic anchor* that circulates efficiently in platform recommendation systems, and a *normative anchor* that legitimizes bureaucratic and legislative action.

Across the four cases—Lippo/Padang Landmark, “pork rendang,” the hijab debate, and LGBT mobilization—digital anger, disgust, and pride were coordinated on platforms, reframed by news media, and translated into policy actions. These processes enhanced government responsiveness but also intensified affective polarization and constrained pluralist deliberation.

Strengthening democratic inclusivity requires cultivating digital-affective literacy, ensuring transparent policymaking, and fostering dialogue across identity groups, so that local moral idioms serve as ethical resources rather than exclusionary tools. Because ABS–SBK anchors both algorithmic amplification and institutional legitimacy, its governance is central to balancing responsiveness with democratic plurality.

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Author contributions

Yayuk Lestari (First and Corresponding Author): Conceptualization; theoretical framing; methodology design; supervision; project administration; funding acquisition; writing-review & editing. Rinaldi: Data collection (platform posts and comment threads); digital discourse analysis; trace-based network mapping; formal analysis; visualization; writing-original draft (methods/results sections). Vannyora Okditazeini: Media and policy document curation; investigation; validation; data curation; writing-review & editing. All authors approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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