

Framing Dedi Mulyadi's Vasectomy Policy in International Media: A Comparative Analysis Using Entman's Framing Theory and Its Implications for Indonesia's Public Diplomacy

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Abstract

This study examines the international media's portrayal of the vasectomy policy as a prerequisite for accessing social assistance, as proposed by West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi. Using Robert Entman's theoretical framework, this research examines how three international media outlets (Channel News Asia, South China Morning Post, and The Telegraph) frame this controversial policy through four key elements: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. The research method employs qualitative framing analysis with a systematic approach to the news corpus from the three media outlets. Results indicate that all three media outlets use negative framing with a dominance of moral evaluation (90%) and problem definition (85%), yet with different strategies: SCMP uses a "discriminatory policy" frame (9/10), Telegraph emphasizes "human rights violation" (8/10), and CNA employs a "governance problem" approach (7/10). Differences in intensity and editorial tone reflect the geographical and ideological orientations of each media outlet, with the SCMP being the most critical, the Telegraph focusing on international human rights standards, and CNA adopting a more contextual approach to the complexities of Southeast Asia. This study confirms the relevance of Entman's theory in the digital era and reveals that treatment recommendation is the most diverse element in international framing. These findings offer strategic implications for Indonesia's public diplomacy, suggesting the development of

targeted and proactive communication strategies in response to the evolving global media landscape.

Keywords: *Dedi Mulyadi; Framing Analysis; International Media; Political Communication; Public Policy*

1. Introduction

In the era of digital globalization, a country's domestic policies are no longer purely internal affairs. International media coverage of domestic policies in developing countries has increased dramatically, as reflected in global databases such as GDELT, which tracks cross-border issues in real-time (Chen et al., 2024). The transformation of the global media landscape in the digital age has accelerated this process, whereby domestic information quickly becomes international news within hours through social media platforms and increasingly sophisticated communication technologies (Castells, 2015; Howard & Hussain, 2013).

Global media no longer acts as a passive conveyor of information, but rather as an active actor that shapes the perception and reputation of a country through complex narrative constructions (Archetti, 2012). International media framing has a direct impact on a country's image and public diplomacy, where the construction of meaning significantly shapes global public opinion (Lim & Seo, 2009). This, in turn, affects a country's soft power, global reputation, foreign investment, bilateral cooperation, and its position in multilateral forums (Entman, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; Nye, 2004; Wang, 2008). This impact is reflected in various global indices that serve as references for a country's reputation, such as the Global Soft Power Index and the World Press Freedom Index, both of which are influenced by international media narratives (Seib, 2012).

The importance of understanding the construction of international media framing becomes increasingly crucial when domestic policies address sensitive issues, such as reproductive rights and poverty. The case of Indonesia in 2025 is a clear example when Governor Dedi Mulyadi's proposal for vasectomy as a prerequisite for social assistance in West Java received foreign media attention. This policy addresses sensitive areas of reproductive health, poverty, and human rights in the global discourse, and is therefore often perceived as problematic, potentially discriminatory, and at risk of violating universal human rights values (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The sensitivity of this issue lies in the intersection between reproductive rights, anti-poverty policies, and social assistance, a point that invites strong moral and ideological reactions, making it a unique case that connects various dimensions of controversial public policy.

The international media response to the vasectomy policy shows significant diversity in framing, reflecting a pattern consistent with previous studies on cross-country coverage variation (Vliegenthart & van Zoonen, 2011). Channel News Asia reported that this policy is part of a systemic problem in which 961 Indonesian regional leaders have created controversial programs without adequate coordination with the central government (Siregar, 2025). The South China Morning Post strongly criticized the policy as a “ridiculous vasectomy plan” that reflects systemic discrimination against poor groups (Yuniar, 2025), while The Telegraph categorized it as a human rights violation, calling the policy a form of modern “eugenics” (Newey, 2025). The differences in the intensity and tone of the editorials reflect the geographical and ideological orientation of each media outlet, in line with the findings of D’Angelo and Kuypers (2010) on the influence of national context on the construction of international news.

These three media outlets were selected based on several methodological justifications. First, they represent different regional perspectives: Channel News Asia from Southeast Asia, South China Morning Post from East Asia, and The Telegraph from Western Europe. Second, all three outlets have extensive international reach and high credibility in their coverage of Asian politics. Third, they use English as their language of communication, allowing for direct comparison without translation bias. Fourth, each outlet has a distinct ideological orientation and media system: CNA, as a public media outlet, adopts a pragmatic approach, SCMP, with a post-colonial Hong Kong background, and The Telegraph, with a Western liberal tradition. This selection aims to provide a more comprehensive cross-cultural and geopolitical analysis of the framing of Indonesia's domestic policies, while capturing the variation in meaning construction within the context of diverse international media.

Framing theory, as a framework for analyzing political communication, has been well established in the academic literature since Entman's (1993) seminal work. Entman defines framing as a process that “promotes particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations” through four key elements: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. (López-Rabadán, 2022) asserts that framing studies remain a strong field of research in political communication and have undergone significant transformation in the digital age, particularly in the context of social media and hybrid communication platforms.

Framing research in the international context shows that global media act as active actors that shape the perception and reputation of countries

through complex narrative constructions (Archetti, 2012). Empirical studies reveal that international framing significantly shapes public opinion (Lim & Seo, 2009), which in turn influences a country's soft power and global reputation (Nye, 2004; Wang, 2008). This impact is reflected in various global indices such as the Global Soft Power Index and the World Press Freedom Index, both of which are influenced by international media narratives (Seib, 2012).

Cross-national comparative studies reveal significant variations in the construction of international media framing. Vliegenthart and van Zoonen (2011) show that cross-national coverage reflects patterns consistent with the geographical and ideological orientation of each media outlet. Seurings et al. (2024) further reveal that diagnostic frames often prevail over prognostic frames in various countries, indicating a tendency for international media to focus more on identifying problems than on solutions. D'Angelo and Kuypers (2010) reinforce these findings by demonstrating the influence of national context on the construction of international news.

The majority of international framing studies focus on transnational crises such as terrorism, pandemics, or global health policy reforms (Bhatti et al., 2022; Civil de Dios & Romero-Rodríguez, 2018; Rowbotham et al., 2019). These studies generally analyze global issues that simultaneously affect many countries, with an analytical framework that emphasizes the impact of cross-border policies rather than specific domestic policies that are controversial at the international level (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2018; van der Meer et al., 2017).

Although international framing studies have developed rapidly, three significant gaps remain unfilled in the literature. First, there is a lack of systematic research on how the domestic policies of developing countries, which are often controversial, are framed by the international media, particularly those that address sensitive issues such as reproductive rights and poverty. Second, there is a limitation in cross-regional comparative studies that analyze variations in meaning construction based on the geographical and ideological orientation of the international media. Third, there is a lack of studies that explicitly link international media framing with practical implications for the public diplomacy of developing countries. This gap creates a practical problem, whereby countries such as Indonesia lack an adequate understanding of how their domestic policies are perceived internationally, thereby preventing them from developing diplomatic communication strategies that are responsive to global reputation challenges in the digital age.

This study aims to analyze how Channel News Asia, South China Morning Post, and The Telegraph frame Dedi Mulyadi's vasectomy policy using Entman's four elements of framing: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. This study also explores the strategic implications of these framing variations for Indonesia's public diplomacy in facing global reputation challenges.

2. Method

This study uses Robert Entman's framing analysis approach to examine the construction of international media reality regarding Dedi Mulyadi's vasectomy policy. López-Rabadán (2022) asserts that framing studies remain a strong field of research in political communication and have undergone significant transformations in the digital age, particularly in the context of social media and hybrid communication platforms that have profoundly changed the organization of public debate. The theoretical framework of framing was chosen for its ability to analyze the connections between media processes, political debate, and the social construction of meaning in shaping public opinion (López-Rabadán, 2022). This study specifically adopts Entman's four elements of framing, which have become the primary reference in political communication studies: *problem definition*, *causal interpretation*, *moral evaluation*, and *treatment recommendation*.

This study employs a purposive sampling approach to select three international media outlets based on geographical representation, editorial reach, language accessibility, and demonstrated coverage of the policy issue. Channel News Asia was selected to represent Southeast Asia's governance-oriented perspective, reflecting regional norms of pragmatism and policy coordination (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). South China Morning Post represents East Asia, chosen for its sensitivity to "body politics" shaped by Hong Kong's post-colonial experience and China's reproductive policy history (Chakravartty & Zhao, 2008). The Telegraph represents Western Europe, anchored in liberal press traditions emphasizing universal human rights and individual autonomy (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). These three outlets were the only international English-language media that provided substantial coverage of the policy during the study period, enabling a tri-regional comparative analysis.

The data were collected from articles published between April and May 2025 on the official websites of three international media outlets: Channel News Asia, South China Morning Post, and The Telegraph. Articles were retrieved using the keywords "Dedi Mulyadi," "vasectomy," "social assistance," "Indonesian governor," and "Indonesia's local

leader.” The inclusion criteria required that articles be in English, directly address the vasectomy policy as a central issue, and be classified as news reports rather than opinion pieces. Duplicate or irrelevant items were excluded. The unit of analysis for this study is the full article.

The analysis was conducted by identifying and categorizing each framing element in the collected news corpus. Foley et al., (2019) emphasize that qualitative framing analysis provides important conceptual and operational insights for media analysis, even though frames are often considered "difficult to measure" with their analysis being a "methodological black box." Problem definition was analysed by identifying how each media outlet defined vasectomy policy as a problem, including the context used to frame the issue. Causal interpretation was explored by examining how the media explained the causes of the policy and the factors contributing to the situation. Moral evaluation was analysed by identifying the normative judgments given by the media, including the use of value-laden words, expert quotes, and references to moral or legal standards. Treatment recommendations were examined by reviewing the solutions or actions suggested by the media, either explicitly or implicitly, to address the previously defined problem.

The coding procedure followed several stages: initial reading, open coding, categorization, and mapping into Entman's four elements. Two independent coders participated in the process to enhance reliability. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielding a score of 0.82, which indicates a very good level of agreement.

The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis techniques with a systematic approach to three international media outlets: Channel News Asia, South China Morning Post, and The Telegraph. Matthes (2009) demonstrates, in his analysis of media framing studies in leading global communication journals, that quantitative and qualitative content analysis are the dominant approaches in framing research. However, he also highlights the challenges associated with the operational precision and descriptive focus of many analyses. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the capture of nuance, moral tone, and implicit meanings that are often overlooked in purely quantitative frequency counts (Matthes, 2009). Each article was analysed in depth by identifying units of analysis, such as words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, that reflected Entman's four elements of framing.

Triangulation was achieved by comparing the results across three media outlets representing different regions (Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Western Europe). To minimize bias, the study employed transparent coding schemes, researcher reflexivity, and peer validation through

academic discussion. This study acknowledges several methodological limitations. The analysis was restricted to three English-language outlets due to the limited international coverage of this specific policy during the April-May 2025 period. While this constraint reflects the empirical reality of international media attention to Indonesian regional policies, it limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the qualitative coding process remains subject to interpretive judgment despite measures taken to ensure intercoder reliability. The analytical framework employed in this study is illustrated in Figure 1, which outlines the systematic process of framing analysis.

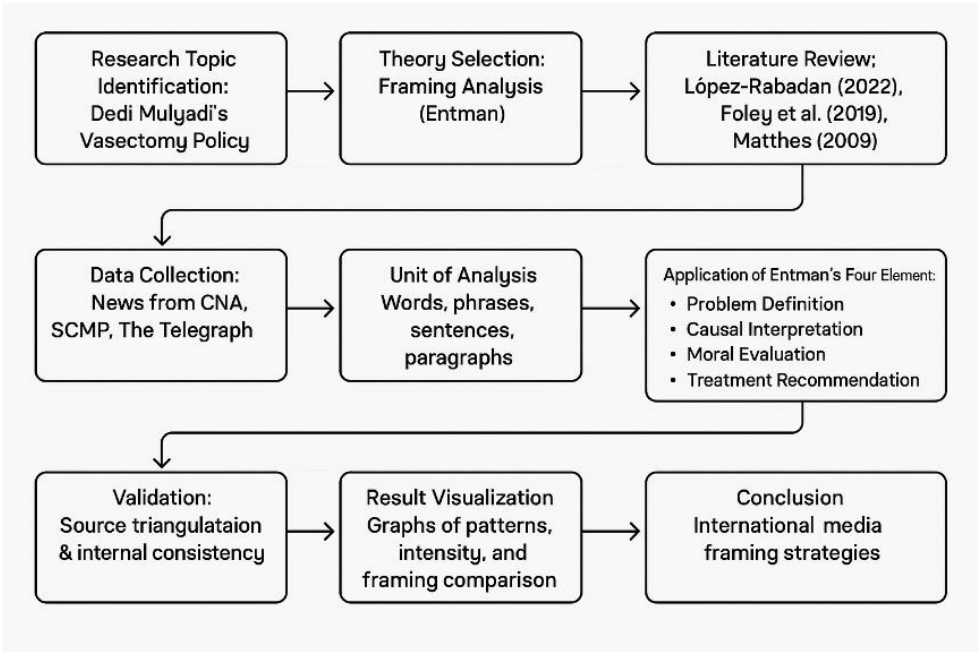


Figure 1. Framing Element Distribution Chart
Source: Research Flowchart, 2025

The intensity of framing was measured based on frequency of occurrence, placement in the news structure, and the level of emphasis given to each element. The validity of the analysis is ensured through internal consistency by applying the same analytical framework to all units of analysis. The results of the analysis are visualized using various graphic techniques to show patterns, intensity, and comparisons of framing between media. This enables the identification of the framing strategies

used by each media outlet in constructing the reality of Dedi Mulyadi's vasectomy policy.

3. Results and Discussion

An analysis of three international media outlets reveals consistent framing patterns but with varying intensity and approaches to Dedi Mulyadi's vasectomy policy. To ensure transparency, the percentages and intensity scores reported in this section are derived from a systematic coding process. Percentages (e.g., 90% for moral evaluation) were calculated by dividing the number of coded units of meaning (sentences or paragraphs) containing a particular framing element by the total number of coded units across all articles. Intensity scores (e.g., 9/10 for SCMP) reflect coder assessments of prominence, ranging from 1 (minimal emphasis) to 10 (maximum emphasis), based on placement in the article (headline, lead, or body), frequency of repetition, and the lexical strength of evaluative terms.

As shown in Figure 2, all three media outlets were found to use negative framing in 100% of the cases, with the highest emphasis on moral evaluation and problem definition. These findings align with Entman's argument (1993), which posits that framing serves to "promote certain problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and recommendations for handling."

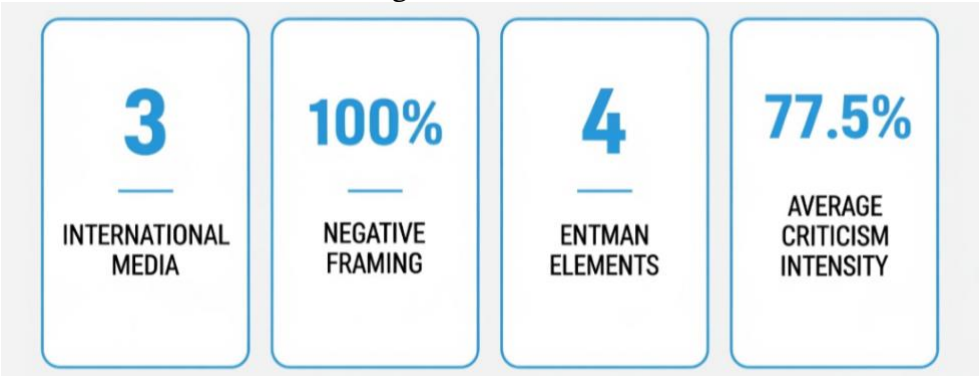


Figure 2. Framing Element Distribution Chart
Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

The prevalence of moral evaluation elements reflects the contentious nature of policies that address sensitive issues related to reproduction and poverty. This is evident in the direct textual choices used by each outlet, which reveal both convergence in condemnation and divergence in framing strategies, as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Comparison of News Quotes

Media Outlet	Direct Quote	Framing Focus (Interpretation)
SCMP	<i>"This idea is really ridiculous. This is a very blatant form of 'body politics.'"</i>	Strong moral condemnation; frames the policy as body politics and systemic discrimination against the poor.
The Telegraph	<i>"...tying birth control to welfare payments ... is a human rights violation."</i>	Highlights human rights violations and echoes public discourse of "eugenics"; emphasizes universal ethical concerns.
CNA	<i>"This is not coercion, but an invitation for shared responsibility. We provide incentives, not just empty appeals."</i>	Pragmatic and moderate framing; emphasizes governance problems and shared responsibility in family planning.

Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

While all three outlets adopted negative framing, their approaches varied considerably. The SCMP employed a highly critical lens, situating the policy within broader debates on state control of citizens' bodies and systemic discrimination, reflecting Hong Kong's historical sensitivity to reproductive governance. The Telegraph emphasized universal human rights concerns, framing the policy as a violation of international norms and associating it with "eugenics." In contrast, the CNA presented a more pragmatic perspective, highlighting governance and policy coordination issues while reproducing Dedi's own justification of shared responsibility. These differences show that although moral evaluation dominates quantitatively, its qualitative direction is shaped by each outlet's ideological orientation and socio-political context.

Figure 3 shows variations in framing intensity across media outlets, reflecting their respective geographical and ideological orientations. For instance, SCMP received a score of 9/10 on moral evaluation because nearly all paragraphs (9 out of 10) contained strong evaluative language that explicitly condemned the policy. The article repeatedly used terms such as "ridiculous" and "a very blatant form of 'body politics'" to describe the proposal, signaling harsh moral judgment and ideological rejection. In addition, Sulfikar Amir, a professor quoted in the article, denounced the idea as "really ridiculous" and emphasized that it was based on a flawed assumption linking poverty to family size: *"This idea is really ridiculous. This*

is a very blatant form of 'body politics' ... whereas the reality faced by poor families is much more complex." The recurrence of such normative assessments across almost the entire article justified the assignment of a near-maximum intensity score (9/10), as the evaluative dimension was not incidental but systematically foregrounded throughout the text.

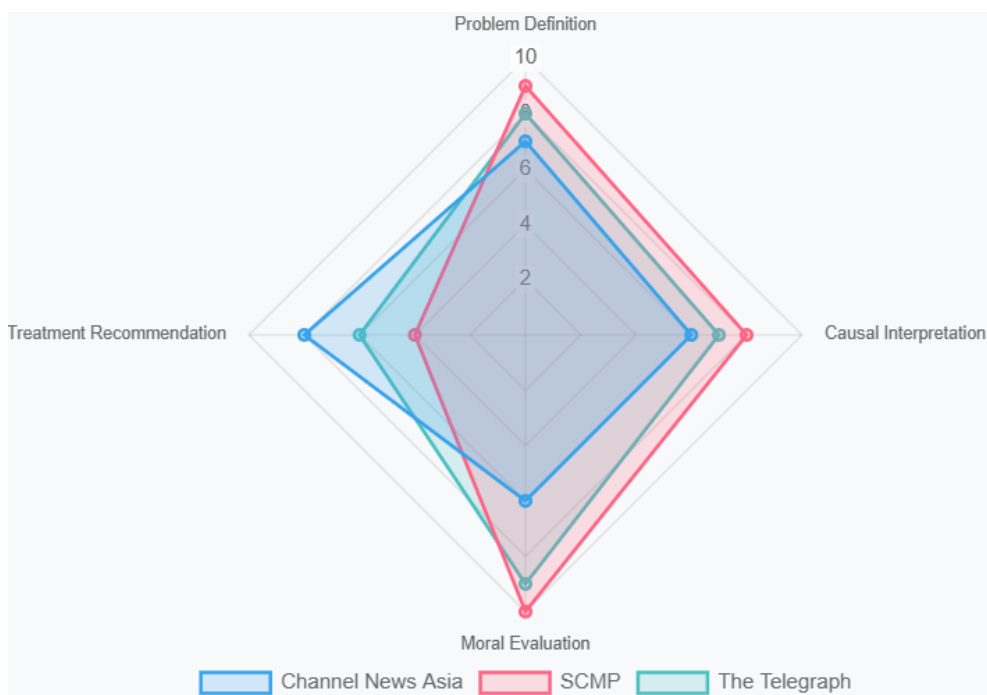


Figure 3. Comparison of Framing Intensity
Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

The South China Morning Post (SCMP) demonstrates the highest intensity in Moral Evaluation (10/10) and Problem Definition (9/10), using explicitly condemnatory language such as *“really ridiculous... a very blatant form of ‘body politics’”* to frame the policy as systemic discrimination and state control over citizens’ bodies. The Telegraph adopts a relatively balanced approach, scoring consistently high across all elements (7–9), but emphasizes human rights concerns through the statement that *“...tying birth control to welfare payments ... is a human rights violation”*, and even echoes public discourse that labeled the policy *“eugenics.”* By contrast, Channel News Asia (CNA) is the most moderate, excelling in Treatment Recommendation (8/10), with a focus on governance and policy coordination. This moderation is visible in its quotation of Dedi’s defense,

“This is not coercion, but an invitation for shared responsibility. We provide incentives, not just empty appeals”, which shifts the focus from moral judgment to systemic problem-solving. These variations suggest a pattern that resonates with the observations of Civila de Dios & Romero-Rodríguez (2018), who note that “cultural and linguistic gaps between different civilizations, coupled with war-like discursive constructions, can create a foundation for ongoing confrontation.” SCMP, with its Hong Kong/China background, frames the policy most intensely as authoritarian and discriminatory, reflecting historical sensitivities to reproductive control shaped by the legacy of the one-child policy.

These variations in intensity and framing approach reveal more than editorial preferences; they demonstrate how socio-historical contexts and dominant cultural values shape the meaning of public policy debates across regions. CNA’s pragmatic orientation reflects the political culture of Southeast Asia, where stability and consensus are prioritized; however, this also shows how critical scrutiny is often softened in favor of preserving regional harmony. By contrast, SCMP and The Telegraph adopt confrontational and normative lenses grounded in their respective contexts: Hong Kong’s historical sensitivity to state intrusion over reproductive rights and the Western liberal press tradition of universal human rights. The divergence suggests that framing is not merely a matter of journalistic choice, but rather a reflection of deeper ideological positions shaped by history and geopolitics. This may support López-Rabadán’s (2022) claim that global media transmit value frameworks, while tentatively extending his argument by suggesting that such frameworks do not operate uniformly but are selectively amplified. In this case, moral condemnation is foregrounded in some outlets, while pragmatic problem-solving is emphasized in others, depending on each media’s cultural and geopolitical standpoint. In this sense, the framing of Indonesia’s vasectomy policy not only reflects media bias but also exposes asymmetries in how international audiences are invited to interpret sensitive domestic issues.

Figure 3 illustrates that the intensity of *framing* is not only a reflection of media editorial preferences but is also influenced by the nation’s geopolitical context and collective memory. The high intensity shown by the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) in terms of *moral evaluation* and *problem definition* can be interpreted as a form of resistance to the narrative of a state that controls its citizens, a sentiment that resonates strongly in post-colonial societies such as Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the British newspaper *The Telegraph* displays a relatively balanced and consistently high *framing* profile across all elements, demonstrating adherence to the principles of universal *human rights* that are common in Western media.

On the other hand, *Channel News Asia* (CNA) adopts a more systemic and pragmatic approach, focusing on policy improvement without expressing strong rejection, which can be attributed to the approach of Southeast Asian media that tends to prioritize stability and consensus. This variation shows that the intensity of *framing* is not only a matter of news content but also a communication strategy shaped by power relations, historical experiences, and the ideological constructs of each media outlet (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

This diverse construction of reality is clearly evident in the spectrum of editorial *tone* depicted in Figure 4, where SCMP adopts a highly critical approach, using the word "*ridiculous*" and framing systemic discrimination in a harsh manner.

The differences in tone across outlets highlight how international media embed distinct ideological narratives in their coverage of Indonesia's vasectomy policy. The Telegraph's use of "eugenics" situates the issue within Western liberal traditions of human rights, invoking historical trauma to amplify critique and connect the policy to broader ethical debates. CNA's more measured and systemic framing reflects a Southeast Asian orientation toward pragmatism and policy coordination, showing how regional media often privilege stability over moral condemnation. SCMP's sharp portrayal of the proposal as an "authoritarian policy" resonates with Hong Kong's heightened sensitivity to state intrusion into personal freedoms, shaped by its own socio-political experience. This variation affirms Lim and Seo's (2009) argument that international framing significantly shapes public opinion, yet it also illustrates that tone is not simply descriptive but an active strategy for constructing Indonesia's image as a rights violator, an authoritarian state, or a governance-challenged nation. By foregrounding different tonal choices, each outlet strategically aligns the policy with its own ideological and cultural context, thereby producing competing global perceptions of Indonesia.

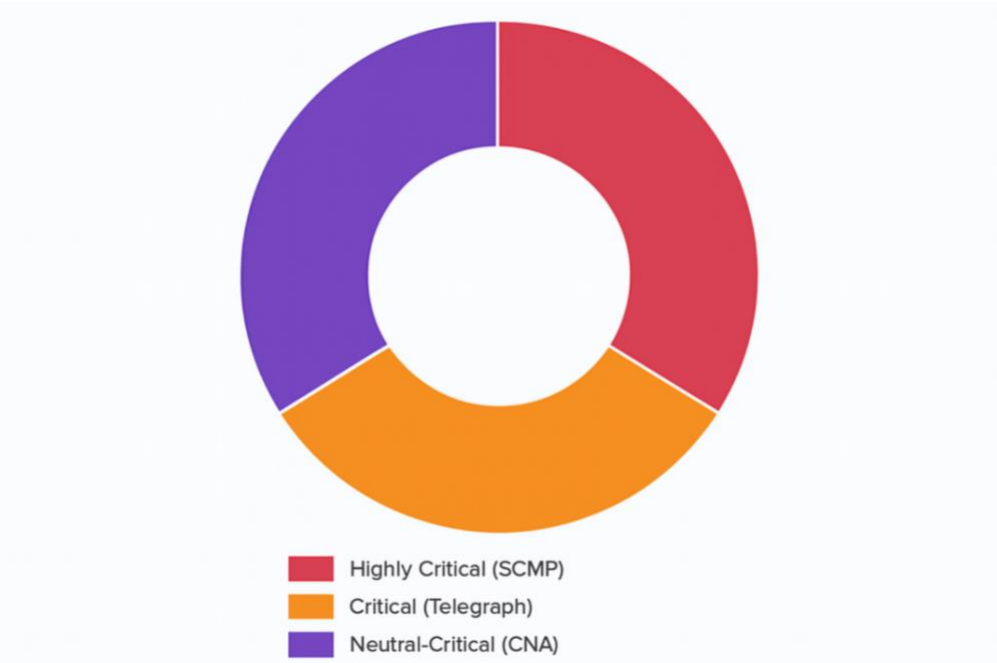


Figure 4. Media Tone Distribution
Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

The diversity of tones can be clearly traced in the direct wording chosen by each outlet, as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Comparison of Tone in Media Coverage		
Media Outlet	Direct Quote	Framing Tone
SCMP	<i>“This idea is really ridiculous. This is a very blatant form of ‘body politics.’”</i>	Harsh and ideological; framing the policy as authoritarian and discriminatory.
The Telegraph	<i>“...tying birth control to welfare payments ... is a human rights violation.”</i> and social reaction labeling it as <i>“eugenics”</i>	Normative and rights-based; emphasizes violations of international human rights standards.
CNA	<i>“This is not coercion, but an invitation for shared responsibility. We provide incentives, not just empty appeals.”</i>	Analytical and pragmatic; situates the issue within governance and policy coordination.

Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

By highlighting these textual choices, it becomes evident that SCMP deliberately frames the policy as authoritarian “body politics.” The Telegraph invokes the universal moral frame of human rights violations and “eugenics,” and CNA redirects attention to the technical and governance dimensions of policy-making. This demonstrates how tone and lexical selection play a central role in shaping international perceptions of Indonesia.

Table 3 presents a comparison matrix illustrating how each media outlet operationalizes Entman’s four framing elements in a manner that reflects its respective orientation. CNA employs a systemic-analytical approach, emphasizing governance gaps, family readiness, and the need for evidence-based policy coordination. SCMP adopts an ideological-critical approach, framing the policy as a form of body politics and systemic discrimination against the poor, while also drawing on structural stereotypes that link poverty with population growth. The Telegraph applies a human rights-oriented approach, highlighting international standards and framing the policy as a human rights violation, with moral evaluations that evoke historical abuses such as eugenics. These distinctions are not only visible in the numerical coding but also in the direct textual choices of each outlet, as summarized in the table below:

Table 3. Comparison of Framing Elements in Media Coverage

Framing Element	CNA (Channel News Asia)	SCMP (South China Morning Post)	The Telegraph
Problem Definition	<i>“...they should not yet pursue parenthood” → defines issue as lack of family readiness and governance gap.</i>	<i>“...a very blatant form of ‘body politics.’” → defines issue as state control over the poor.</i>	<i>“...a human rights violation.” → defines issue as breach of international human rights.</i>
Causal Interpretation	<i>“...the burden should not fall solely on women.” → attributes cause to lack of gender balance and weak governance.</i>	<i>“...based on the assumption that there is a correlation between poverty and population size.” → attributes cause to structural stereotypes about poverty.</i>	<i>“...asking poor men to be sterilised in exchange for access to state welfare could tackle child poverty.” → attributes cause to misperceptions</i>

Framing Element	CNA (Channel News Asia)	SCMP (South China Morning Post)	The Telegraph
Moral Evaluation	<i>"...not coercion, but an invitation for shared responsibility." → moderate moral tone, pragmatic.</i>	<i>"This idea is really ridiculous." → highly critical tone, strong condemnation.</i>	about fertility and poverty. <i>"...form of eugenics." → sharp moral evaluation linked to historical abuses.</i>
Treatment Recommendation	<i>"...leaders should actively consult relevant parties... conduct research before implementing new programmes." → recommends evidence-based governance.</i>	<i>"...poverty can be stopped by increasing employment opportunities, not stopping poor people from being born." → implies rejection of sterilization, recommends structural solutions.</i>	<i>"...it should be voluntary." → recommends voluntariness in family planning.</i>

Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

The comparative evidence shows that CNA highlights coordination and policy design, SCMP frames the policy as discriminatory “body politics,” and The Telegraph universalizes it as a violation of international human rights norms. This alignment with Entman’s four elements confirms that while all three outlets converge on negative framing, they diverge in causal attributions and treatment recommendations. CNA emphasizes institutional fixes and consultation, SCMP calls for structural economic alternatives, and The Telegraph defends voluntariness as a principle of reproductive rights.

These patterns reveal editorial logics shaped by different contexts: CNA frames the issue as a governance problem, consistent with Southeast Asian media norms that emphasize consensus and stability. SCMP’s framing as “body politics” reflects Hong Kong’s socio-historical sensitivity to authoritarian control and reproductive regulation, shaped by the legacy of China’s one-child policy. The Telegraph’s human rights lens corresponds to the Western press tradition of moral universalism, where violations are quickly connected to broader ethical discourses such as “eugenics.”

Table 3 shows how Entman’s four framing elements (problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation) are operationalized differently by each media outlet. Channel News Asia (CNA) defines the problem as a lack of family readiness and governance gaps, with the cause attributed to weak gender balance and poor governance. CNA’s moral evaluation is moderate and pragmatic, framing the policy as an invitation for shared responsibility rather than coercion, and it recommends evidence-based governance through consultation, research, and coordination. In contrast, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) frames the vasectomy policy as a form of body politics and systemic discrimination against the poor. The causes are linked to stereotypes and structural biases about poverty, with a highly critical moral evaluation that deems the policy ridiculous and implies outright rejection.

Meanwhile, The Telegraph raises the issue as a breach of international human rights, challenging the misconception of fertility as the root of poverty. Its moral evaluation is sharp, equating the policy with eugenics, and it recommends voluntarism in family planning as a more ethical approach. These differences highlight how editorial orientation and sociopolitical context shape framing, echoing findings by Bhatti et al. (2022) and Reese (2007), who observed cross-country variations in media framing of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the comparison with Bhatti et al. (2022) also highlights an important difference: while pandemic coverage was shaped by immediate health risks, the vasectomy policy debate is mediated by long-standing cultural and historical narratives about reproduction and poverty. This suggests that cross-country variations are not uniform but depend heavily on whether the issue at stake is perceived as urgent crisis management or as a symbolic moral conflict. In this sense, the present findings extend Bhatti et al.’s argument by showing that variations in framing are not only conditioned by national contexts but also by the type of policy problem itself, where reproductive control invites deeper moralization and ideological contestation than health emergencies.

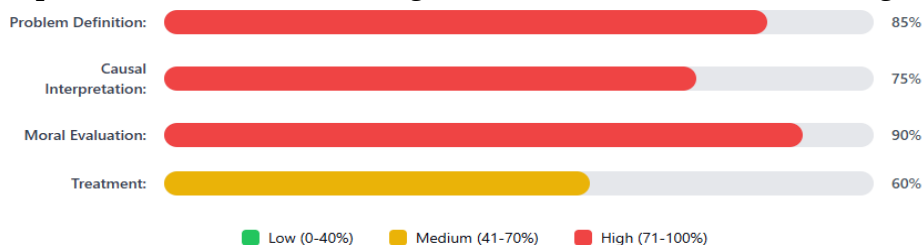


Figure 5. Intensity of Criticism per Element
Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

The distribution of criticism across Entman's four elements (Figure 5) reveals more than a numerical hierarchy; it highlights the editorial logics underpinning international media coverage. The dominance of *moral evaluation* (90%) indicates that the policy was primarily perceived as a moral failure rather than a policy challenge, reflecting the media's tendency to mobilize universal values, such as human rights, fairness, and dignity, to garner global resonance. The strong presence of *problem definition* (85%) further indicates consensus that the policy represents a structural issue requiring urgent attention, yet the relative decline in *treatment recommendations* (60%) illustrates the limits of international media in offering constructive solutions, underscoring Seurings et al.'s (2024) observation that diagnostic frames often outweigh prognostic ones. However, unlike Seurings et al.'s (2024) general observation, in this case, the scarcity of prognostic frames may also be shaped by the international position of the outlets. Western and Hong Kong media often frame Indonesian policies for external audiences, where condemnation tends to resonate more strongly than solution-oriented reporting. This suggests that the imbalance between diagnostic and prognostic frames cannot be explained solely as a universal tendency, but must also be understood within the context of transnational news logics.

The variation in *causal interpretation* (75%) is particularly revealing: CNA attributes the problem to weak governance, SCMP to systemic bias, and The Telegraph to flawed assumptions about fertility, demonstrating how socio-historical contexts and editorial orientations shape not only *what* is criticized but *why*. Thus, rather than being a mere reflection of moral outrage, the hierarchy of framing elements underscores the diverse ideological positions of global media and their selective emphasis on condemnation over resolution.

Figure 5 highlights the intensity of criticism per element, showing that Moral Evaluation dominates at 90%, followed by Problem Definition (85%), Causal Interpretation (75%), and Treatment Recommendation (60%). This indicates that international media were more focused on condemning and problematizing the policy than on offering solutions, a tendency consistent with Seurings et al. (2024), who found that diagnostic frames tend to outweigh prognostic frames in media coverage of social issues. The textual evidence demonstrates how each outlet prioritized moral judgments and problem definitions, while diverging in their recommendations, as shown in the table below:

Table 4. Intensity of Criticism Across Framing Elements

Media Outlet	Direct Quote	Dominant Critical Element
SCMP	<i>"This idea is really ridiculous. This is a very blatant form of 'body politics'."</i>	Moral Evaluation (90%) → harsh condemnation; emphasizes discrimination and authoritarian control.
The Telegraph	<i>"...tying birth control to welfare payments ... is a human rights violation."</i>	Problem Definition (85%) + Moral Evaluation (strong); constructs policy as human rights breach, echoing "eugenics."
CNA	<i>"This is not coercion, but an invitation for shared responsibility. We provide incentives, not just empty appeals."</i>	Treatment Recommendation (60%) → pragmatic framing; stresses governance fixes and evidence-based consultation.

Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

These variations underscore that SCMP prioritized a discourse of systemic injustice, branding the policy as discriminatory and authoritarian. The Telegraph, on the other hand, placed the policy within the universalist human rights framework, mobilizing the powerful moral label of "eugenics." Meanwhile, CNA stood apart by offering governance-based solutions and policy coordination as the path forward. Although the numerical dominance of moral evaluation is clear, the qualitative direction of criticism reveals distinct editorial orientations shaped by geopolitical and ideological contexts.

The variation shows not only what is criticized but also why. SCMP intensifies criticism because its editorial stance is shaped by a broader skepticism toward state intrusion into personal lives. The Telegraph interprets the causal link between fertility and poverty as flawed, reinforcing its universal human rights perspective. CNA downplays moral judgment and instead critiques weak governance and gender imbalance, consistent with its role as a regional broadcaster aligned with technocratic approaches to policymaking.

This pattern supports the findings of Seurings et al. (2024) that "diagnostic *frames* are more prominent than prognostic *frames* in different countries and years, in line with previous research showing that journalists are more likely to highlight problems in their coverage of social issues than solutions." In the context of vasectomy policy, the three media outlets focused more on identifying and criticizing problems than providing

constructive solutions, with the exception of CNA, which took a more balanced approach in providing recommendations.

The diversity of treatment recommendations also has important policy implications for Indonesia. The Telegraph's emphasis on voluntarism underscores the necessity of ensuring that family planning initiatives respect reproductive rights and are framed as empowering choices rather than coercive measures. SCMP's structural critique highlights the urgency of addressing poverty through job creation and economic inclusion, reminding policymakers that welfare debates cannot be divorced from systemic inequality. CNA's governance-oriented frame points to the need for stronger intergovernmental coordination and evidence-based policymaking to prevent regional leaders from adopting controversial, populist measures. Taken together, these recommendations suggest that Indonesia's policy response should not only counter moral condemnation but also integrate human rights safeguards, structural economic reforms, and institutional coordination. This triangulation demonstrates that even when international media prioritize moral evaluation, their diverse treatment recommendations can be leveraged as practical guidance for policy refinement.

Figure 6 reveals three main framing strategies that reflect the geopolitical orientation of each media outlet.

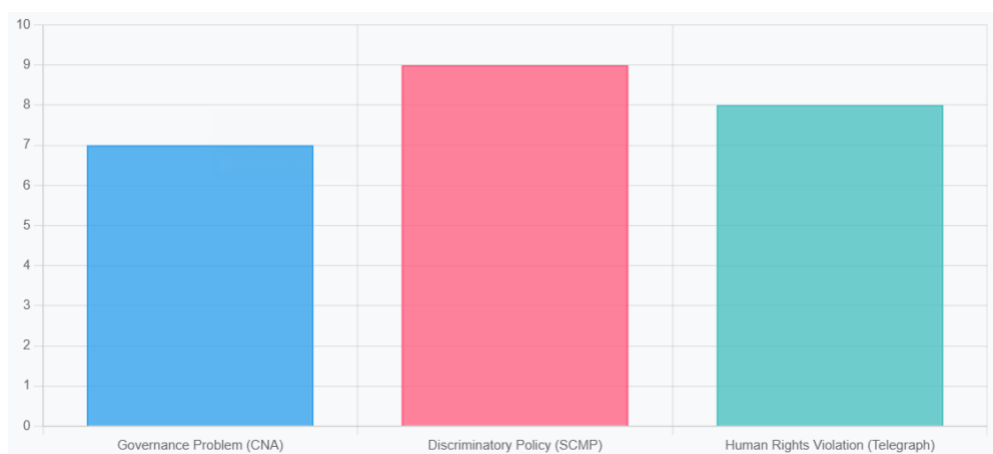


Figure 6. Main Frames Used

Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

SCMP uses *Discriminatory Policy* as the most dominant frame (9/10) with a focus on "*body politics*" and discrimination against poor groups, reflecting Hong Kong/China's sensitivity to policies that are considered to

control the bodies of citizens. The Telegraph emphasizes human rights violations (8/10), highlighting breaches of international standards and voluntary principles, reflecting the Western orientation towards individual human rights as a universal value. CNA utilizes *Governance Problem* (7/10), situating the issue within the systemic context of Indonesia's regional autonomy, thereby demonstrating a more *nuanced* understanding of the complexity of *governance* in Southeast Asia.

This variation in frames confirms the argument made by Rowbotham et al. (2019) that "advocates and opponents use five main *frames*: health, social, economic, practical, and ideological" in the context of controversial public policy. Nevertheless, Rowbotham et al.'s (2019) framework of five frames, developed largely in health policy debates, may not fully explain the intensity of moral condemnation observed here. The vasectomy controversy demonstrates that ideological and moral frames can overshadow practical or economic ones, particularly in non-Western contexts where policies intersect with religion, cultural identity, and postcolonial sensitivities. This suggests the need to adapt their typology when analyzing reproductive or poverty-related policies in global South contexts. In this case, the three media outlets employed a combination of social (discrimination), ideological (human rights), and practical (*governance*) frames, with varying emphases according to their respective geographical orientations and *target* audiences.

Figure 6 illustrates the main frames employed by the three outlets, showing how each drew upon different cultural and ideological repertoires. The South China Morning Post (SCMP) emphasized the discriminatory nature of the policy, framing it as authoritarian "body politics." The Telegraph focused on human rights concerns and equated the proposal with "eugenics." Meanwhile, Channel News Asia (CNA) approached the issue as a governance problem tied to regional autonomy and policy implementation. These frames are not only evident in the coding but also in the textual expressions of each outlet, as summarized in the table below:

Table 5. Main Frames Used in Media Coverage

Media Outlet	Direct Quote	Main Frame (Entman)
SCMP	<i>"This idea is really ridiculous. This is a very blatant form of 'body politics.'"</i>	Discriminatory Policy Frame → frames vasectomy plan as authoritarian control and systemic discrimination against the poor.
The Telegraph	<i>"...tying birth control to welfare payments ... is a</i>	Human Rights Violation Frame → interprets the policy as coercive and

Media Outlet	Direct Quote	Main Frame (Entman)
CNA	<i>human rights violation.” and references to “eugenics.” “This is not coercion, but an invitation for shared responsibility. We provide incentives, not just empty appeals.”</i>	unethical under international human rights standards. Governance Problem Frame → positions the policy within regional autonomy, emphasizing policy coordination and pragmatic solutions.

Source: Research Processed Data, 2025

The inclusion of these quotes shows that while all outlets rejected the policy, their dominant frames diverged sharply: SCMP drew from a discourse of authoritarianism and systemic injustice, The Telegraph from universal human rights and historical traumas associated with “eugenics,” and CNA from a pragmatic governance perspective. This confirms Rowbotham et al.’s (2019) observation that contentious public policies are framed through overlapping lenses—social, ideological, and practical but the balance between these frames depends heavily on geopolitical and cultural contexts.

These frames reflect deeper editorial orientations. SCMP’s critical stance resonates with Hong Kong’s identity as a post-colonial society wary of authoritarianism. The Telegraph reproduces a Western liberal press ethos, where reproductive rights are linked to international norms and historical abuses like eugenics. CNA, by contrast, embodies Southeast Asia’s preference for pragmatic stability, framing the policy not as a moral outrage but as a governance failure. Thus, the dominance of certain frames is not random but rooted in the outlets’ editorial cultures and geopolitical contexts.

This variation in framing also underscores the role of media ideology, which can be better understood through established theoretical perspectives. Hall’s (1980) encoding/decoding model explains how media messages are encoded with dominant ideological positions that audiences negotiate differently; SCMP’s focus on “body politics” reflects a negotiated reading shaped by Hong Kong’s colonial past and sensitivity to authoritarian control. Likewise, the Western liberal press tradition observed in The Telegraph resonates with (1988) *propaganda model*, which shows how media in liberal democracies reproduce dominant elite discourses—in this case, universal human rights norms. From a postcolonial perspective, CNA’s pragmatic “governance problem” frame aligns with findings by Chakravartty and Zhao (2008), who argue that

Asian media often balance critique with the imperative of stability, producing a moderated ideological stance. By incorporating these perspectives, the ideological orientations of international media toward Indonesia's vasectomy policy can be understood not as isolated editorial preferences but as manifestations of deeper structural logics of communication shaped by history, political economy, and cultural identity.

It is essential to recognize that framing intensity may also be influenced by contextual factors beyond textual coding. Variations in article length, editorial style, publication timing, or the geopolitical context of each outlet may influence the prominence of certain elements. These potential confounding factors, while not directly measured in this study, represent limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Beyond these analytical constraints, this study also faces broader limitations. The analysis was restricted to three English-language outlets and therefore may not represent the full spectrum of international coverage, let alone local Indonesian media. Researcher positionality and the interpretive nature of qualitative coding may also introduce bias, even though intercoder reliability was ensured. As such, the findings should be interpreted as illustrative patterns rather than definitive conclusions, and further research with larger and more diverse samples is necessary to validate and expand these results.

This study offers several implications for understanding framing in international media. The persistence of Entman's four elements demonstrates that his framework remains analytically robust in the digital era, even as López-Rabadán (2022) notes transformations in framing research. The dominance of moral evaluation across outlets highlights the tendency of global media to universalize certain values, particularly human rights and social justice, in order to resonate with transnational audiences. At the same time, the greater variation in treatment recommendations highlights how problem-solving approaches are shaped by cultural and political contexts, resulting in distinct prescriptions for action rather than a single global consensus.

Beyond theoretical relevance, the findings carry practical significance for Indonesia's public diplomacy. International responses to domestic policies are shaped by value systems and historical memories that vary across regions. SCMP's portrayal of the policy as "discriminatory" reflects Hong Kong and China's sensitivity to state control over reproduction. The Telegraph's framing of "human rights violations" aligns with Western liberal traditions of moral universalism, and CNA's focus on "governance

problems” mirrors Southeast Asia’s preference for pragmatic, stability-oriented analysis. These divergent framings show that Indonesia cannot assume a uniform reception of its policies; rather, communication strategies must be segmented and tailored to the ideological orientation of each media context.

For Indonesia, these findings provide preliminary insights into how communication strategies might be tailored to different audiences. Anticipating negative moral evaluations likely requires more than defensive explanations, but the evidence here remains tentative. Rather than offering definitive prescriptions, the results suggest potential directions: CNA’s emphasis on governance may shape regional perceptions of Indonesia as administratively weak, SCMP’s framing could reinforce authoritarian stereotypes among Chinese and Hong Kong publics, and The Telegraph’s human rights discourse might position Indonesia as a violator of international norms. Viewed together, these patterns suggest that framing is not a passive reflection of policy, but an active construction of global meaning, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive and strategically differentiated communication in Indonesia’s engagement with the world.

Building on these empirical findings, Indonesia’s public diplomacy strategies should be explicitly aligned with the dominant frames identified in each outlet. The overwhelming presence of moral evaluation (90%) suggests that international narratives will most likely moralize Indonesia’s domestic policies, requiring proactive communication that foregrounds ethical justifications and social responsibility. For audiences shaped by the SCMP’s discriminatory-policy framing, Indonesian diplomacy should emphasize structural poverty alleviation and equitable development to counter perceptions of authoritarianism. In the Telegraph’s human-rights-oriented context, communication must directly address voluntariness and align policies with international norms to neutralize “eugenics” accusations. Meanwhile, CNA’s governance framing indicates a regional expectation for systemic coordination, suggesting that Indonesian representatives should highlight institutional reforms, inter-ministerial collaboration, and evidence-based policymaking. These differentiated strategies, derived directly from the empirical frame distribution, demonstrate how statistical patterns and textual evidence can inform context-specific public diplomacy initiatives.

These findings also provide a theoretical contribution to framing studies in non-Western and transnational contexts. While Western traditions often emphasize universal values such as human rights and liberal democracy, this case shows that Entman’s elements are mediated

by different historical memories and cultural orientations: SCMP highlights “body politics” due to experiences with reproductive control in China, CNA foregrounds governance problems consistent with Southeast Asia’s consensus-oriented political culture, and The Telegraph stresses human rights violations in line with the Western liberal ethos. Yet Entman’s framework also has limitations when applied transnationally. The dominance of moral evaluation may reflect not only ideological orientations but also journalistic routines that privilege controversy, while CNA’s pragmatism could equally be read as a strategy of risk-avoidance in Southeast Asian media. These alternative readings suggest that framing theory remains robust but must be critically expanded to capture variations in media systems, professional practices, and political constraints, thereby moving beyond confirmation of universality to a more nuanced understanding of global meaning-making.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze how three international media outlets, Channel News Asia, South China Morning Post, and The Telegraph, framed West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi’s proposal that vasectomy should be a prerequisite for social assistance. The findings indicate that all three outlets employed predominantly negative framing, with a strong emphasis on moral evaluation (90 percent) and problem definition (85 percent); however, their approaches varied according to ideological and geopolitical orientations. The South China Morning Post underscored a “discriminatory policy” frame linked to body politics, The Telegraph highlighted “human rights violations” associated with eugenics, while Channel News Asia emphasized a “governance problem” within the context of regional autonomy.

Theoretically, this research suggests the continuing relevance of Entman’s framing framework in the global and digital media era, while providing tentative evidence that the balance between diagnostic and prognostic frames is mediated by transnational news logics rather than being a universal tendency. These contributions should be interpreted cautiously, as they are based on a limited dataset and primarily serve to illustrate rather than confirm broader theoretical claims.

In practical terms, the findings may provide preliminary insights for Indonesia’s public diplomacy. The results tentatively indicate that negative moral evaluations cannot be addressed solely through defensive explanations but may require more proactive and culturally sensitive narratives. Potential directions could include highlighting governance coordination in Southeast Asian contexts, emphasizing voluntarism in

human rights-oriented Western outlets, and foregrounding structural justice in East Asian contexts. However, these insights should not be viewed as prescriptive recommendations, but rather as exploratory reflections that require further testing with broader empirical evidence.

This study also faces several limitations. The analysis was restricted to three English-language outlets and a single controversial policy, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. It did not include longitudinal analysis to track changes over time, audience reception studies to assess how frames are interpreted, or systematic consideration of potential cultural bias in coding and interpretation. These limitations suggest that the findings should be treated as illustrative patterns rather than definitive conclusions.

Future research could address these gaps by expanding the sample to include local Indonesian and additional international outlets, employing longitudinal designs to capture changes in framing d

ynamics, and integrating audience-based studies to explore reception and meaning-making. Comparative cross-cultural analyses would also enrich understanding of how geopolitical, cultural, and ideological factors mediate international media framing. Such extensions would not only refine the theoretical application of framing analysis but also provide more robust foundations for strategic public diplomacy.

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