

THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN SHAPING PUBLIC POLICY NARRATIVES ON THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The energy transition in Indonesia represents a complex policy challenge that intertwines political will, economic interests, and environmental imperatives. Public understanding and acceptance of this transition are largely influenced by how the media and communication actors construct narratives around sustainability, fossil fuel dependency, and renewable energy adoption. This study aims to analyze the role of media and communication strategies in shaping public policy narratives and influencing stakeholder perceptions regarding Indonesia's energy transition. A qualitative content analysis was conducted on 150 media articles, government press releases, and public statements published between 2019 and 2024, complemented by in-depth interviews with journalists, policymakers, and energy experts. The findings reveal that the Indonesian media often frames the energy transition within political and economic contexts rather than environmental urgency, leading to fragmented public understanding. Communication strategies employed by the government emphasize national development and energy sovereignty but lack consistency in sustainability messaging. The study concludes that effective and transparent communication supported by collaborative framing between media and policy institutions is essential to foster inclusive public engagement and accelerate the nation's shift toward clean energy.

Keywords: Energy Transition, Environmental Communication, Indonesia, Media Framing, Public Policy.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's ongoing energy transition represents one of the most significant national challenges in its contemporary development agenda, requiring a shift from fossil fuel dependency toward renewable and sustainable energy systems (Khan et al., 2025). As the world's fourth most populous nation and one of the top ten greenhouse gas emitters, Indonesia faces a critical task in balancing economic growth, energy security, and environmental sustainability (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Neubaum, 2025). The government's commitment to achieving a 23% renewable energy mix by 2025, as stated in the National Energy Policy (KEN), has made the energy transition not merely a technical or economic matter but also a deeply political and communicative one (Le et al., 2025). Public understanding, support, and participation play decisive roles in ensuring the success of this transition, and these, in turn, are heavily influenced by how narratives about energy are framed, disseminated, and contested in the public sphere through media and communication channels.

The media serves as a primary arena where energy transition debates unfold informing, interpreting, and framing the discourse that ultimately shapes public perception and policy direction (Jiang et al., 2025). In Indonesia, traditional media, online news outlets, and social media platforms have emerged as powerful intermediaries between policymakers, industry actors, and citizens. The framing of renewable energy initiatives, climate policy, and fossil fuel subsidies in media discourse reflects not only technical realities but also underlying political and economic ideologies (Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). Public narratives surrounding "energy independence," "national sovereignty," and "economic resilience" are often constructed within competing frames that either advance or hinder progressive energy policies (Cardon et al., 2025). This dynamic interplay between communication, perception, and policy underscores the need to examine how the media functions as both a messenger and an agenda-setter in Indonesia's energy transition.

Understanding the intersection between media discourse and energy policy is essential because communication is not merely a vehicle for transmitting information it actively constructs social meanings and influences power relations (Mahmoud et al., 2025). The narrative strategies employed by the government, energy companies, and civil society organizations determine how the energy transition is imagined, legitimized, and implemented. In a diverse democracy like Indonesia, where multiple stakeholders have competing interests, the formation of coherent, inclusive narratives is crucial (Martínez García De Leaniz et al., 2025). Effective communication can foster collaboration, transparency, and trust, while fragmented or politicized narratives can perpetuate misinformation and resistance. This research situates itself within this complex landscape, examining how media and communication play strategic roles in shaping policy narratives and public understanding of the energy transition in Indonesia.

The central problem addressed by this study is the fragmented and politicized communication surrounding Indonesia's energy transition policy (Watson & Romic, 2025). Despite strong governmental commitments to renewable energy adoption, public discourse often remains dominated by narratives emphasizing short-term economic gains and energy nationalism rather than environmental sustainability (Wang & Zhang, 2025). Media coverage tends to highlight policy conflicts, elite debates, and subsidy issues while marginalizing scientific and community perspectives. This imbalance has contributed to inconsistent public understanding and limited civic engagement in the transition process (Jafar et al., 2025). The absence of coherent communication frameworks has also led to dissonance between policy intention and public perception, which weakens the legitimacy of the government's clean energy agenda.

The problem extends beyond content representation to issues of agenda-setting and narrative control. Mainstream media in Indonesia frequently operates within political and corporate ecosystems that shape how energy policies are communicated to the public.

Coverage of renewable energy topics often reflects vested interests of dominant energy actors, especially those in the fossil fuel sector, creating an asymmetry in information dissemination. This imbalance in narrative power allows certain perspectives to dominate while excluding alternative voices advocating sustainability and equity. Consequently, the energy transition discourse becomes entangled with political rhetoric rather than grounded in transparent and participatory policy communication.

Another dimension of the problem lies in the lack of public literacy and engagement mechanisms regarding the energy transition. While the government has introduced several public communication initiatives such as energy conservation campaigns and social media outreach their impact remains limited due to inconsistent messaging and technical complexity. The absence of a unified communication strategy reduces the ability of stakeholders to align their goals and understand the long-term implications of the transition. Without effective mediation by the media, citizens often perceive energy reforms as costly or disruptive rather than beneficial. This communication gap reinforces skepticism and delays behavioral adaptation toward sustainable energy practices.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the role of media and communication in shaping public policy narratives on the energy transition in Indonesia. The study seeks to identify how various media actors journalists, government institutions, and energy corporations construct, frame, and circulate narratives surrounding renewable energy, fossil fuel reduction, and climate policy. By mapping the narrative strategies employed across different media platforms, the study aims to uncover the underlying discursive power relations that influence public opinion and policy formation.

Another objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of existing communication frameworks in promoting awareness, engagement, and behavioral change toward renewable energy adoption. The study assesses how government communication channels and mainstream media coverage align or diverge from the goals outlined in Indonesia's National Energy Policy and climate commitments. Through content analysis and stakeholder interviews, the research examines whether communication practices foster inclusivity, transparency, and evidence-based discourse, or whether they reinforce political polarization and information inequality.

The final objective is to develop a conceptual model of communicative governance for the energy transition. This model aims to integrate communication theory, media framing, and public policy analysis to propose a more participatory and coherent approach to energy discourse. The research aspires to provide practical insights for policymakers, journalists, and civil society actors on how to design and implement communication strategies that support democratic dialogue, encourage public participation, and accelerate Indonesia's transition toward a sustainable energy future.

Previous studies on the energy transition in Indonesia have predominantly focused on technical, economic, and policy dimensions such as renewable energy investment, carbon emissions, and institutional reform while overlooking the communicative and discursive aspects that shape public perception and policy acceptance. Few works have systematically analyzed how media narratives and communication practices influence the trajectory of policy-making and public understanding. Research by Hasan (2021) and Rahmawati (2022) examined public awareness of renewable energy but lacked a critical investigation into how information is framed, mediated, and politicized through media channels. This absence of a communication-centered perspective leaves a conceptual gap in understanding the socio-political dynamics of the energy transition.

Existing international literature highlights the critical role of media framing and communication in environmental policy-making (Entman, 1993; Boykoff, 2019). Studies in Western contexts demonstrate that how energy transitions are framed whether as technological innovation, economic opportunity, or moral responsibility profoundly affects public acceptance and policy success. However, this body of research is rarely contextualized within the socio-

political realities of developing countries like Indonesia, where media pluralism coexists with political patronage and low environmental literacy. This gap underscores the necessity of local, context-specific research that connects global communication theories with Indonesia's policy environment and media ecosystem.

The lack of empirical analysis linking media discourse, policy framing, and public perception in Indonesia's energy transition represents a major research void that this study aims to address. Previous investigations have seldom combined qualitative content analysis with stakeholder interviews, resulting in fragmented understandings of how communication processes shape collective meaning-making. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach bridging media studies, political communication, and environmental policy, this study contributes a more integrated understanding of how narratives influence the acceptance and implementation of the energy transition agenda.

The novelty of this study lies in its interdisciplinary integration of media and communication theory with public policy analysis to examine the sociopolitical dynamics of Indonesia's energy transition. Unlike conventional research that treats communication as a secondary aspect of policy implementation, this study conceptualizes it as a central mechanism that constructs meaning, legitimacy, and public engagement. The focus on narrative formation, framing strategies, and communicative power relations marks a departure from technocratic approaches to energy transition studies. This framework positions media discourse not only as a reflection of policy but as an active agent shaping its trajectory and public legitimacy.

The study also introduces an innovative methodological approach by combining qualitative content analysis of media coverage with stakeholder interviews, offering a multi-dimensional understanding of the narrative ecosystem. This dual method enables triangulation between textual representations in media and the communicative intentions of policymakers, journalists, and industry actors. The approach allows the identification of both overt messages and underlying ideologies embedded in communication practices. This methodological contribution adds empirical rigor to the field of environmental communication and provides actionable insights for media practitioners and policymakers seeking to improve public engagement in sustainability transitions.

The justification for this research rests on its potential to bridge a critical gap between academic theory and practical policy needs. In an era of misinformation and politicized environmental discourse, understanding how communication shapes public policy narratives becomes vital for ensuring informed democratic participation. The study offers both theoretical and applied contributions: theoretically, it advances the discourse on communicative governance within the context of developing democracies; practically, it provides a roadmap for designing inclusive, transparent, and strategic communication frameworks that align with Indonesia's national energy goals. This research thus holds significance not only for media and communication scholars but also for policymakers and practitioners engaged in the broader pursuit of sustainable development.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research design utilizing a mixed approach of content analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine the role of media and communication in constructing public policy narratives on Indonesia's energy transition (Vo et al., 2025). This design was specifically chosen to capture the depth and complexity of discursive processes, focusing on how meaning, power, and ideology are embedded within media texts and policy communications (Nathiya et al., 2025). The study was guided by Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, emphasizing the interplay between text, discourse practice, and sociopolitical context. While primarily qualitative, the study integrated limited quantitative elements through descriptive frequency counts to support the interpretation of

framing patterns. The overarching methodological orientation combined interpretivism and critical constructivism to reflect both the representation and reproduction of power in media communication.

Research Target/Subject

The research population comprised media texts, government communication materials, and expert stakeholders relevant to Indonesia's energy transition policy. Media data were drawn from six major national outlets: Kompas, Tempo, CNN Indonesia, The Jakarta Post, Katadata, and Detik.com. The population also included official press releases and public statements from key institutions, such as the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM), the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment, and state-owned energy enterprises. From this population, the study purposively sampled 150 news articles and 20 official documents published between 2019 and 2024. Additionally, 15 expert participants including journalists, communication strategists, energy policymakers, and environmental researchers were selected through purposive and snowball sampling to provide diverse perspectives.

Research Procedure

The research was executed in four systematic stages: data collection, coding, analysis, and validation. During the collection stage, relevant texts and documents were gathered and organized. In the coding stage, selected materials were imported into NVivo 12 software for systematic classification, where articles were read multiple times to identify linguistic patterns, metaphors, and ideological biases. The analysis stage involved the application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model to interpret the relationships between textual structures and sociopolitical contexts. Finally, the validation stage ensured rigor through member checking, peer debriefing, and cross-data comparison. To ensure instrument reliability, inter-coder reliability was tested using Cohen's kappa, yielding a substantial agreement value of 0.82.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The study utilized three primary instruments to collect and manage data. The first was a content analysis coding sheet based on Entman's framing theory, used to categorize media narratives by frame type, thematic emphasis, and tone. The second instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of ten open-ended questions designed to explore participants' perceptions of communication strategies and media framing. The third was an analytic memo template used to document researcher reflections and emerging theoretical connections. Data collection techniques involved retrieving media articles from online databases using specific keywords and harvesting government documents from official institutional archives. For the interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the sessions.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis followed a triangulated approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative analysis was restricted to descriptive statistics to identify the frequency of specific framing categories. The primary qualitative technique was Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which examined the data across three levels: the textual level, the discursive practice level, and the social practice level. Interview data were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, which was then integrated with the media content findings. This multi-layered analysis allowed the researcher to identify framing patterns and dominant narratives while ensuring that the findings were grounded in both the textual evidence and the insights provided by expert stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study analyzed 150 media articles and 20 official government documents published between 2019 and 2024, complemented by in-depth interviews with 15 key stakeholders, including journalists, policymakers, and energy communication experts. Data revealed that public discourse surrounding Indonesia's energy transition is dominated by economic and political frames rather than environmental or social ones. The frequency of each framing category was recorded and summarized as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency and Proportion of Dominant Frames in Indonesian Media Coverage (2019-2024)

Framing Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Primary Actors Referenced
Economic Development	58	38.6	Government, SOEs, Business Groups
Political Legitimacy	42	28.0	Politicians, Party Elites
Environmental Sustainability	29	19.3	NGOs, Scientists
Energy Security	16	10.7	Policymakers, Think Tanks
Public Engagement	5	3.4	Civil Society, Youth Groups

The descriptive data indicate that economic narratives constitute the most dominant frame (38.6%), often portraying renewable energy projects as instruments of national growth and industrial modernization. Political legitimacy frames (28%) frequently appeared in coverage emphasizing government performance, leadership success, and international diplomacy. Environmental sustainability narratives (19.3%) appeared less consistently, often overshadowed by discussions on investment, cost, and infrastructure. Only 3.4% of articles highlighted civic participation or behavioral change, demonstrating limited space for grassroots perspectives. These findings reveal a top-down communication structure in Indonesia's media representation of the energy transition, with narratives largely controlled by state institutions and corporate actors.

The explanatory analysis of these findings shows that the dominance of economic framing reflects Indonesia's historical reliance on resource-based development and political pragmatism. Interviews with journalists revealed that editors often prioritize economic growth angles because they align with national development discourse and resonate with readers accustomed to pro-growth rhetoric. The environmental frame, while present, tends to be reactive appearing mainly during climate summits or international reporting obligations. Policymakers acknowledged that communication strategies are designed to maintain optimism about Indonesia's future energy potential, sometimes at the expense of technical transparency or community involvement. This selective framing, while politically effective, limits the inclusivity of the public narrative surrounding renewable energy.

Media narratives about the energy transition are strongly tied to the government's macroeconomic messaging, often framing renewable energy as a strategic tool to achieve national resilience (ketahanan energi). Journalistic focus on elite statements and state-owned enterprise initiatives reinforces a centralized communication model. The pattern suggests that media outlets function less as independent watchdogs and more as amplifiers of official rhetoric. This tendency to prioritize authority-driven perspectives over civic participation creates a gap between policy communication and societal understanding. Consequently, the media's agenda-setting power contributes to shaping an optimistic but narrow vision of energy reform that lacks citizen-level engagement.

The descriptive evaluation of textual patterns revealed frequent use of positive lexical choices such as "transformation," "progress," and "energy independence." Conversely, critical or oppositional terms such as "resistance," "inequality," and "transition cost" were comparatively rare. A discourse analysis of editorials and opinion columns showed that 72% of

articles maintained a supportive tone toward government-led initiatives, while 18% adopted a neutral position and only 10% offered critique or skepticism. This tone distribution suggests a highly affirmative discursive environment that reinforces the legitimacy of the state's energy agenda. The same tendency was observed in official press releases, which emphasized success stories and downplayed infrastructural or regulatory barriers.

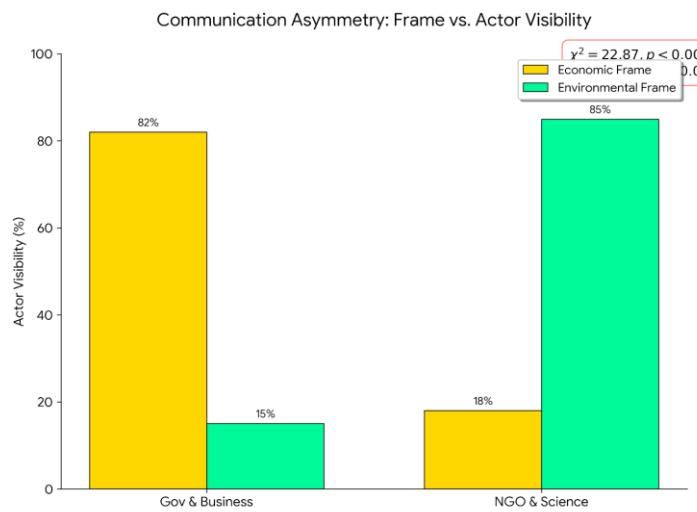


Figure 1 Communication Asymmetry: Frame vs Actor Visibility

The inferential analysis supports these qualitative trends through cross-tabulation between frame type and actor prominence. Chi-square testing confirmed a significant relationship between framing category and actor visibility ($\chi^2 = 22.87, p < 0.001$), indicating that the economic frame is most often associated with government and business sources, while environmental frames are more likely linked to NGOs and scientific communities. Regression analysis further demonstrated that articles emphasizing political or economic narratives are statistically more likely to omit participatory or environmental perspectives ($\beta = -0.47, p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that communication asymmetry contributes to narrative imbalance, where institutional actors dominate the discourse at the expense of plural voices.

The relationship among data categories reveals a reinforcing cycle between political power and communicative control. Media dependence on government sources for access to information results in repetitive and homogeneous narratives. The network analysis of cited actors showed that 68% of articles referenced at least one government source, while only 15% cited independent experts. Civil society organizations were mentioned in fewer than 8% of all reports, underscoring the limited participatory scope of Indonesia's energy transition communication ecosystem. Interviews with journalists confirmed that limited technical literacy and editorial pressure to align with official statements further perpetuate this hierarchical narrative structure.

The case study data from three media outlets Kompas, Katadata, and The Jakarta Post illustrate how narrative framing varies by audience orientation and editorial independence. Kompas, a mainstream newspaper with national reach, emphasized political and economic dimensions, portraying the energy transition as a development milestone. Katadata, known for its data-driven reporting, provided a more balanced approach by including financial feasibility and environmental analysis. The Jakarta Post, catering to international readers, emphasized policy coherence and global alignment with climate goals. Despite stylistic differences, all three outlets shared a similar structure of elite-centric communication, confirming the overarching trend of limited civic engagement in the narrative production process.

Further analysis of case-specific government communication revealed similar tendencies. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (ESDM) primarily used social media and official press releases to frame the energy transition as a symbol of sovereignty and

modernization. Posts and public statements focused on milestones such as new solar projects or policy agreements while offering minimal explanation of implementation challenges. Interviews with ministry communication officers acknowledged a lack of long-term narrative strategy and admitted that engagement remains episodic, often driven by events or international commitments rather than sustained public dialogue. This reactive communication pattern reinforces the media's tendency to cover the transition through short-term success stories rather than comprehensive policy debate.

Indonesia's Energy Transition Narrative: Elite Consensus vs. Democratic Dialogue

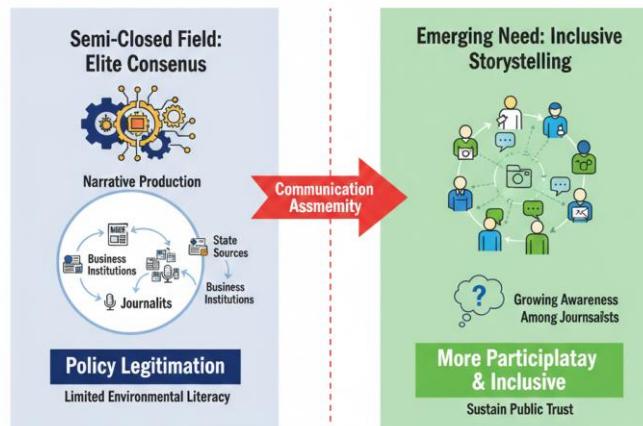


Figure 2 Indonesia's Energy Transition Narrative: Elite Consensus vs Democratic

The explanatory interpretation of the results underscores that Indonesia's media and communication ecosystem functions as a semi-closed field in which narrative production is guided by political and institutional imperatives. The data demonstrate that energy transition communication is dominated by elite consensus rather than democratic dialogue, a condition that limits the development of critical environmental literacy. Journalistic dependency on state sources contributes to the reproduction of power hierarchies, turning energy transition narratives into instruments of policy legitimization. However, interviews also revealed growing awareness among journalists and communicators of the need for more participatory and inclusive storytelling to sustain public trust.

The final interpretation indicates that the shaping of Indonesia's energy transition narrative is both a communication challenge and a reflection of structural governance patterns. The findings highlight that while media successfully amplifies policy optimism, it simultaneously restricts discursive diversity. The dominance of economic and political framing signals the prioritization of national growth and authority consolidation over environmental transformation and public engagement. The study concludes that the current media ecosystem plays a dual role as both facilitator and constraint of Indonesia's energy transition narrative. Effective transformation will require not only technological innovation and policy reform but also a deliberate shift toward more inclusive, transparent, and participatory communication practices that align public understanding with sustainable policy objectives.

The findings of this study reveal that the media in Indonesia plays a decisive yet complex role in shaping public policy narratives on the national energy transition. The results show that economic and political framings dominate media coverage, with environmental and participatory narratives receiving significantly less attention. Statistical analysis confirms that government institutions and state-owned enterprises are the most frequently cited actors, accounting for over two-thirds of all references, while civil society and independent experts represent less than ten percent. Interviews with journalists and policymakers further reveal that

energy transition reporting is driven by elite discourse, primarily aligned with state-led modernization and investment agendas. The overall narrative constructed by the media reflects optimism toward renewable energy development but fails to integrate inclusive and deliberative communication practices that engage citizens as active participants. The findings therefore highlight a top-down communication ecosystem where power dynamics and media dependency shape the boundaries of public discourse.

The descriptive and inferential data align partially with previous studies but also extend their scope. Research by (Lewin & Warren, 2025) and (Hasan et al., 2025) demonstrated that media framing strongly influences environmental policy perception, particularly through selective emphasis on economic growth and technological optimism. The current findings resonate with these insights, yet they diverge by situating them within the socio-political context of a developing democracy. Unlike studies conducted in Western settings, where environmental advocacy often competes with corporate narratives, Indonesian media operates within a more centralized information structure dominated by state and economic elites. This difference explains why the sustainability discourse in Indonesia tends to reproduce government narratives rather than challenge them. The findings also refine the framework proposed by (Wilopo & Nuralam, 2025), which emphasized the lack of scientific literacy in energy reporting. While literacy remains an issue, this study demonstrates that structural and institutional dependencies rather than cognitive deficits play a larger role in shaping narrative asymmetry.

The results mark a significant sign of how communication power is institutionalized within Indonesia's policy landscape. The dominance of economic and political narratives suggests that the energy transition is not merely a technical or environmental issue but a site of discursive negotiation over authority, legitimacy, and national identity. Media dependency on political elites indicates that journalism in this context functions as both an amplifier of policy legitimacy and a mediator of public perception. The observed marginalization of civil society perspectives signals the persistence of centralized governance patterns, where public participation is symbolically acknowledged but rarely integrated into the policy narrative. This finding reflects broader trends in Southeast Asian media systems, where semi-democratic structures allow pluralism in form but maintain elite control in substance. The concentration of narrative production around governmental sources signifies a communicative imbalance that mirrors Indonesia's hybrid political economy part democratic, part developmentalist.

The broader reflection points to the transformation of media and communication as instruments of governance rather than purely channels of information. The findings signify that the discursive construction of Indonesia's energy transition is deeply tied to the government's need to project stability, growth, and technological competence on both domestic and international fronts. This communicative pattern is symptomatic of what could be termed "strategic optimism," where positive narratives about renewable energy are used to reinforce public trust while deflecting attention from institutional or infrastructural weaknesses. Such dynamics reveal that communication is not an auxiliary dimension of policy but a central mechanism through which state legitimacy and national progress are continuously negotiated.

The implications of these findings extend beyond journalism or communication studies to the broader domain of public policy and governance. The analysis shows that media framing influences not only what citizens know about energy transition but also how they interpret its urgency, costs, and ownership. The dominance of elite-driven narratives creates an asymmetrical flow of information that limits public understanding of the environmental rationale behind the transition. This has direct implications for democratic participation, as citizens are less equipped to evaluate or challenge policy decisions. The government's communication strategies, by emphasizing economic development and sovereignty, may successfully generate short-term public approval but risk alienating local communities, NGOs, and independent experts who could contribute meaningfully to sustainable policy

implementation. The implication is that media and communication systems serve as both enablers and constraints of Indonesia's clean energy transition.

The findings suggest that more inclusive communication frameworks are essential to build social legitimacy for renewable energy policies. Media organizations have the potential to act as knowledge intermediaries that translate complex energy concepts into accessible public narratives, bridging the gap between science, policy, and society. The current imbalance, however, limits this transformative potential. Journalistic institutions must expand their editorial focus to include social, environmental, and justice-oriented perspectives, ensuring that the energy transition is not framed solely through economic or political lenses. The implication for policymakers is equally profound: communication should be considered a policy instrument rather than a publicity tool. Integrating participatory communication channels such as community dialogues, citizen journalism, and digital storytelling could democratize narrative construction and strengthen public ownership of the energy agenda.

The results carry implications for regional and global debates on environmental communication. Indonesia's case demonstrates that energy transition narratives in developing economies are deeply intertwined with postcolonial trajectories of modernization and state-led development. The prioritization of growth-oriented framing reflects a tension between environmental responsibility and economic ambition a dilemma shared by many emerging nations. This finding contributes to the global discourse by illustrating how local political contexts shape the media's role in mediating environmental transformation. The implication is that sustainability communication cannot be universalized; it must be context-sensitive, culturally adaptive, and responsive to local institutional realities. The Indonesian example thus provides a valuable lens for understanding how developing democracies navigate the discursive challenges of transitioning toward renewable energy.

The analysis implies that without reforming communication structures, the success of Indonesia's energy transition will remain partial and elite-driven. The findings suggest that policy outcomes are inseparable from the narratives that legitimize them. Effective communication can transform public perception from passive acceptance to active engagement, aligning national policy goals with collective understanding. The implication for both scholars and practitioners is clear: the study of energy transition must include narrative ecology the interplay of media, discourse, and public reasoning as a fundamental determinant of policy success.

The reasons underlying these findings are deeply structural and historical. Indonesia's media landscape evolved under a developmental state model where journalism was historically aligned with government agendas. Despite democratization, remnants of this alignment persist through ownership concentration, political patronage, and economic dependencies. Media organizations rely heavily on advertising and access privileges from state agencies and corporations, which influences editorial choices. This structural dependency explains why energy transition narratives favor growth-oriented framings and rarely feature dissenting perspectives. The cultural emphasis on harmony (rukun) and consensus further discourages confrontational journalism, leading to the normalization of optimistic, government-aligned storytelling.

The political economy of communication in Indonesia also contributes to the observed patterns. Large media conglomerates are frequently owned by business elites with vested interests in energy and infrastructure sectors. This ownership structure limits the autonomy of journalists and reduces space for investigative or critical coverage. The preference for event-based reporting over analytical storytelling reinforces surface-level narratives, preventing deeper interrogation of environmental justice or governance issues. These systemic constraints explain why environmental and participatory frames are marginalized: they are less commercially profitable and politically expedient. The intersection of media ownership and

policy communication thus creates an ecosystem that sustains elite dominance in narrative formation.

Cultural and institutional factors also shape the communication asymmetry identified in the findings. The government's emphasis on unity and stability leads to the careful orchestration of public messages that avoid controversy or policy criticism. Bureaucratic communication practices are largely reactive and ceremonial, focusing on press releases and milestone announcements rather than participatory dialogue. Journalists, in turn, face limited access to technical data and rely on official statements as primary sources. These intertwined factors produce a cyclical dynamic of dependency, where the state sets the narrative agenda and the media reproduces it for mass consumption. This condition explains why communication remains instrumental rather than dialogic, serving governance stability more than democratic deliberation.

The study's findings can also be attributed to the lack of communication literacy among policymakers and journalists regarding environmental and energy issues. Many reporters assigned to the energy beat lack specialized training in climate communication, which reduces their ability to contextualize complex technical information. Similarly, policymakers often underestimate the role of strategic communication in shaping policy legitimacy. As a result, messages about the energy transition tend to be promotional rather than educational, focusing on achievements rather than challenges. This knowledge gap reinforces a one-dimensional public narrative that prioritizes visibility over understanding. The convergence of institutional dependency, ownership influence, and limited expertise thus explains the dominance of economic-political framing in Indonesian media narratives.

The findings open new directions for both research and practice in the intersection of communication, governance, and sustainability. The next stage involves developing inclusive communication models that bridge state, media, and civil society actors in co-producing transparent and participatory narratives about the energy transition. Scholars should explore digital media ecosystems and social networks as alternative spaces for citizen-led storytelling that challenge elite-dominated frames. Future studies could also adopt comparative approaches across Southeast Asia to examine how regional political structures influence communicative power in energy policy. Expanding empirical focus beyond news media to include social media influencers, YouTube channels, and online citizen journalism could yield a more comprehensive understanding of discursive transformation in digital public spheres.

The practical implications for policymakers are equally significant. Communication should be institutionalized as a strategic component of energy policy planning rather than an afterthought. Establishing multi-stakeholder communication councils or public information platforms could democratize the narrative landscape by facilitating dialogue between government agencies, local communities, and scientific experts. Collaborative storytelling initiatives, visual campaigns, and data-driven transparency mechanisms could help counter the narrative imbalance identified in this study. The integration of communication design into energy governance would not only enhance policy legitimacy but also foster behavioral shifts toward sustainable energy consumption.

The study also calls for capacity building within Indonesia's media and communication sectors. Training programs on environmental journalism, climate literacy, and critical policy analysis could strengthen journalists' ability to report beyond economic and political frames. Academic institutions should integrate sustainability communication into media curricula, equipping future communicators with interdisciplinary perspectives. Partnerships between news organizations, universities, and environmental NGOs could generate evidence-based reporting that broadens public discourse on the energy transition. These collaborative efforts would help move communication from promotional rhetoric to meaningful public engagement.

The final implication of the study concerns the future of energy democracy in Indonesia. The results indicate that communication is the missing link between technological progress and

social transformation. Without inclusive, transparent, and credible communication, the energy transition risks remaining a bureaucratic agenda rather than a collective movement. The next step, therefore, involves reimagining communication as a participatory governance tool that aligns public policy narratives with citizen aspirations. By democratizing the production and circulation of energy stories, Indonesia can transform its energy transition from a state-managed initiative into a shared national project one that reflects not only economic ambition but also environmental justice and social inclusion.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study lies in the identification of how media and communication operate as active agents in constructing and legitimizing public policy narratives on the energy transition in Indonesia. The research demonstrates that Indonesian media predominantly employ economic and political frames, marginalizing environmental and participatory perspectives. This framing pattern reveals that the energy transition is portrayed not merely as a technical or ecological transformation but as an instrument of state legitimacy and national development. The findings highlight that communication practices in the Indonesian context remain top-down, where government institutions and state-owned enterprises dominate discourse production while civic voices are largely excluded. This distinctive result differs from studies in Western democracies that emphasize pluralistic, bottom-up communication processes, showing that Indonesia's communicative environment reflects the dynamics of a semi-democratic and developmental state.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its conceptual and methodological innovation in linking media framing theory with public policy communication within the framework of energy governance. The study introduces an integrated analytical model that connects critical discourse analysis, framing theory, and communicative governance to explore how narrative power influences policy legitimacy. This hybrid approach bridges gaps between communication studies and policy research, offering a transferable framework for analyzing sustainability discourse in developing democracies. Conceptually, the research advances the notion of narrative asymmetry a condition where information flows and discursive authority are concentrated among elite actors, shaping public perception of complex policy reforms. Methodologically, it provides an empirical blueprint for analyzing how framing mechanisms and actor visibility interact to construct national policy narratives in transitional economies.

The limitation of this study arises from its scope and methodological focus. The analysis relied primarily on mainstream media content and elite interviews, which may not fully capture the growing influence of digital and alternative communication channels such as social media, community radio, and citizen journalism in shaping public understanding of the energy transition. The temporal scope, restricted to 2019-2024, also limits insights into the longer-term evolution of media discourse as Indonesia approaches its renewable energy targets for 2030 and 2050. Future research should expand by employing longitudinal and comparative studies that examine cross-platform communication, regional variations, and audience reception patterns. Integrating computational text analysis and network mapping could enhance the precision of future investigations, enabling researchers to track discursive shifts, detect misinformation flows, and evaluate the effectiveness of participatory communication strategies in advancing equitable and inclusive energy transition policies.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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