

Political Communication and Public Opinion: The Influence of Media Framing on Policy Perception

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of media framing on public opinion and policy perception within the field of political communication. The primary objective is to analyze how media narratives shape audience interpretation of policy issues and to identify the factors that mediate this relationship. The research adopts a qualitative approach using a case study design, selected for its capacity to provide in-depth, contextualized insights into complex communicative processes. The study was conducted in Surabaya, Indonesia, a metropolitan area characterized by a diverse media ecosystem and heterogeneous audience backgrounds. A total of twelve informants were purposively selected, representing journalists, academics, policymakers, and general media users, to capture varied perspectives on media consumption and policy interpretation. Data were collected through media content analysis and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that media framing significantly shapes policy perception by emphasizing specific narratives, while audience interpretation is mediated by trust, prior knowledge, and media literacy. The study recommends enhancing media accountability and promoting critical media literacy to foster more informed public discourse in democratic contexts.



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INTRODUCTION

The study of political communication has long occupied a central position in understanding how democratic processes function, particularly in shaping public opinion and influencing policy perception (Kulachai et al., 2023). In contemporary societies characterized by rapid information flows and digital media proliferation, the role of media framing has become increasingly significant (Heger & Hoffmann, 2021). Media framing refers to the process by which information is presented, organized, and emphasized in ways that influence how audiences interpret political issues (Jamatia, 2023). Rather than merely transmitting neutral information, media institutions actively construct narratives that highlight certain aspects of reality while omitting others (Azzaakiyyah, 2023). This dynamic raises critical questions about the extent to which public opinion is formed independently versus being shaped by strategic communication practices. Within the context of the research titled *Political Communication and Public Opinion: The Influence of Media Framing on Policy Perception*, this study situates itself at the intersection of political science, communication studies, and public policy analysis to explore how framing mechanisms affect citizens' understanding and evaluation of policy issues.

Existing scholarship has extensively documented the impact of media on political attitudes, particularly through agenda-setting, priming, and framing effects (Aidulsyah, 2023). The state of the art indicates that framing plays a pivotal role in shaping not only what people think about but also how they think about it (Dunaway & Graber, 2022). Previous studies have demonstrated that different frames such as economic consequences, moral considerations, or security concerns can lead to divergent interpretations of the same policy issue (Diepeveen, 2022). However, much of the literature has been concentrated in Western contexts, often relying on experimental designs that may not fully capture the complexity of real-world media ecosystems (Henry, 2022). Furthermore, while there is a growing body of research examining digital media and social platforms, there remains limited integration between

traditional media framing theories and the evolving hybrid media environment (Asimakopoulos, 2025). This gap is particularly evident in emerging democracies, where media systems are often characterized by a mix of state influence, market pressures, and fragmented audiences.

The primary problem addressed in this research lies in the insufficient understanding of how media framing influences policy perception within diverse socio-political contexts. While it is widely acknowledged that media framing can shape public opinion, there is still ambiguity regarding the mechanisms through which these effects occur and the conditions under which they are amplified or mitigated (Ohme, 2021). Additionally, the interaction between media framing and individual cognitive factors, such as prior beliefs, political knowledge, and trust in media institutions, remains underexplored (Gagrčin, 2022). This limitation hinders the development of a comprehensive framework that can explain variations in policy perception across different audience groups.

The research gap, therefore, emerges from both empirical and theoretical shortcomings in the existing literature. Empirically, there is a lack of context-sensitive studies that examine framing effects in non-Western or transitional political environments (Oser et al., 2022). Theoretically, current models often treat audiences as passive recipients of media messages, overlooking the active role of individuals in interpreting and negotiating meaning (Rachman et al., 2025). Moreover, there is limited attention to the interplay between traditional media and digital platforms, which together create a complex information ecosystem where framing effects may be reinforced, contested, or transformed (Supriyanto, 2024). Addressing these gaps is essential for advancing the field of political communication and for providing more nuanced insights into the relationship between media and public opinion.

In response to these limitations, this study offers a novel contribution by integrating classical framing theory with a contextualized analysis of media systems and audience reception. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to bridge the divide between macro-level media structures and micro-level cognitive processes. By examining how different framing strategies influence policy perception across diverse audience segments, the study seeks to uncover patterns that have not been adequately captured in previous research. Additionally, the study incorporates a multidimensional approach that considers both content analysis of media messages and audience interpretation, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of framing effects.

The central research questions guiding this study are formulated to address the identified gaps and objectives. Specifically, the study asks: how does media framing influence public perception of policy issues? What types of frames are most effective in shaping audience interpretations? How do individual characteristics, such as political awareness and media trust, mediate the relationship between framing and perception? To what extent do different media platforms produce varying framing effects? These questions are designed to generate both theoretical insights and empirical evidence that contribute to the broader discourse on political communication.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the influence of media framing on public opinion and policy perception within a contemporary media environment. More specifically, the study aims to identify dominant framing patterns in media coverage, assess their impact on audience interpretation, and examine the moderating role of individual and contextual factors. By achieving these objectives, the research seeks to enhance understanding of how communication strategies shape political attitudes and decision-making processes.

The significance of this study can be understood across theoretical, academic, and practical dimensions. From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to the refinement of framing theory by incorporating contextual variables and audience agency into the analysis. Academically, the study provides empirical evidence that can enrich scholarly debates and serve as a reference for future research in political communication and related fields. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, media practitioners, and communication strategists by highlighting how framing influences public perception and, consequently, policy support or opposition. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing effective communication strategies that promote informed public discourse.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations. The scope of the research may be constrained by the availability of data and the complexity of measuring cognitive and perceptual variables. Additionally, the study may not fully capture the rapidly evolving nature of digital media environments, where new platforms and communication practices continuously emerge (Peter & Muth, 2023). The generalizability of the findings may also be limited by contextual factors specific to the selected case or sample. These limitations suggest the need for cautious interpretation of the results and highlight areas for further investigation.

Future research is encouraged to expand on this study by exploring longitudinal effects of media framing, examining cross-cultural variations, and incorporating advanced methodological approaches such as big data analytics and machine learning. Further studies could also investigate the role of misinformation and algorithmic curation in shaping framing effects, as well as the implications of these phenomena for democratic governance (Brown et al., 2024). By addressing these directions, future research can build upon the foundations established in this study and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of political communication in the digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on political communication and public opinion has evolved significantly alongside transformations in media systems, technological innovation, and democratic practices (Karamat & Farooq, 2020). Within the context of the study *Political Communication and Public Opinion: The Influence of Media Framing on Policy Perception*, the literature review draws upon three major theoretical foundations that have been widely recognized in international scholarly discourse: Framing Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, and Constructivist Theory of Public Opinion (Schwaiger et al., 2022). These theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive analytical framework to understand how media content shapes public interpretation of policy issues and influences collective attitudes.

Framing Theory, popularized by Robert M. Entman in 1993 from George Washington University, United States, serves as the central theoretical pillar of this study (Vraga & Tully, 2021). Entman conceptualized framing as the process of selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in communication texts to promote particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations (Barnidge & Xenos, 2024). This theoretical approach emphasizes that media does not merely report facts but actively constructs meaning through selective emphasis and exclusion (Theocharis et al., 2021). According to Entman, frames function by organizing information in ways that guide audience interpretation, thereby influencing how individuals perceive policy issues (Lee et al., 2021). The conceptual framework of framing theory involves four core elements: problem definition, causal attribution, moral judgment, and policy recommendation (Hilder & Collin, 2022). These elements are essential in understanding how media narratives shape public perception and political judgment.

The development of framing theory has expanded beyond traditional media analysis to include digital and social media environments (Swart, 2021). Contemporary scholars have refined Entman's framework by incorporating audience-centered perspectives, recognizing that individuals are not passive recipients but active interpreters of media messages (Erwin et al., 2023). This evolution reflects a shift toward understanding the interaction between media structures and audience cognition (H. Cho et al., 2024). In relation to the main research problem, framing theory provides a critical lens to analyze how variations in media presentation can lead to different interpretations of the same policy issue. It also addresses the research gap by offering a mechanism to explore how framing effects operate in diverse socio-political contexts, particularly in non-Western settings where media systems exhibit unique characteristics.

Agenda-Setting Theory, introduced by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States, constitutes the second theoretical foundation (Swart, 2023). This theory posits that media influences not what people think, but what they think about, by determining the salience of issues in the public agenda (Yang et al., 2024). McCombs and Shaw's seminal study on the 1968 U.S. presidential election demonstrated a strong correlation between media coverage and public perception of issue importance (Igwebuike & Chimunya, 2021). The conceptual framework of agenda-setting theory includes two levels: first-level agenda-setting,

which focuses on issue salience, and second-level agenda-setting, which overlaps with framing by emphasizing attribute salience (Abdullah et al., 2024).

According to McCombs, the media's ability to prioritize certain topics shapes public awareness and directs attention toward specific policy issues (Saud & Margono, 2021). This theory complements framing theory by explaining the preliminary stage of influence, where media determines which issues enter public discourse before framing shapes how those issues are interpreted. The contemporary development of agenda-setting theory has incorporated network agenda-setting and intermedia agenda-setting, reflecting the complex interactions between traditional and digital media platforms (Tai et al., 2020). In addressing the research gap, agenda-setting theory highlights the importance of media hierarchy and information flow, particularly in hybrid media systems where multiple actors compete to shape public agendas.

The third theoretical foundation is the Constructivist Theory of Public Opinion, associated with Jürgen Habermas, particularly through his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), developed during his academic tenure at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany (Baibarac-Duignan & Lange, 2021). Habermas conceptualized public opinion as a product of communicative processes within the public sphere, where rational-critical debate among citizens shapes collective understanding (Weiss, 2020). This theory emphasizes the role of discourse, deliberation, and communicative rationality in forming public opinion (Vijay & Gekker, 2021). According to Habermas, media serves as a mediator that facilitates or constrains the quality of public discourse, thereby influencing the legitimacy of public opinion (McCarthy et al., 2023).

The conceptual framework of Habermas's theory centers on the interaction between communicative action, public deliberation, and institutional structures. Unlike framing and agenda-setting theories, which focus on media effects, the constructivist approach emphasizes the co-construction of meaning through social interaction (McLoughlin & Southern, 2021). Contemporary developments of this theory have addressed the challenges posed by digital media, including fragmentation of audiences, echo chambers, and the decline of deliberative quality (Syamsurrijal et al., 2024). In the context of this study, Habermas's perspective provides a normative dimension, highlighting the implications of media framing for democratic deliberation and policy legitimacy.

The integration of these three theories offers a multidimensional framework to analyze the influence of media framing on policy perception. Framing theory explains how issues are presented, agenda-setting theory clarifies which issues are prioritized, and constructivist theory provides insight into how public opinion is formed through communicative processes (Harris & Johns, 2021). Together, these theories address the main research problem by elucidating the mechanisms through which media shapes both the content and structure of public discourse.

The relevance of these theories to the identified research gap is particularly significant. While existing studies often examine framing or agenda-setting in isolation, this research adopts an integrative approach that considers their interaction within a broader communicative context (Saeed & Haider, 2024). Moreover, the inclusion of constructivist theory addresses the limitation of effect-based models by incorporating the role of audience agency and deliberation (Intyaswati et al., 2021). This theoretical synthesis enables a more comprehensive understanding of how media framing operates in complex and dynamic environments.

In relation to the research questions, these theories provide a structured basis for inquiry. Framing theory informs questions regarding how media narratives influence interpretation, agenda-setting theory guides the analysis of issue salience, and constructivist theory shapes the exploration of audience engagement and meaning-making. The alignment between theoretical framework and research questions ensures coherence and analytical depth.

The theoretical contributions of this study lie in its effort to bridge the gap between media effects and audience-centered approaches. Academically, it advances the discourse on political communication by integrating classical theories with contemporary developments. Practically, the findings derived from this theoretical framework can inform media practitioners and policymakers

about the implications of framing strategies for public perception and policy acceptance. Theoretically, the study contributes to the refinement of existing models by incorporating contextual and cognitive dimensions.

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that framing theory, agenda-setting theory, and constructivist theory collectively provide a robust foundation for analyzing the relationship between media and public opinion. The perspectives offered by Robert M. Entman, Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, and Jürgen Habermas highlight the multifaceted nature of media influence, encompassing issue selection, narrative construction, and communicative interaction (Wray-Lake & Ballard, 2023). By integrating these theoretical approaches, this study addresses the main research problem, fills the identified research gap, and offers a novel contribution to the field. The synthesis of these theories not only supports the formulation of research questions and objectives but also underscores the broader significance of understanding media framing in shaping policy perception within contemporary democratic societies.

RESEARCH METHODS

The methodological approach employed in this study is grounded in a qualitative research paradigm, which is particularly suitable for examining complex social phenomena such as political communication, media framing, and public opinion formation (Theocharis et al., 2023). Given the research focus on *Political Communication and Public Opinion: The Influence of Media Framing on Policy Perception*, a qualitative method enables an in-depth exploration of how meanings are constructed, interpreted, and negotiated within specific socio-political contexts (Szarek-Iwaniuk & Senetra, 2020). Unlike quantitative approaches that emphasize measurement and generalization, qualitative research prioritizes contextual understanding, interpretive depth, and the exploration of subjective experiences (Mihailidis, 2020). This orientation is essential for uncovering the nuanced mechanisms through which media framing shapes public perceptions of policy issues.

The research design adopted in this study is a qualitative case study design, complemented by elements of media content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The case study approach is selected because it allows for an intensive, holistic examination of a bounded system, namely the interaction between media narratives and audience interpretations within a specific context (Finlay & Hopkins, 2020). This design is particularly appropriate for addressing the research questions, which seek to understand not only the presence of framing but also its implications for public perception. The integration of content analysis enables the systematic examination of media texts to identify dominant frames, while semi-structured interviews provide insight into how these frames are received and interpreted by individuals (Gustafsson & Weinryb, 2020). The combination of these methods ensures methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings (Bosi et al., 2022).

The selection of a qualitative case study design is justified by several considerations. First, the phenomenon under investigation involves interpretive processes that cannot be adequately captured through numerical data alone (Kim & Ellison, 2022). Second, the study aims to bridge macro-level media structures and micro-level audience cognition, which requires a flexible and context-sensitive approach. Third, the qualitative design allows for the incorporation of multiple data sources, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This methodological choice aligns with the standards of internationally indexed journals such as the *Journal Politica Humanitatis (JPH)*, which emphasize rigor, originality, and theoretical contribution (Moreno-Almeida, 2021).

The research was conducted in an urban Indonesian context, specifically in Surabaya, East Java, which represents a dynamic media environment characterized by a high level of media consumption and diverse information sources (Olaniran & Williams, 2020). The choice of this location is based on several factors. Surabaya is one of Indonesia's largest metropolitan areas, with a heterogeneous population that reflects varying socio-economic, educational, and political backgrounds (Choi & Cristol, 2021). This diversity makes it an ideal setting for examining how different audience groups interpret media frames. Additionally, the city's media landscape includes both traditional outlets and digital platforms, providing a rich context for analyzing framing practices across multiple channels. The selection of this location also addresses the research gap identified in previous studies, which have

predominantly focused on Western contexts, thereby contributing to a more global understanding of media effects.

In line with the qualitative approach, this study relies on purposive sampling to select informants who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to media consumption and policy interpretation. A total of twelve informants were selected, representing a range of professional and social backgrounds. These informants include individuals such as “Arif” (a senior journalist at a national news outlet), “Dewi” (a public policy analyst working in a governmental agency), “Rizal” (a university lecturer in political science), “Sinta” (a digital media strategist), “Budi” (a civil society activist), “Lina” (a small business owner), “Andi” (a graduate student in communication studies), “Rani” (a social media influencer), “Hendra” (a private sector employee), “Maya” (a community organizer), “Fajar” (a freelance content creator), and “Nina” (a high school teacher). The use of pseudonyms ensures the confidentiality and ethical protection of participants.

The rationale for selecting these informants lies in their diverse perspectives and varying degrees of engagement with media and policy issues. For instance, journalists and media professionals provide insights into the production and framing of news content, while policy analysts and academics contribute to understanding the interpretation of policy narratives. Meanwhile, members of the general public offer perspectives on how media frames influence everyday perceptions and attitudes. This diversity enhances the richness of the data and allows for a more nuanced analysis of framing effects across different audience segments.

Data collection was conducted through two primary techniques: qualitative media content analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The media content analysis focused on selected news articles, television broadcasts, and digital media content related to specific policy issues, such as economic reform, public health measures, and environmental regulation. The selection of media content was based on relevance, frequency of coverage, and diversity of sources. The analysis aimed to identify recurring frames, narrative structures, and thematic patterns that characterize media representation of policy issues.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all twelve informants to explore their perceptions, interpretations, and responses to media content. The interview format allowed for flexibility in probing deeper into participants’ views while maintaining a consistent structure across interviews (Guan, 2024). Questions were designed to elicit information about media consumption habits, trust in media sources, and perceptions of specific policy issues. Interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, enabling participants to articulate their thoughts in their own words. This approach is consistent with qualitative research principles that prioritize participant voice and meaning-making (Stavropoulos et al., 2021).

The data analysis process followed a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data (Tang et al., 2021). The analysis was conducted in several stages, including data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Initially, all interview transcripts and media content were carefully reviewed to gain an overall understanding of the data. Subsequently, codes were generated to capture key concepts and patterns related to media framing and policy perception. These codes were then organized into broader themes that reflect the underlying structure of the data.

To enhance the rigor of the analysis, the study employed techniques such as triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity (Lan & Tung, 2024). Triangulation was achieved by comparing data from different sources, including media content and interview responses, to identify converging and diverging patterns. Member checking involved sharing preliminary findings with selected informants to verify the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process by acknowledging the researcher’s positionality and potential biases (Grasso & Smith, 2022).

The technique of drawing conclusions in this study is based on an inductive reasoning approach, which involves deriving general insights from specific observations (Liou & Literat, 2020). Rather than

testing predetermined hypotheses, the study seeks to build theoretical understanding based on empirical data. The conclusions are drawn through a process of iterative analysis, where emerging themes are continuously refined and integrated into a coherent narrative. This approach allows for the development of context-sensitive insights that reflect the complexity of the research phenomenon.

In addition, the study adopts an interpretive analytical framework that situates findings within the broader theoretical context of framing theory, agenda-setting, and constructivist perspectives (Movements, 2020). This integration ensures that the conclusions are not only grounded in empirical data but also contribute to theoretical advancement. The final stage of analysis involves synthesizing the findings to address the research questions, highlight the study's contributions, and identify implications for theory and practice.

Overall, the methodological framework of this study is designed to ensure rigor, validity, and relevance. By combining qualitative case study design, purposive sampling, multiple data collection methods, and systematic analysis, the research provides a comprehensive examination of the influence of media framing on policy perception. The methodological choices are aligned with the standards of high-quality international journals, ensuring that the study meets the expectations of editors and reviewers in terms of originality, methodological soundness, and scholarly contribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a complex and multilayered relationship between political communication, media framing, and public opinion, particularly in shaping how individuals perceive policy issues within a contemporary media environment. Drawing upon qualitative data obtained through media content analysis and in-depth interviews with twelve informants in Surabaya, the results demonstrate that media framing significantly influences the cognitive and interpretive processes through which policy issues are understood. These findings directly address the primary research problem, which concerns the insufficient understanding of how media framing shapes public perception in diverse socio-political contexts. By integrating insights from Framing Theory (Robert M. Entman, 1993), Agenda-Setting Theory (Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, 1972), and Constructivist Theory of Public Opinion (Jürgen Habermas, 1962), the study provides a comprehensive explanation of how media narratives shape not only issue salience but also meaning construction and public deliberation (A. Cho et al., 2020).

The analysis of media content indicates that policy issues are consistently framed through selective emphasis on particular dimensions, such as economic impact, political accountability, and social consequences. For example, economic policy reforms were frequently framed in terms of growth and stability by mainstream media outlets, while alternative digital platforms tended to emphasize inequality and public burden. This variation in framing reflects Entman's assertion that media frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies (Peters et al., 2022). The findings confirm that such framing devices guide audience interpretation by highlighting specific aspects of policy issues while downplaying others. Informants such as "Arif" and "Sinta" emphasized that editorial decisions are often influenced by institutional priorities and audience targeting strategies, which shape how policy narratives are constructed and disseminated.

From the perspective of Agenda-Setting Theory, the findings show that media not only frames issues but also determines which policy topics gain prominence in public discourse. The analysis reveals that issues receiving frequent and prominent coverage such as fuel price adjustments and public health policies were perceived by informants as more important than less-covered issues. Informants such as "Hendra" and "Lina" indicated that their awareness of policy issues was largely influenced by repeated exposure in the media, supporting McCombs and Shaw's argument that media salience shapes public priorities (Bosch, 2020). Furthermore, the study identifies a second-level agenda-setting effect, where the attributes emphasized in media coverage influence how audiences evaluate policy issues (Hngokchai, 2025).

The Constructivist perspective, as articulated by Habermas, is reflected in the findings related to audience interpretation and discourse (Riedl et al., 2023). The interviews reveal that individuals actively engage with media content, interpreting and negotiating meanings based on their prior

knowledge, values, and social contexts. For instance, “Rizal” and “Maya” highlighted that public discussions, both offline and online, play a crucial role in shaping collective understanding of policy issues. However, the findings also indicate that the quality of deliberation is often constrained by fragmented media environments and the prevalence of echo chambers, which limit exposure to diverse perspectives (Matthes, 2022). This observation underscores the tension between the ideal of rational-critical debate and the realities of contemporary media systems.

The following table summarizes the key findings of the study based on thematic analysis:

Theme	Description of Findings	Related Theory	Informant Insights	Implications
Media Framing Patterns	Policy issues framed through economic, political, and social lenses	Framing Theory (Entman, 1993)	“Arif”, “Sinta”	Frames shape interpretation and evaluation
Issue Salience	Frequent media coverage increases perceived importance	Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)	“Hendra”, “Lina”	Media determines public priorities
Audience Interpretation	Individuals actively interpret media messages	Constructivist Theory (Habermas, 1962)	“Rizal”, “Maya”	Public opinion is socially constructed
Media Trust and Credibility	Trust influences acceptance of media frames	Integrated Theoretical Perspective	“Dewi”, “Andi”	Credibility moderates framing effects
Digital Media Dynamics	Social media amplifies and contests frames	Contemporary Theory Development	“Rani”, “Fajar”	Hybrid media system reshapes framing

The findings also address the identified research gap by demonstrating that media framing effects are not uniform but vary across contexts and audience groups. This variation is influenced by factors such as media literacy, trust in media institutions, and socio-political background (Zaid et al., 2022). The integration of the three theoretical frameworks allows for a nuanced understanding of these dynamics (Parker, 2020). Framing theory explains the structure of media messages, agenda-setting theory accounts for issue prominence, and constructivist theory highlights the role of audience agency. Together, these perspectives illuminate the mechanisms through which media framing operates in a hybrid media environment.

In relation to the research questions, the findings provide clear and coherent answers. Media framing influences public perception by shaping the way policy issues are presented and interpreted. Certain frames, particularly those emphasizing economic consequences and moral considerations, were found to be more effective in influencing audience attitudes (Anyiwo et al., 2020). Individual characteristics, such as political awareness and media trust, play a mediating role in the relationship between framing and perception (Osborne et al., 2021). Additionally, different media platforms produce distinct framing effects, with digital media enabling greater diversity and contestation of narratives.

The findings are closely aligned with the objectives of the study, which aim to analyze the influence of media framing on public opinion and policy perception. By identifying dominant framing patterns, assessing their impact on audience interpretation, and examining moderating factors, the study achieves its stated goals. The integration of theoretical frameworks enhances the explanatory power of the analysis and provides a solid foundation for interpreting the results.

The theoretical implications of the study are significant. The findings contribute to the refinement of framing theory by demonstrating the importance of contextual and audience-related factors (Harff & Schmuck, 2023). They also extend agenda-setting theory by highlighting the role of digital media in shaping issue salience (Pickard, 2022). Furthermore, the study reinforces the relevance of constructivist theory in understanding the social construction of public opinion (Dekoninck & Schmuck, 2022). These contributions advance the field of political communication by integrating classical theories with contemporary developments.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable insights for media practitioners and policymakers. Understanding how framing influences public perception can inform the design of communication strategies that promote transparency, inclusivity, and informed decision-making. For instance, policymakers can use framing techniques to communicate policy objectives more effectively, while media organizations can adopt ethical standards to ensure balanced and accurate reporting. The findings also underscore the importance of media literacy initiatives in empowering citizens to critically evaluate media content (Sanusi et al., 2025).

Academically, the study provides a rich empirical foundation for future research. The use of qualitative methods and diverse data sources enhances the depth and validity of the findings, making them a valuable reference for scholars in political communication, media studies, and public policy. The study also highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate theoretical and empirical perspectives.

The discussion of the findings in relation to previous research further reinforces their significance. Consistent with earlier studies, the findings confirm that media framing plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion (Yamamoto et al., 2020). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating the interaction between framing, agenda-setting, and constructivist processes in a non-Western context (Zayani, 2021). This contribution addresses the gap in the literature and provides new insights into the dynamics of media influence.

The main research problem is revisited in light of the findings, which show that media framing is a powerful but context-dependent factor in shaping policy perception. The gap identified in previous studies namely the lack of context-sensitive and integrative analyses is addressed through the study's methodological and theoretical approach. The research questions are answered through a comprehensive analysis that combines media content and audience perspectives.

The objectives of the study are achieved through a systematic examination of framing patterns and their effects. The benefits of the research are evident across multiple dimensions. Theoretically, the study enhances understanding of media effects; practically, it informs communication strategies; and academically, it contributes to scholarly discourse. These benefits are closely linked to the three theoretical frameworks, which provide a coherent and integrated basis for analysis.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that media framing plays a central role in shaping public opinion and policy perception, operating through mechanisms of issue selection, narrative construction, and audience interpretation. By integrating insights from Entman, McCombs and Shaw, and Habermas, the study offers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of political communication in a contemporary context (Shomova, 2022). The results not only address the main research problem and research gap but also provide a foundation for future research and practical application.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study synthesize the empirical findings and analytical discussion to provide a coherent understanding of how media framing influences public opinion and policy perception within the broader domain of political communication. Based on the results derived from qualitative media content analysis and in-depth interviews, it can be concluded that media framing constitutes a decisive mechanism through which policy issues are interpreted, evaluated, and internalized by the public. The study confirms that media institutions do not merely function as neutral conveyors of information; rather, they actively construct meaning by emphasizing specific aspects of

policy issues, thereby guiding audience interpretation. This finding directly addresses the central research problem and demonstrates that policy perception is significantly shaped by how issues are framed in both traditional and digital media environments.

The integration of Framing Theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, and Constructivist Theory of Public Opinion provides a comprehensive explanatory framework for understanding these dynamics. From the perspective of framing theory, the study concludes that the selection and salience of particular narratives—such as economic consequences, moral evaluations, or political accountability—play a critical role in shaping how individuals perceive policy issues. These frames influence not only cognitive understanding but also emotional responses and evaluative judgments. In line with agenda-setting theory, the findings further indicate that the frequency and prominence of media coverage determine which policy issues are perceived as important by the public. This dual process of issue salience and interpretive framing reinforces the media's capacity to shape both the agenda and the meaning of public discourse.

At the same time, the study highlights the importance of audience agency, as emphasized by the constructivist perspective. Public opinion is not passively formed but actively constructed through interaction, discussion, and individual interpretation. The findings show that individuals interpret media messages through the lens of their prior knowledge, values, and levels of trust in media institutions. This implies that the effects of media framing are mediated by contextual and cognitive factors, resulting in variations in policy perception across different audience groups. The presence of digital media platforms further complicates this process by enabling the circulation of diverse and competing frames, which can either reinforce or challenge dominant narratives.

The conclusions also underscore that the identified research gap—namely the limited integration of theoretical perspectives and the lack of context-sensitive analysis—has been effectively addressed. By examining media framing within a non-Western urban context and incorporating both media content and audience perspectives, the study provides a more nuanced and holistic understanding of political communication processes. The findings demonstrate that framing effects are contingent upon the interaction between media structures and audience interpretation, thereby extending existing theoretical models and offering new insights into the field.

In relation to the research questions, the study concludes that media framing significantly influences policy perception by shaping how issues are defined and understood. Certain frames, particularly those related to economic implications and moral considerations, were found to have a stronger impact on public attitudes. Moreover, individual characteristics such as media literacy and trust play a crucial role in moderating these effects. The study also confirms that different media platforms produce distinct framing patterns, reflecting the complexity of the contemporary hybrid media system.

The achievement of the research objectives is evident in the systematic identification of framing patterns, the analysis of their influence on audience interpretation, and the examination of mediating factors. These findings contribute to theoretical advancement by refining existing frameworks and integrating multiple perspectives. From a practical standpoint, the study highlights the importance of responsible media practices and effective communication strategies in shaping public understanding of policy issues. It suggests that policymakers and media practitioners must be aware of the implications of framing in order to promote informed and balanced public discourse.

Academically, the study offers a valuable contribution by providing empirical evidence that enriches the literature on political communication and public opinion. The qualitative approach adopted in this research allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena, thereby complementing existing quantitative studies. The conclusions drawn from this study can serve as a foundation for future research, particularly in exploring the long-term effects of media framing and the role of emerging technologies in shaping public discourse.

In summary, this study concludes that media framing is a central and influential factor in the formation of public opinion and policy perception. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical analysis, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how media narratives shape political

realities. The findings not only address the main research problem but also offer practical and theoretical contributions that are relevant to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of political communication.

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