

Religious Doctrine Construction and Piety Control: An Analysis of Discipline among State Civil Servants in Palembang Government

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Abstract

This study examines the role of power and religion in disciplining State Civil Servants (ASN) in the Palembang City Government, South Sumatra Indonesia, by taking the case of the Fajr Congregational Prayer Movement. The study is relevant due to the widespread indiscipline practices among Indonesian State Civil Servants and the use of religious approach to ASN's disciplinary. Using qualitative research approach, data in this study obtained through in-depth interviews with government officials, ASN, and religious leaders; and content analysis of online news, Facebook, and Instagram posts. Foucault's theory of disciplinary mechanisms was applied as analytical framework. Results of this study showed that the Government integrated religious doctrine and piety control as disciplinary instruments. This approach introduces a new dynamic in monitoring civil servant behaviour, differing from conventional bureaucratic practices. The research offers a new perspective on the relationship between power, religion, and bureaucracy while enriching discussions on variations in disciplinary mechanisms within the context of a majority Muslim country. The findings also suggest avenues for further research on the effectiveness of religious approaches in bureaucratic reform.

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INTRODUCTION

This study examines the relationship between power and religion in the disciplining practices (Jackowicz et al., 2025) of the State Civil Servants (ASN) by the Palembang City Government. This phenomenon is interesting to analyse because it shows that the government's practices rely on instruments of power in administrative regulations and involve religion as an essential mechanism in shaping discipline (Ziller & Hummler, 2025). This approach is implemented through the obligation of ASN to attend congregational Fajr prayers, maintain environmental cleanliness, and participate in the ASN charity programme, all of which are institutionalised through several mayoral regulations.

The issuance of regulations such as Mayor's Regulation (Perwali) No. 69 of 2018 on the Movement for Congregational Fajr Prayers, Perwali No. 14 of 2019 on the Implementation of Mutual Assistance, and the ASN Charity Programme reflect a form of power intervention combined with religious narratives. In this context, the local government produces administrative compliance and engineers bureaucratic piety as part of its governance strategy over the ASN body. This phenomenon is essential to study, as such disciplinary practices are not widely documented in the literature on bureaucratic management in Indonesia, which has traditionally emphasised legalistic and technocratic approaches (Laird et al., 2025).

In many cases in Indonesia, disciplinary violations by State Civil Servants remain rampant despite the implementation of various instruments such as training, electronic attendance, and morning roll calls (Boubker, 2024). Empirical data shows that disciplinary abuses occur in multiple regions, ranging from involvement in criminal acts to violations of work ethics codes. For example, in 2021, there were various ASN violations, such as involvement in corruption (Republika, 2021), extortion (Azzahra, 2021), creating content on social media during working hours (Sinulingga,

2021), and drug trafficking (Radar Lombok, 2020). This situation indicates that conventional approaches have been ineffective in creating sustainable and integrity-based civil service discipline.

The Palembang City Government has implemented a new strategy by integrating religious values into the civil service disciplinary system (Trovato & Zimmerman, 2025). This approach is assumed to be a form of religious doctrine construction and the creation of ritual order to foster bureaucratic piety and self-control. Through this practice, power is repressive and productive, as Michel Foucault argues in his analysis of discipline and surveillance (Armstrong, 2015). In this case, the government acts as an agent shaping religious subjects through administrative and ritualistic instruments (Foucault, 1995).

Literature on employee discipline has largely emphasised the importance of sanctions and rewards as instruments of behavioural control (Benoit & Borough Director, 1980). Argyris (Argyris, 1964), for example, emphasises that formal mechanisms such as rewards and punishments are part of a rational system for creating organisational discipline. Meanwhile, Kaboolian (Kaboolian, 1996) and Franklin (Franklin, 2006) show that informal strategies such as social isolation, special assignments, and training can also play a significant role.

Previous studies have shown that religion plays a significant role in shaping and directing disciplinary practices within society. In *The Disciplinary Revolution*, Gorski (2003) argues that Calvinist doctrine not only developed the work ethic as theorized by Max Weber, but also established institutional order through systems of education, moral norms, and economic productivity. Through these mechanisms, religion emerges as an organizing force that consolidates forms of social discipline and ultimately supports the construction of the modern bureaucratic state in Europe (Shkolnikov, 2023). This finding reinforces the notion that religion, in its organized form, possesses a structural capacity to create effective systems of social control aimed at ensuring political stability and efficient governance (Dewey, 2019).

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Furthermore, Michel Foucault's theoretical approach to power and subjectivity offers an analytical foundation for understanding how religious practices also embody complex disciplinary logics. Yahyaoui and Carrette (2022) demonstrate that forms of religious discipline such as confession, monastic practice, and spiritual governance represent expressions of pastoral power that operate through surveillance, spatial regulation, and the internalization of inner rituals. In a similarly, Westerink (2020) expands upon Foucault's concept of *care of the self* to explain that ascetic practices and early Christian spirituality were not solely religious pursuits but also regulatory strategies of the self that eventually shaped the formation of ethics in both scientific domains and modern social life. From an anthropological perspective, this analysis is further reinforced. Mayblin (2017), examines sacramental practices such as confession as rituals that generate symbolic power relations, which in turn produce piety as a form of internalized obedience that is continuously reproduced. Graham Hill (2017) extends this line of thought by analyzing testimonial practices in charismatic Christian communities as reflective mechanisms that compel individuals to consciously align their behavior with hegemonic religious norms through personal spiritual narratives and public acts of confession.

Although studies have explored the intricate relationship between religion and discipline, only a few explicitly examined how piety is constructed and how mechanisms of control over piety are exercised within the context of modern state bureaucracies—particularly in Muslim-majority countries. It is within this framework that the present study offers both empirical and theoretical contributions to understand how piety is not only constructed as an expression of personal religious identity but also regulated, controlled, and disciplined through the instruments of state power. The case study of disciplinary practices among State Civil Servants (ASN) in the Palembang City Government provides an entry point to reveal how religious rituals are engineered, institutionalized, and utilized as tools to shape bureaucratic subjects who are not only administratively compliant but also spiritually obedient.

Furthermore, the case studied in this article is Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement programme. The program was initiated by the Palembang City Government to create internal discipline (self-discipline) among State Civil Servants. In this case, Foucault's thoughts on discipline and surveillance are relevant to explaining how power works in coercive forms and through mechanisms of subjectivity formation. As in Foucault's concept of the 'panopticon,' attendance at the fajr prayer in congregation becomes a space for collective observation, where subjects feel watched and ultimately internalise norms of piety as a form of self-control (Foucault, 1995). As such, aims of this study are two folds: first, to analyse how religious doctrine is constructed within the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement programme as part of the civil service discipline strategy. Second, to examine how control over ritual order is exercised in implementing the programme. Result and discussion in this study contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the new configuration of the relationship between power and religion in local government practices in Indonesia. It also contribute to the discourse on bureaucracy, religiosity, and governance.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach to examine how the Palembang City Government integrates power and religious values in disciplining State Civil Servants (ASN) by the Palembang City Government. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand phenomena comprehensively by identifying, analysing, and interpreting contextual and complex issues. The qualitative approach enables the study to describe disciplinary practices by tracing how power and religion are engineered and mobilised as instruments of government. Specifically, this approach is used to answer two previously formulated research questions.

This study employs a case study strategy because the object of study meets the criteria for a case as outlined by Yin (2023), namely: (1) it is a contemporary phenomenon; (2) it occurs in a real-world context; and (3) the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not entirely clear. This strategy allows the researcher to uncover the processes and dynamics that unfold intensively within a specific setting, in this case, the Palembang City Government.

The data collection was conducted through three methods: observation, interviews and documentation. Direct observation was applied by visiting the mosques of the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement practiced. Indirect observations were carried out through a digital ethnography approach (netnography) to monitored and analyzed various digital content, such as online news, uploads on the Facebook platform, and visual and narrative content on Instagram related to the implementation of the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement digital ethnography and media content analysis are considered very relevant to studying contemporary social phenomena mediated by online platforms and social media (Kozinets, 2020; Krippendorff, 2018; Miller et al., 2016). Furthermore, In-depth interviews were conducted with a number of key informants, consisting of government officials, State Civil Servants (ASN), and religious figures who were actively involved in implementing religious programs. Then, documentation was obtained through

annual government reports, scientific journals, regulations (laws, regional regulations, mayoral regulations), printed and online news clippings, and other public archives.

Data in this study were analyzed by using theory of disciplinary mechanisms (Foucault, 1985) to see how far power and religion are simultaneously practiced in forming civil servant discipline. analysis of such practise is important, because it highlights the involvement of religious institutions in the state bureaucracy, which will be further analyzed in the discussion section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Construction of Religious Doctrine in the Disciplining of State Civil Servants

The Palembang City Government, through the issuance of Palembang Mayor Regulation No. 69 of 2016 concerning the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement, actively shapes the construction of religious doctrine while implementing mechanisms for regulating religious rituals within the bureaucracy (Papargyropoulou et al., 2015). This policy demonstrates how religious authority is not merely manifested in the spiritual domain but is constructed as an instrument of discipline for State Civil Servants (ASN). Such practices represent the state's exercise of power in producing religious subjects through formal institutionalised normative interventions. In this case, the authority of local governments to formulate and implement such religious policies is legally legitimised by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which explicitly grants autonomy to local governments to independently regulate internal government affairs, including aspects of social and religious life (Colenbrander et al., 2015).

Furthermore, when viewed from the perspective of the national regulatory framework as stipulated in Law No. 12 of 2011 on the Formation of Regulations, which has been updated through Law No. 15 of 2019, the Mayor's Regulation legally falls under the category of regional regulations of districts/cities that have legally binding force. Thus, the issuance of Perwali No. 69 of 2016 constitutes a constitutionally valid structural intervention in the religious life of State Civil Servants.

From a power genealogy perspective, this regulation can be understood as an institutional construction of religious doctrine materialised through the ritualisation of communal Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement. This ritualisation aims to systematically instil religious values in ASN individuals, based on the assumption that the internalisation of these values will produce a pious personal character, which in turn will shape work ethic and bureaucratic discipline. Within this framework, personal piety is not only positioned as a form of individual obedience but also as the foundation for professional integrity within the state apparatus (Shin et al., 2024).

This argument is reinforced by the official statement of the Mayor of Palembang, Harnojoyo, on Sriwijaya TV (March 14, 2017), who emphasised that the consistent practice of congregational fajr prayers contributes to the integrity and discipline of State Civil Servants. A similar view was expressed by the Secretary of Palembang City, Dewa, who interpreted this programme as part of the mission of the mental and spiritual revolution of State Civil Servants to cultivate noble character (Info Publik, 2018). These statements indicate that the government consciously uses religious rituals as a pedagogical and moral medium to shape the character of State Civil Servants who are administratively competent and possess strong ethical credibility.

Thus, it is clear that the Palembang City Government has positioned religious rituals as a strategic tool in disciplining ASN. This perspective aligns with Hegelian state philosophy, which views the state as the realisation of moral concepts—as the embodiment of rational, substantial will—that not only regulates externally but also must shape the ethical consciousness of its citizens (Russell, 2013). In this view, the state acts as a collective ethical spirit with a historical mandate to develop societal values. Even in the early interpretations of Karl Marx's thought, the state was seen as the concrete manifestation of universal values such as truth and justice—a kind of 'kingdom of God on earth'—operating through social structures and public institutions (Devito et al., 2022). Therefore, the state's intervention in the religious life of State Civil Servants through Perwali No.

69 of 2016 reflects a configuration of power that is not only administrative but also normative and ideological.

In this study, the state manifests as government institutions that exercise their hegemonic functions by institutionalising religious values into the formal legal framework. The Palembang City Government, through Mayor Regulation No. 69 of 2016 on the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement, explicitly combines transcendent (divine) commands with profane (institutional) policies. This regulation is not merely an administrative instrument but an expression of the practical implementation of religious doctrine institutionalised within the modern bureaucratic framework (Almazroui, 2025).

The integration of religious teachings and state legal instruments can be interpreted through the lens of Michel Foucault's theory as part of the disciplinary power mechanisms employed by social institutions to shape the behaviour and consciousness of subjects. Just as schools, hospitals, and prisons are arenas for normalising the body and soul in Discipline and Punishment, government institutions also reproduce power through regulations and rituals, which take the form of ritualised congregational fajr prayers (Foucault, 1985). Thus, Perwali No. 69 of 2016 becomes a means of social control that frames religious obedience as normative piety that is monitored and evaluated institutionally.

The Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement as a public policy is not a neutral entity but a manifestation of power relations, identity strategies, and the state's moral project that intervenes in the private sphere through religious instruments. Within this framework, religious doctrine is reproduced in a bureaucratic format framed by narratives of morality and public piety, thereby establishing the state's symbolic dominance over the bodies of State Civil Servants through structured, choreographed rituals (Ling et al., 2025).

Implementing the SIABUH (Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement Information System) digital application is a further phase of rationalising biopolitical control mechanisms. This technology enables systemic surveillance of State Civil Servants' attendance at fajr prayer in the congregation through digital presence equipped with geotagging and visual verification (selfie) features, thereby creating a disciplinary system that is simultaneous, real-time, and documented. In Foucault's terminology, this reflects power technologies, i.e., power techniques that operate through written law and technological devices that infiltrate subjects' daily practices (sumsel.antaraneews.com, 2018).

With the integration of SIABUH, State Civil Servants' discipline in performing religious rituals no longer depends solely on moral consciousness but is mediated by panoptic digital surveillance—that is, creating an awareness of the presence of an invisible but always possible supervisor. This produces an auto-disciplinary effect, where State Civil Servants are driven to comply with religious commands not only out of belief but also due to structural obligations reproduced by the system (Huang et al., 2024).

In addition to technological and regulatory aspects, power is exercised through symbolic actors, namely the preachers involved by the Palembang City Government in implementing the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement programme. These preachers perform rituals as imams and act as agents of religious and ideological transmission through sermons delivered after prayers. These sermons serve as a vehicle for shaping the religious consciousness of State Civil Servants, conveyed through narratives about the obligation of worship, the virtues of congregational prayer, and theological imagery of rewards, heaven, and hell. These narratives form an affective and symbolic structure within State Civil Servants, where morality is instilled as a value and an institutional obligation.

Interviews with two preachers—Herwansyah (2023) and Noerchalidin (2023)—indicate that although there are no explicitly government-mandated sermon themes, they have received preaching training and in-depth material aligned with the vision of shaping ASN morality. This shows the existence of ideological curation in the mainstreaming of religious values conveyed. An examination of sermon documentation through the official YouTube channel of the Palembang City

Government reveals a repetitive pattern in the content of da'wah that emphasises narratives of obedience, piety, and discipline. This repetition is part of the state's pedagogical strategy in internalising values through affective and repetitive mechanisms.

Thus, the Palembang City Government's efforts to regulate the religious practices of State Civil Servants constitute a configuration of power that combines law, technology, and religiosity in a complementary system. This project is not merely administrative but ideological, where the state acts as a normative agent intervening in individual piety through regulation, digital surveillance, and religious narratives. This constitutes a form of religious governmentality—governance practices that utilise religious doctrine as a medium for shaping obedient, disciplined, and moral subjects within the framework of modern bureaucracy.



Figure 1. Da'i Palembang Lecture on the Importance of Fajr Prayer in Congregation

In one of the visual documents uploaded to YouTube by an account named Sobri, there is explicit footage of a religious lecture delivered by a preacher as part of the Fajr Prayer in Congregation programme. In the lecture, the preacher emphasised the urgency of performing prayers, especially the Fajr prayer, in a mosque or prayer room congregation as a form of obedience to divine commands. Furthermore, he articulated the performance of congregational fajr prayer as a concrete manifestation of gratitude for the blessings of Allah to humanity. This emphasis indicates that worship is a ritual obligation and a medium for internalising spiritual values in shaping personal piety and social discipline (Sobri, 2020).

The emphasis on spirituality in the sermon reflects efforts to unite the religious dimension and the formation of ethical awareness among State Civil Servants (ASN). In this context, the sermon delivered by the preacher not only serves as a channel for conveying normative Islamic teachings but also as an ideological instrument that systematically reproduces the doctrine of religious obedience. This function strengthens the correlation between spiritual submission to God's commands and administrative compliance with institutional regulations within the framework of bureaucratic life. Thus, religious practices become an effective medium in shaping obedient bureaucratic subjects through value-based control mechanisms rooted in faith.



Figure 2. Preacher's Lecture about the Urgency of Fajr Prayer

Similar visual findings were also obtained through the official channel of the Palembang City Government Public Relations, which documented the implementation of the Fajr prayer in the congregation, complete with the preachers' sermons. In one of the videos, a preacher named Darsono said that humans, as the most perfect creatures created by God, should carry out worship with a higher quality than other creatures. He emphasized that good behaviour and obedience in prayer will result in heavenly rewards, while violations of religious values will result in hellish punishment (Palembang City Public Relations, 2018). This sermon explicitly contains an eschatological narrative that functions as a tool for internalizing values and a strategy for forming a religious ethos that underlies individual ASN discipline. The construction of religious doctrine targets ASN's moral and spiritual realm by delivering narratives such as heaven, hell, the obligation to pray, and the urgency of good deeds. In Michel Foucault's perspective, this construction is a form of knowledge production that cannot be separated from power relations. Foucault (1985) emphasized that power and knowledge are inherently interrelated: power not only oppresses but also produces knowledge that is then used to shape the subject. In this context, through the Congregational Fajr Prayer program, the Palembang City Government strategically produces religious knowledge that is institutionalized through administrative regulations, such as the Mayor's Regulation, and disseminated through religious preaching discourse. The power in this process is not coercive-repressive but rather productive and normalizing power. It does not subdue through physical force but through regulation and internalization of norms that individuals voluntarily accept. ASNs form self-awareness of their spiritual obligations through deeply internalized religious narratives, simultaneously confirming compliance with the bureaucratic structure. Within this framework, the practice of congregational Fajr prayers carried out routinely by ASN not only reflects religious obedience but is also a form of discipline produced by the mechanism of power that works through the production of religious knowledge.

Furthermore, discipline through religious knowledge is carried out by regulating ASN religious rituals. Knowledge about the obligation to perform Fajr prayers in the congregation is conveyed through lectures and made part of the bureaucratic moral assessment and supervision system. The Palembang City Government consciously positions religious rituals as a space for intervention to form the habitus of pious and obedient ASN. In a Foucauldian framework, this can be read as a form of governmentality, namely how the state manages individual behaviour through subtle and moral-based control techniques. By continuously instilling knowledge about the

importance of worship and eschatological threats, ASNs are encouraged to display piety as an expression of obedience to God and the state. Faith and holiness, in this case, are no longer in the private realm alone but become a tool of legitimacy for public obedience. ASN individuals who feel supervised by God for all their actions become obedient subjects, not because of external supervision but because of the internal supervision mechanism formed by institutionalized religious narratives. Thus, the Fajr Prayer Congregation program in Palembang does not merely function as a religious movement but also as a disciplinary strategy through the construction of doctrine and the production of religious knowledge. This discipline is carried out by integrating theological aspects into the bureaucratic administrative apparatus, thus creating ASN subjects who are both spiritually submissive and structurally obedient. In this case, the eschatological narrative becomes vital in building an invisible but highly effective supervision system because it operates from within the individual's consciousness.

A Foucauldian Perspective on Bureaucratic Governance: The Interplay of Political Authority and Islamic Normativity in Regulating State Civil Servants in Palembang, Indonesia

In implementing the Fajr Prayer Movement program in the congregation, the Palembang City Government actively involves preachers to fill the religious lecture segment as an integral part of the activity. The role of preachers in this context is not merely as a conveyor of religious information but as an agent of religious doctrine transmission that instils specific spiritual values in State Civil Servants (ASN). One of the main strategies used by preachers in conveying the doctrine is the use of eschatological narratives—namely narratives about life after death, the Day of Judgment, heaven, and hell—which are referred to from the Qur'an and hadith as authoritative sources in Islam (Angeles, 1981). Etymologically, the term eschatology comes from the Greek *eschaton* (the last, the end) and *logos* (knowledge), which generally refers to knowledge about matters related to the end of human life, such as death, resurrection, divine judgment, and eternal life (Bagus, 1996). In the philosophical tradition, eschatology includes metaphysical dimensions about the end of time and the final fate of humans.

In contrast, from the perspective of Islamic theology, eschatology is not only part of the belief system (*'aqidah*) but also functions as a moral guideline that determines human behaviour during life in the world (Pius et al., 1994). The Qur'an explicitly contains various eschatological narratives as a reminder of the consequences of human deeds and as a spiritual motivation to avoid disobedience and pursue obedience (Rahman et al., 1996). Within the framework of this religious program, the Palembang City Government utilizes eschatological narratives as a medium for instilling spiritual values and discipline in ASN. These narratives include an invitation to carry out the obligation of prayer, a warning about the torment of hell for those who neglect religious commands, and the promise of the pleasures of heaven for those who obey. The preachers in this program convey these messages by citing normative arguments from the Qur'an and hadith, strengthening the moral and spiritual authority of the lectures they deliver (Anwar et al., 2009). This shows that eschatological narratives are used not only as educational instruments but also as symbolic and psychological control mechanisms in forming ASN piety. As stated by Fazlur Rahman (1996), eschatology is one of the major themes in the Qur'an that is directly related to the core of human beliefs about the final phases of life, including death, the realm of *barzakh*, the day of judgment, and the calculation of deeds. In this context, using eschatological narratives in bureaucratic religious programs is not merely a form of indoctrination but a cultural strategy that aims to form subjects who are spiritually aware of the ethical consequences of their actions. ASNs are invited to reflect on their behaviour and responsibilities professionally and on the horizon of eternity.

This self-reflection concept aligns with Michel Foucault's thinking on the importance of introspection in modern disciplinary mechanisms. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes how the panopticon architecture allows subjects (in this case, prisoners) to continuously monitor and judge themselves because they feel constantly being watched, even though they do not know when

and if they are being watched. This structure creates an internalization effect of discipline, where the subject shapes their behaviour through reflection and fear of sanctions (Foucault, 1985). In the context of ASN Palembang, the eschatological narrative works similarly: by presenting discourses on death, judgment day, and eternal punishment, ASNs are encouraged to reflect on the final consequences of their actions. Thus, the use of eschatological narratives in the lectures of the congregational fajr prayer program is a subtle but effective form of indoctrination. The religious doctrine conveyed through these narratives becomes a normative teaching and a hegemonic instrument that structures the vertical relationship between ASN and God while strengthening bureaucratic discipline horizontally. The Palembang City Government, in this case, has formed a knowledge system that combines theological aspects with administrative functions. This marks a shift in the state's role from merely an administrative manager to a cultural actor that forms moral and spiritual subjects through religious narratives. Finally, it can be concluded that the eschatological narrative in this program not only functions as a religious reminder but also as a mechanism of power that regulates ASN behaviour through the internalization of fear and hope for the afterlife. In this framework, religious doctrine becomes the main bond between ASN and God and a tool for forming discipline within the bureaucracy. The use of eschatological narratives and religious discourse in disciplinary practices by the Palembang City Government through the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement program cannot be interpreted simplistically as a form of forcing the will on individual State Civil Servants (ASN). Instead, these narratives are mobilized as reflective devices that foster ethical and spiritual awareness of individual actions. By raising discourses about death, the day of judgment, and the rewards of heaven and the torments of hell, the government seeks to create conditions in which ASNs can reflect on their actions independently and internalize religious values as the basis for forming a work ethic and personal piety. This approach aligns with Michel Foucault's conception of discipline in modern society, which no longer operates through physical domination or authoritarian conquest of the body but rather through mechanisms of self-awareness and self-control. Foucault emphasized that discipline fundamentally differs from slave obedience because it is not based on total submission to external power (Dewey, 2019).

Discipline is also not identical to religious obedience in monasteries that are oriented towards the salvation of the afterlife because the primary goal of modern discipline is effectiveness, productivity, and control over one's body as a rational subject (Shkolnikov, 2023). In this context, the eschatological narrative becomes a medium that allows ASN individuals to develop a form of voluntary supervision and self-control—namely, the awareness that administrative superiors and the Omniscient God see their behaviour. Furthermore, in the implementation structure of the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement, the presence of a narrator is a key element that bridges eschatological messages with the collective consciousness of ASN. In this context, the narrator is the preacher invited to deliver a religious sermon full of Islamic symbols, values, and doctrines. Theoretically, the narrator is understood as a storytelling subject representing an external perspective on a narrative (Jong, 2004). In Mieke Bal's narratology theory (2009), the narrator is an essential element that directs how a text or narrative is understood. He can select, compose, and articulate the story in a way that shapes the character and structure of the text as a whole.

According to Bal (2009), narrators are divided into two types: external narrators (who are outside the narrative) and internal narrators (who are involved as characters in the narrative). In the context of this program, the da'i functions as an external narrator who positions himself outside the story but with spiritual authority that allows him to represent transcendent realities, such as the power of God, the Day of Judgment, and images of heaven and hell. This external narrator tells the story and directs the audience—in this case, ASN—to interpret the reality of their lives within the framework of a religious narrative. As stated by Gerald Prince, understanding a narrative is highly dependent on the narrator's characteristics, including background, interpretive capacity, and interest in conveying a particular message (Prince, 1982). In practice, the Palembang City Government realizes the importance of data as an eschatological narrator because all audiences cannot literally understand these narratives without interpretation and contextualization. The preachers are tasked

with paraphrasing, summarizing, and re-explaining the complex Qur'an and hadith narratives so ASNs can communicatively accept them from various educational backgrounds and religious experiences. The narratives delivered by the preachers about the necessity of prayer, the threat of hellfire, and the promise of heaven are dogmatic and aim to shape the structure of ASN's thinking and behaviour to align with the values constructed by the government. Thus, within the framework of modern power, as explained by Foucault (1985), the use of eschatological narratives in this program is not a form of coercive domination but a productive cultural strategy: it does not directly subdue the body. However, it regulates consciousness through knowledge and religious values conveyed through lectures. As an external narrator, the preacher acts not only as a religious communicator but as an epistemological agent who shapes the way ASNs understand themselves, their duties, and their relationship with God. Finally, what is to be formed is a figure of ASN who is pious, disciplined, and has a high work ethic because it is driven by fear and eschatological hope embedded in the structure of his consciousness. The statement of the Mayor of Palembang Harnojoyo, in one of the videos on the official YouTube channel, shows that the Palembang City Government is seriously moving and institutionalizing the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement program through the direct involvement of 1,100 preachers. This involvement is not merely an administrative action but an ideological strategy to consolidate the state's symbolic power through religious authority. In this case, preachers are not only positioned as spiritual guides but also as the leading agents in transmitting and instilling religious doctrine to State Civil Servants (ASN) so that they are not only obedient in carrying out religious rituals but also internalize the values of bureaucratic discipline as a manifestation of piety.

Recruitment of da'i as narrators of truth is a practice that directly intersects political power and epistemic authority. In this context, da'i plays a dual role as a conveyor of eschatological narratives and simultaneously as a constructor of the discourse of truth desired by the state. For this function to run effectively, da'i must have scientific qualifications in Islam, a deep understanding of eschatological narratives, and adequate rhetorical experience. Their function is not merely to convey religious information but to shape the horizon of ASN awareness so that they voluntarily submit to the normative values constructed in the program. This approach aligns with Michel Foucault's (1980) analysis of the relationship between power and knowledge. For Foucault, knowledge is not a neutral entity but a product of the configuration of power that works through a discourse system. From this perspective, religious narratives—especially eschatological ones—are not merely spiritual instruments but hegemonic discourses that normalize certain behaviours and marginalize forms of deviation. Through formal regulations, such as Palembang Mayor Regulation Number 69 of 2018 concerning the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement, knowledge about the importance of congregational fajr prayers is reproduced as a form of normative truth that ASN must follow. In this practice, preachers become the main narrators who legitimize this knowledge through religious arguments in public spaces.

Furthermore, Foucault (1975) argued that power infiltrates all knowledge production, and every form of truth is always the result of certain power relations. In this context, the Palembang City Government formed a "truth regime" that actively defined pious and disciplined behaviour for ASN. The eschatological narrative, conveyed systematically by preachers, became the primary legitimation mechanism for this truth. Through this mechanism, ritual actions such as congregational fajr prayers in mosques were not only understood as an obligation of worship but as an indicator of the normality and discipline of ASN within an institutional framework. Joseph Rouse offers a relevant explanation for why power infiltrates knowledge production. According to him, power works through two channels at once: political power and epistemic power. In this case, the Palembang City Government exercises political power by monitoring the implementation of congregational fajr prayers. In contrast, epistemic power works through institutions such as universities, da'wah institutions, and ASN training institutions that reproduce the view that specific religious behaviour is a legitimate truth. Within this framework, the constructed narrative aims to create a new norm—a religious norm institutionalized in the state bureaucracy.

This process leads to forming a social structure that defines what is considered “normal” and “abnormal”. Performing Fajr prayers in congregation at a mosque or prayer room becomes a new standard of normality produced by the state through a network of power discourse. Consequently, ASNs who do not follow this standard will be categorized as abnormal in the sense of being unpious and undisciplined. In other words, the eschatological narrative conveyed in this program aims to form spiritual piety. It operates a normative surveillance mechanism over the body of ASN—a subtle but effective disciplinary practice, as stated in Foucault’s (1975) theoretical framework. that the da’wah practices directed at State Civil Servants (ASN) are not merely religious instruction, but a form of religious governmentality that internalizes power through divine narratives.

Ritual Orderly Control on the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement and ASN Disciplinary Mechanisms. The ritual orderly control implemented by the Palembang City Government on state civil apparatus (ASN) in the Congregational Fajr Prayer Program is a concrete manifestation of the operation of power that is subtle but systemic. This control is a mechanism to guarantee the internalization of religious doctrine into the ASN body through direct supervision of their participation in congregational worship activities. In Michel Foucault’s framework, the human body is not just a biological entity but the main field for the operation of power. The body becomes a subject trained, supervised, subdued, and given meaning; it becomes a medium of productivity and obedience. In other words, power makes the body an object of political technology that produces submissive but functional individuals. The power relations embedded in the practice of ritual orderly supervision are what Foucault (1975) calls a form of body conquest that involves training, coercion, marking, and internalization of norms. The Palembang City Government, through the practice of formally institutionalized religious rituals, not only regulates the external behaviour of ASNs but also tries to shape their internal consciousness. By making worship a disciplinary arena, state power frames piety as a form of productive submission. According to Foucault, this submission is not based on an authoritarian relationship between ruler and slave but on the subject’s understanding and awareness of norms accepted as truth. In this context, religious doctrine is presented not merely as an ideology but as an instrument that works in a power network to produce a body of obedient and disciplined ASNs. What the Palembang City Government does is a practice of what Foucault (1975) calls “political technology of the body.” This technology is not limited to formal state institutions but operates in hidden ways through micromechanisms: surveillance, classification, evaluation, and normalization. Foucault calls this phenomenon the microphysics of power—power that permeates the most micro level in the social body (Odei, 2025). A particular actor does not hold this power but instead circulates through institutions, regulations, and social practices that shape individuals according to previously constructed norms. In this context, ritual orderly control over ASN is a real example of the microphysical work of power. Power is no longer present in the form of direct prohibitions but as a strategy that is integrated into socio-religious practices. Interestingly, in this case, power comes not only from government institutions but also from religious authorities. Thus, the control that is carried out involves two forms of power: first, administrative-political power (government), and second, spiritual-theological power (religion). In this case, the power relationship is complex because it is vertical between the state and the people and transcendental between humans and God, which is mediated by religious actors such as preachers and other religious figures (Jiang, 2025).

The strategy used by the Palembang City Government in enforcing this ritual order control is carried out through two main channels: supervision and classification. ASNs are monitored through a reporting system and attendance at congregational fajr prayers, which are then classified based on their compliance with established religious standards. From this classification process, an evaluation or assessment is carried out, which becomes the basis for granting rewards and punishments (Dewey, 2019). This system allows the state to create a moral hierarchy and discipline within the bureaucracy through mechanisms that appear religious but are structurally a practice of normalizing power. Thus, what appears to be an effort to spiritualize the bureaucracy is part of the

work of the technology of power that forms ASN as normative, religious, and productive subjects. This practice also shows how modern state power no longer operates through physical coercion alone but through the internalization of norms carried out voluntarily by the subject. In this context, implementing congregational fajr prayers is a form of worship and a political-discursive device that forms new standards of normality in the local bureaucracy. ASNs who do not follow the ritual order are considered to deviate from religious and administrative norms, thus marginalized from the construct of the “ideal ASN” desired by the government. The Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement initiated by the Palembang City Government requires the participation of echelon II, III, and IV officials—including heads of departments, sub-district heads, and village heads—in carrying out the ritual ([Mayoral Regulation, 2018](#)).

The structural involvement of these bureaucratic officials is not merely symbolic participation but reflects a systematic disciplinary strategy. The author interprets this movement as a form of disciplinary training developed through modern power mechanisms, as explained by Michel Foucault. Foucault (1975) stated that discipline is not only instilled through sanctions or normative rules but through three key mechanisms: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination. Based on this framework, the implementation of the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement shows the operationalization of discipline in the form of body and consciousness control through a centralized, multi-layered supervision system. Layered supervision is realized through the direct involvement of the Mayor of Palembang, Harnojoyo, as the primary supervisor, together with the heads of departments, sub-district heads, and village heads, who are spread across various locations where the fajr prayer is held. According to information from the People’s Welfare (Kesra) Section of the Palembang City Government, this monitoring is carried out directly by the mayor and other structural officials ([Pahlevi, 2023](#)). With the implementation of activities not centralized in one particular mosque, the involvement of middle and lower-level officials is vital to ensure that orderly ritual control runs evenly throughout the city.

Searches for the participation of these officials can be found in various online media. For example, news from *Giwang Sumsel* reported that the Palembang City Culture Office held congregational fajr prayers with ASN at the Sabililahaq Mosque, Jalan Semeru, Kelurahan 17 Ilir, Ilir Timur I District. Furthermore, the official Instagram account of the PU and Spatial Planning Office displayed documentation of the head of the office and ASN performing congregational fajr prayers at the Istiqomah Mosque, Jalan Merdeka Palembang. Likewise, the Facebook account of the Sako District contains documentation of the involvement of the sub-district head and ASN in congregational fajr prayers at the Baiturrahman Mosque. The Head of Srijaya Village was also recorded as holding congregational fajr prayers with residents at the Arrahman Mosque, RT 41, Jalan Trisukses, Alang-alang Lebar District. The data shows that the supervision structure in the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement is built hierarchically and spread out, creating what Foucault (1975) calls a social panopticon: a control system that makes subjects feel constantly monitored, although not always directly. In this context, the head of the department, sub-district head, and village head function as supervisory actors who ensure that the implementation of religious rituals runs according to the norms determined by the regime of power. Thus, supervision in the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement functions not only as an instrument of administrative control but also as a manifestation of power relations that produce spiritually and bureaucratically disciplined subjects. This aligns with Foucault’s view that modern discipline works through internalising norms in the body, not through external coercion alone. In this case, the ASN body becomes the locus of the practice of power operated through supervision, normalisation, and evaluation.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault (1975) elaborates on the concept of the panopticon as a central metaphor for the mechanisms of modern power. He refers to the design of an ideal prison introduced by Jeremy Bentham, where the architectural structure allows for total surveillance of prisoners from a central tower without the prisoners knowing exactly when they are being watched. Ignorance of the moment of surveillance creates conditions in which the subject of

discipline (the prisoner) internalizes the surveillance mechanism and ultimately regulates himself voluntarily. In this model, power becomes invisible but remains present, and its controlling power increases because it operates through the subject's consciousness. The panoptic model is relevant in analyzing the practice of surveillance in implementing the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement implemented by the Palembang City Government. In this context, surveillance of ASN is not only carried out through the physical presence of supervisory actors such as heads of departments, sub-district heads, and village heads. However, it is also expanded through digital technology, especially the Siabuh application (Congregational Fajr Prayer Attendance Information System). This application is downloaded independently by ASN via Android-based devices, allowing them to perform location, time, and visual (photo) based attendance when attending congregational fajr prayers.



Figure 3. Siabuh Application

Thus, Siabuh becomes a technology-based surveillance instrument that allows control to be carried out in a decentralized but effective manner. It automatically records the coordinates of ASN locations, the implementation time, and visual documentation that is evidence of ritual involvement. In the Foucaultian framework, this application is a sophisticated form of disciplinary technology, where power no longer requires the physical presence of many officers but instead replaces it with a system that allows individuals to feel continuously monitored. This is in line with the concept of electronic panopticism as put forward by Hope (2005), Kupchik (2010), and Taylor (2010), which highlights the shift in the form of surveillance from physical surveillance to digital surveillance, such as the use of CCTV or biometrics. These systems work on the same principle: creating a feeling of being continuously monitored to encourage obedience and behavioural awareness. McKenzie (2010) added that biometric-based surveillance, such as fingerprints, facial recognition, or retinas, have shifted conventional attendance recording systems to more precise and efficient ones, thereby significantly increasing discipline. This transformation is not only technological but also epistemological. It changes how power is produced and exercised: from limited and visible apparatus supervision to invisible, disseminated supervision and operating through the subject's consciousness. As Foucault (1975) emphasized, in conditions where the apparatus of power has logistical and material limitations, power seeks to create a surveillance mechanism that works automatically within the individual. In the context of ASN, the Siabuh application creates awareness of surveillance that leads to auto-regulation, namely the tendency of ASN to control and regulate themselves even without direct supervisors.

Furthermore, the power operating in the Fajr Prayer in Congregation Movement comes not only from state authority but also from the transcendental dimension, namely the power of God. Thus, power works in two axes: external (government through surveillance technology) and internal (religion through moral and spiritual awareness). These two sources of power meet in the bodies of

ASN, making their bodies a field of struggle between obedience and deviation (Arslan et al., 2025). In this framework, the ASN body becomes a productive entity—as theorized by Foucault—because it is subject to, disciplined, and actively reproduces the power that subdues it. Thus, using SIABUH technology to supervise ASN religious rituals is not only an administrative effort to control attendance but a manifestation of modern power technology. It shows how power becomes efficient and invisible but still practical and works through the subjectivity of ASN, who consciously or not become both the perpetrator and the object of the power itself. This application is an administrative instrument and part of a disciplinary regime that distributes surveillance, produces obedient subjects, and creates morality through a panoptical technological structure (Ba & Tan, 2025).

Normalization in disciplining State Civil Apparatus (ASN) by the Palembang City Government is a manifestation of the work of the power system that produces specific social knowledge. This knowledge forms a framework of interpretation that implementing congregational fajr prayers is an expression of faith and piety that ASN must possess. The power of the government functions to categorize ASN into “pious” and “less pious” groups or to classify them as “disciplined” and “undisciplined” based on their compliance in consistently performing congregational fajr prayers. These categories are not neutral but constructed through online presence mechanisms, ritual obligations, and the provision of rewards and punishments, all of which form normative knowledge surrounding the practice. The statement by the Mayor of Palembang, Harnojoyo, who emphasized that the implementation of congregational fajr prayers is intended to “train ASN discipline,” confirms the government’s explicit goal in setting standards of religious behaviour as a disciplinary tool (Infopublik.id; Jawapos.com; Sumsel.antaranews.com; detik.com). In Foucault’s perspective, normalization standardizes individual behaviour by categorizing their actions into normal and abnormal categories based on prevailing social norms. These norms function as measuring tools that allow for monitoring and comparison between individuals, thereby encouraging the formation of internal discipline, where individuals try to adjust themselves to meet these standards (Foucault, 1977). In the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement context, the Palembang City Government has set standards for “normal” behavior through regulations requiring ASNs to follow this ritual. As a result, ASNs who routinely perform congregational fajr prayers are considered “pious” (normal), while ASNs who rarely or do not perform them are considered “less pious” (abnormal). This classification encourages ASNs to normalize their behavior according to the established standards to maintain normal status, so normalization functions as an effective tool of social control.

Furthermore, according to Foucault, the concept of examination is an integration between the techniques of observation hierarchy and normative assessment, where the examination builds visibility and distributes subjects into different categories, accompanied by a mechanism of punishment or reward (Foucault, 1977). The examination does not have to be a formal exam. However, it can be done through continuous ritualistic and symbolic supervision, such as supervision of the implementation of congregational fajr prayers recorded through the Siabuh application. This application allows the Palembang City Government to monitor ASN attendance in real-time and record time, location, and visual evidence so that ASNs are always in a “checked” condition without physical supervisors in person. This mechanism creates an inherent disciplinary effect and strengthens power through supervision that appears permanent and comprehensive. In addition, the reward and punishment mechanism is also an integral part of this disciplinary strategy. Rewards, such as free Umrah for the 10 best ASN in implementing congregational fajr prayers, function as a motive for motivation and measurement of desired behavioral changes (Pahlevi, 2023). According to Foucault, rewards act as an illusion of freedom that motivates subjects to behave according to norms and a tool to strengthen power control (Foucault, 1977). These rewards strengthen the normalization process by identifying appropriate behaviors and inspiring other ASNs to adjust to these standards.

Meanwhile, punishment in the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement is more implicit and symbolic in the form of threats of dismissal for ASNs who do not follow these obligations, as stated

by Harnojoyo (*jawapos*). Although there has been no realization of dismissal, verbal reprimands remain a form of sanction attached to the disciplinary mechanism. According to Foucault, modern punishment focuses more on producing knowledge and educating subjects to realize their mistakes rather than physical punishment. Thus, the threat is a form of internalizing normative knowledge that makes ASNs normalize their behavior to avoid social and administrative sanctions. Overall, through the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement, the Palembang City Government uses normalization, examination, reward, and punishment mechanisms as effective instruments of power in regulating and shaping ASN behavior. This approach integrates surveillance technology and religious doctrine as normative foundations that produce disciplined subjects who obey religious and bureaucratic norms. In other words, applying this disciplinary mechanism shows how power works externally through rules and surveillance and internally through the formation of individual awareness and adjustment to indoctrinated norms.

CONCLUSION

Disciplinary violations of State Civil Servants (ASN) in Indonesia are a problem that not only affects the central government but also poses a serious challenge to regional and city governments. To overcome this problem, the Palembang City Government has constructed religious doctrine and ritual regulation as a disciplinary strategy. This construction is realized through the issuance of Mayoral Regulation Number 69 concerning the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement, which aims to internalize the eschatological narrative and recruit *da'i* as narrators and replacement figures for *kiai* who have charisma and are role models for ASN. Based on the analysis of Michel Foucault's disciplinary mechanism theory, the interaction between power and religion in efforts to discipline ASN by the Palembang City Government can be understood by implementing the Congregational Fajr Prayer Movement. In this context, religion plays a central role because it emphasizes the obligation of Muslims to perform Fajr prayers, which are not only the leading indicator of the level of individual faith but also have added value when performed in congregations in mosques or prayer rooms. The Palembang City Government's strategic awareness of the value of this ritual gave birth to steps to construct religious doctrine and regulate rituals as an effective means of regulating ASN behavior.

Furthermore, control over the ASN congregational fajr prayer ritual is carried out through a supervisory mechanism involving supervisory actors and supervisory media as the main instruments. This supervisory process allows for the grouping and normalization of ASNs based on their compliance with the ritual obligations. Furthermore, through the ongoing examination and normalization process, an assessment becomes the basis for giving rewards and punishments. This mechanism strengthens the power structure that not only enforces discipline but also forms ASN subjects who are internally obedient to the norms constructed through relations of power and knowledge.

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