

Media Framing and Audience Reactions to the 3-Kg LPG Restriction: A Youtube Comment Analysis of Metro TV's "Putus Distribusi 'Gas Melon' Di Pengecer"

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ABSTRACT: This study analyses public sentiment, thematic concerns, and media framing regarding Indonesia's subsidized LPG policy through YouTube comments on a Metro TV discussion video. Using sentiment analysis, we find that 53% of comments express negative sentiment, indicating public dissatisfaction with policy implementation. Thematic analysis reveals three key concerns: (1) economic burdens on small retailers, (2) government mismanagement, and (3) affordability and accessibility issues. The dominance of "Adian" in the discussion suggests that his criticism of the policy resonated strongly with the audience, reinforcing negative perceptions of the government. Conversely, other figures, such as Nurdin Halid, received significantly less attention, indicating weaker public engagement with their perspectives. Media framing played a significant role in shaping discourse, amplifying anti-government narratives and scepticism toward state institutions. The findings highlight the need for more transparent and inclusive LPG distribution policies and better engagement with affected stakeholders. Additionally, the study underscores the growing influence of social media in shaping policy debates, suggesting that future research should examine the long-term impact of digital discourse on governance and public trust.

KEYWORDS: Sentiment Analysis, Media Framing, LPG Subsidy Policy, Public Opinion, YouTube Comments, Thematic Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) in 3-kg cylinders, commonly referred to as *gas melon*, is a subsidized commodity intended for low-income households and micro-businesses in Indonesia. Subsidized Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) policy is one of Indonesia's public policy instruments aimed at ensuring the availability of clean energy, particularly for lower-middle-income households. In the 2025 State Budget (APBN), the Indonesian government, in collaboration with the House of Representatives (DPR), has allocated IDR 87.6 trillion for subsidized 3-kg LPG, an increase from the IDR 85.6 trillion budgeted in 2024 (E-Media DPR RI, 2025). Additionally, the government has set the 2025 subsidized LPG volume at 8.17 million tons, demonstrating a strong commitment to maintaining energy accessibility for the public (Kementrian ESDM RI, 2024). However, in practice, its distribution has often been misdirected, with many affluent households and large-scale businesses also accessing the subsidized gas. To address this issue, the government has implemented restrictions on the sale of 3-kg LPG, requiring data verification for buyers at official distributors.

As of February 1, 2025, all official 3-kg LPG distributors across Indonesia must enforce a distribution system based on registered user data. Consumers wishing to purchase subsidized LPG must register using their National Identification Number (NIK) or Business Identification Number (NIB) for micro-enterprises. This policy aims to ensure that subsidies are provided only to eligible groups. However, its implementation has sparked debates, particularly among small retailers and consumers who have long been accustomed to unrestricted purchasing. Reports from a Pertamina sub-distributor in Jakarta indicated that daily gas allocations were limited to only 5–10 cylinders per agent, significantly below public demand (Metro TV, 2025b). In Cirebon, the shortage was particularly visible, where local retailers struggled to obtain stock (Radar Cirebon TV, 2025). A key factor contributing to the scarcity was a government regulation prohibiting retailers from selling directly to consumers. Instead, residents were required to purchase LPG from official distributors, often leading to long queues and inconvenience. The regulation also forced some residents to travel long distances to obtain subsidized gas, while others resorted to buying from informal markets at inflated prices. This situation triggered widespread dissatisfaction, with many citizens questioning the effectiveness of the subsidy policy.

This situation is further complicated by the lack of an official press release explicitly outlining the policy's implementation mechanism. To date, no publicly available regulation has been found that explicitly states the legal basis for these restrictions.

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Nevertheless, media outlets especially online platforms have reported that the policy is based on Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Decree No. 37.K/MG.01/MEM.M/2023 on Technical Guidelines for the Proper Distribution of Certain Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Metro TV, 2025a). Due to the absence of easily accessible official sources, the role of media in shaping public opinion about this policy has become increasingly significant.

Media outlets play a crucial role in shaping public perception through news framing and agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to Entman (1993), the media do not merely convey information but also highlight certain aspects of an issue while omitting others (Entman, 1993). News reports frequently portray gas shortages as a failure of government management, exacerbating negative public sentiment. Moreover, inadequate government communication such as the lack of proper socialization regarding the prohibition on retail sales has fuelled public frustration. This selective emphasis plays a crucial role in how the public interprets and reacts to a given policy. A notable instance of public discontent occurred when the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, Bahlil Lahadalia, visited a gas queue in South Tangerang and was confronted by a citizen protesting the policy's impact. The individual voiced concerns about the lack of public consultation, stating, "At least give us time to adjust, don't impose sudden restrictions that make things harder for us" (TEMPO, 2025). This incident highlights how poor policy communication can shape public perception negatively.

As a means of disseminating information, media outlets also utilize digital platforms such as YouTube to expand their reach. One particularly notable video is a segment from a television talk show titled "Putus Distribusi 'Gas Melon' di Pengecer, Adian: Jangan Kambing Hitamkan Warung #KONTROVERSI" (METRO TV, 2025), which discusses the LPG distribution restrictions. This video has garnered significant public attention, as indicated by a higher number of comments compared to the full version of the discussion, suggesting increased public engagement in the media-framed debate.

This study examines the framing strategies employed by the media in discussing the 3-kg LPG distribution policy using this YouTube video as the primary research object. Additionally, it analyzes public reactions in the comment section to understand how media framing influences public perception of the policy.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine how media framing shapes public perception of the 3-kg LPG restriction policy. The research focuses on framing analysis, which investigates how the media, particularly through YouTube content, constructs narratives that influence audience interpretation. The study assumes that media discourse plays a crucial role in shaping public attitudes toward government policies, particularly when official regulations are not clearly communicated.

By analyzing the narrative structures, language choices, and thematic emphasis used in the selected YouTube video, this study seeks to understand how the media positions the policy and how the public responds to it through their comments. This approach aligns with Entman's (1993) framing theory, which highlights how media selectively emphasize certain aspects of an issue while omitting others, thereby influencing public perception (Entman, 1993).

B. Research Object

Primary research object of this study is a segment from the MetroTV program "KONTROVERSI", uploaded to YouTube on February 6, 2025, under the title:

"Putus Distribusi 'Gas Melon' di Pengecer, Adian: Jangan Kambing Hitamkan Warung #KONTROVERSI"

This edited segment which has been viewed 1,101,276 times, was uploaded directly by MetroTV as a standalone clip from the full program episode titled "Gara-Gara Gas". The segment presents a debate on the 3-kg LPG restriction policy, featuring political figures, government representatives, economists, and ordinary citizens discussing the impact of the policy.

The speakers in the video include:

1. Nurdin Halid (Deputy Chairman of Commission VI, Golkar Party)
2. Dedek Prayudi (Presidential Communication Office Spokesperson)
3. Agus Pambagio (Public Policy Analyst)
4. Adian Napitupulu (Politician, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle - PDI-P)
5. Rusdi Efendi (Citizen)
6. Defiyan Cori (Constitutional Economist)

This video is chosen as the research object because it is not merely a raw recording of the discussion but a selectively edited segment, indicating potential media framing by MetroTV. The shorter version of the debate has garnered significantly higher engagement in the comment section compared to the full-length video, suggesting that it has shaped public discourse more effectively.

C. Data Source

This study relies on two primary sources of data:

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1. Media Content (Framing Analysis) – The video itself serves as a key unit of analysis, where its visual presentation, language, tone, and thematic emphasis are examined to identify how the issue is framed.
2. Public Response (Comment Analysis) – The comment section of the video provides insight into public reactions and interpretations of the policy based on the media's framing. The comments represent spontaneous, real-time feedback from various individuals who engage with the media discourse.

YouTube is chosen as the primary data source due to its role as a digital public sphere where political discourse occurs in an open and interactive manner (Papacharissi, 2002). Unlike traditional media, where audience reception is difficult to measure, YouTube provides a space where viewers actively respond to news content, offering a valuable perspective on how framing influences perception.

D. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection process involves systematic identification and extraction of media content and public responses:

1. Selection of the Media Content. The study focuses on a specific Metro TV YouTube video that discusses the LPG policy. The video is analysed to identify key framing elements, including word choice and expert opinions.
2. Collection of Public Reactions. Comment section of the video is examined to capture public sentiment and responses to the media framing. Comments are selected based on engagement levels and thematic relevance to ensure they reflect meaningful discourse.
3. Categorization of Media Frames and Public Perception. Dominant frames used in the media content are identified based on thematic analysis. Public comments are categorized according to their alignment with or opposition to these frames, providing insight into how framing influences public opinion.

E. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study employs the following validation techniques:

1. Triangulation of Data Sources. The framing analysis of the video is cross-referenced with news articles, government statements, and social media discussions to assess consistency in the policy's portrayal.
2. Thematic Saturation in Comment Analysis. The comment analysis continues until recurring themes are identified, ensuring that the findings represent the dominant perspectives within public discourse.

By applying these techniques, this study ensures that the analysis of media framing and public perception is both methodologically sound and reflective of real-world discourse.

F. Data Analysis

The collected data is analyzed through framing analysis and public perception analysis, focusing on how media narratives shape audience reactions. The analytical framework includes:

1. Framing Analysis of the Media Content
 - a. Issue Definition: How the LPG restriction policy is described in the video.
 - b. Causal Interpretation: What causes or problems are emphasized by the media.
 - c. Moral Evaluation: What values or judgments are attached to the policy.
 - d. Treatment Recommendation: What solutions or actions are suggested by the media.

This framework is based on Entman's (1993) four functions of framing, allowing a structured examination of the media's narrative construction.

2. Public Perception Analysis (Comment Analysis)
 - a. The comment section is examined to identify how viewers respond to the media framing.
 - b. Comments are categorized into alignment with media framing, opposition to media framing, or neutral/alternative perspectives.
 - c. Patterns in audience engagement (e.g., likes, replies) are analysed to determine the level of public resonance with the media's portrayal.

By integrating framing analysis and public response analysis, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how media coverage of the LPG restriction policy influences public perception and discourse.

III. DISCUSSION AND RESULT

A. Media Framing of the LPG Restriction Policy



Figure 1 Screenshot of Metro TV's "KONTROVERSI" segment

Media framing plays a crucial role in shaping public perception by emphasizing certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others. In the case of Metro TV's coverage of the subsidized LPG distribution controversy, the framing strategies employed reveal implicit biases that influence how the audience perceives both the problem and its potential solutions. This section examines how Metro TV constructs its narrative, the choice of speakers, and the underlying themes that emerge from the discussion.

1) Framing Analysis of the Video Segment

Media outlets have the power to define a problem in ways that shape public discourse. In this discussion, Metro TV positions the issue of subsidized LPG distribution within the broader framework of policy failures and economic struggles, while subtly presenting small retailers (warung) as scapegoats for inefficiencies in the system.

The problem definition revolves around the misallocation and leakage of subsidized LPG, which results in shortages and prevents the intended beneficiaries from receiving government aid. The causal attribution, however, is contested within the discussion:

1. Adian Napitupulu (PDI-P politician) argues that the core issue lies in structural failures in implementation—particularly the widespread practice of illegal blending, which diverts approximately 30% of subsidized gas before it reaches consumers. He asserts that the real culprits are large-scale distributors and middlemen, rather than small retailers who operate with minimal profit margins.
2. Government representatives defend the policy, suggesting that small retailers contribute to distribution inefficiencies, either by selling to non-eligible buyers or through informal and unregulated practices.
3. Policy analysts and economists recognize flaws in the policy execution, yet their voices remain secondary to the dominant clash between political figures.

By structuring the discussion around these conflicting perspectives, Metro TV frames the issue as a matter of government mismanagement rather than an inherent flaw in subsidy policies themselves. This aligns with Entman's (1993) framing model, which explains how media defines problems, attributes cause, evaluates moral dimensions, and suggests solutions. The framing aligns with Entman's Framing Model:

- a. Problem Definition: The gas shortage and subsidy misallocation.
- b. Causal Interpretation: The failure of government oversight and illegal blending practices (Adian's argument) vs. small retailers as contributors to distribution inefficiencies (official narrative).
- c. Moral Evaluation: Government policies are necessary but flawed; small retailers suffer unfairly.
- d. Treatment Recommendation: Improved monitoring and systemic reforms rather than punishing small retailers.

2) Selective Editing and Narrative Emphasis



Figure 2 Adian Napitupulu's Speaking Critique for Government

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The composition of the panel is instrumental in shaping how the issue is perceived. Metro TV includes representatives from various backgrounds politicians, government officials, economists, and a member of the public creating an impression of a balanced discussion. However, a closer analysis reveals asymmetries in how these voices are positioned within the narrative:

1. Adian Napitupulu's critique of government inefficiency dominates the discussion, positioning him as a strong opposition figure. His arguments receive significant airtime and resonate with MetroTV's overarching framing of policy failures.
2. The government's defense, primarily presented through Dedek Prayudi (Presidential Communication Office), appears weaker in comparison. While he provides justifications for the new regulations, his responses are overshadowed by Adian's more direct and populist critique.
3. Agus Pambagio (Public Policy Analyst) and Defiyan Cori (Constitutional Economist) provide technical perspectives but are not the focal points of the debate. Their contributions, while informative, do not shift the primary framing of the issue as a failure of policy execution rather than policy design.
4. Rusdi Efendi (citizen representative) serves to reinforce the public's dissatisfaction, adding emotional weight to the argument that small retailers are unfairly targeted. His inclusion strengthens the framing that government policies disproportionately impact lower-income communities.

The selection of speakers and the relative weight given to their arguments indicate that MetroTV is not merely presenting a neutral debate; instead, the station subtly amplifies criticisms of government inefficiency while maintaining a degree of journalistic balance by including pro-government voices.

3) Thematic Emphasis and Recurrent Narratives

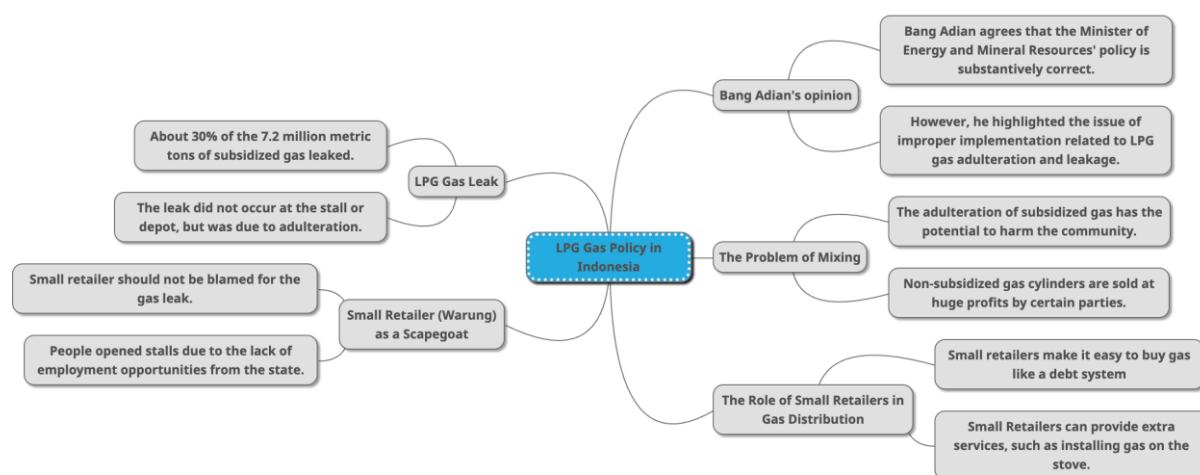


Figure 2 Thematic Mind map of Metro TV's video segment

As seen from Figure 3, the mind map showing what thematic focus discussed in the video segment. Beyond the structural elements of the discussion, Metro TV's framing is also evident in the specific themes it chooses to highlight. The dominant narratives that emerge from the discussion include:

1. **The Scapegoating of Small Retailers**
Metro TV repeatedly emphasizes Adian Napitupulu's argument that small retailers are unfairly blamed for issues they do not control. The notion that government officials are "attacking the wrong target" is a recurring theme, reinforcing the perception that policymakers lack an understanding of the realities on the ground.
2. **Government Inefficiency and Structural Failures**
The discussion frequently returns to the claim that policy execution is flawed, even if the regulations themselves are well-intended. The focus is placed on illegal blending and inadequate enforcement mechanisms, rather than questioning the subsidy system itself. This allows Metro TV to be critical of policy outcomes while avoiding direct opposition to the government's broader economic strategies.
3. **Economic Hardship and Public Distrust in Policy Implementation**
By incorporating perspectives from small retailers and consumers, Metro TV underscores the economic struggles faced by lower-income groups. This framing appeals to public sentiment by portraying small retailers as victims of an unjust system rather than contributors to inefficiencies. The implication is that government policies disproportionately harm marginalized communities, further eroding public trust.
4. **The Need for Reform Rather Than Blame**

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While the discussion is highly critical of current policy implementation, Metro TV does not advocate for the abolition of subsidies. Instead, the framing suggests that reform and better oversight are necessary, shifting the responsibility away from small retailers and toward higher-level enforcement agencies.

4) Implications of Metro TV's Framing

The way Metro TV frames this issue has several broader implications:

1. **Public Opinion and Policy Resistance:** By reinforcing a narrative of government inefficiency and misplaced blame, the coverage may contribute to public resistance against similar regulatory efforts in the future. If citizens perceive policies as unfairly targeting small businesses, compliance and trust in government initiatives may decline.
2. **Political Implications:** The prominence given to Adian Napitupulu's critique suggests that Metro TV's framing aligns more closely with opposition narratives rather than a strictly neutral perspective. While government representatives are included, their arguments are not given equal weight, leading to a perception that the media is actively challenging official policy decisions.
3. **Media's Role as a Political Actor:** This case illustrates how media outlets are not merely passive observers but active participants in shaping political discourse. Metro TV's framing does not simply report the facts—it constructs a particular interpretation of events that influences how the public understands the issue.

B. Public Response in YouTube Comments

1) Overview of Comment Sentiment Distribution

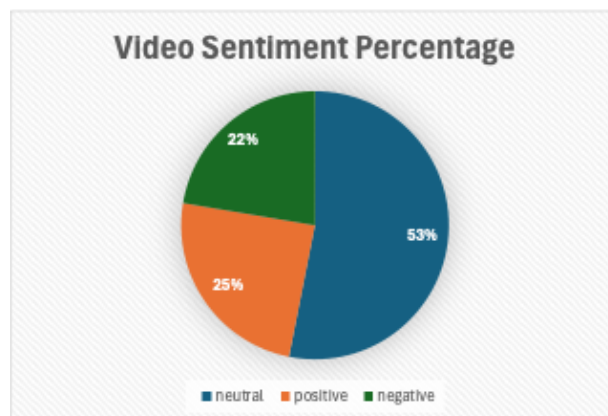


Figure 3 Sentiment Distribution of Metro TV's video segment

The analysis of 7,578 comments under the Metro TV YouTube video as seen in Figure 4 discussing the LPG subsidy policy reveals a strong public reaction, with a majority expressing dissatisfaction. The sentiment distribution is as follows:

- a. Negative comments: 4,025 (53.1%)
- b. Neutral comments: 1,860 (24.5%)
- c. Positive comments: 1,693 (22.3%)

This sentiment breakdown indicates that more than half of the audience reacted negatively, while a smaller proportion expressed neutral or positive views. Such a response suggests widespread discontent, which could stem from either dissatisfaction with the government's policy, scepticism toward the media's framing of the issue, or both.

The dominance of negative comments suggests several key issues that resonated negatively with the audience:

a. Criticism of the LPG Subsidy Policy

Many comments likely highlight concerns about the government's failure to ensure fair distribution of subsidized LPG. The discussion in the video, particularly Adian Napitupulu's argument, suggests that structural failures in implementation—such as illegal blending practices and inefficiencies in monitoring—have led to significant leakages in the subsidy system. The audience's frustration may stem from the perception that ordinary citizens, particularly small retailers (warungs), are being unfairly blamed for systemic failures.

b. Frustration with Economic Struggles

Some negative sentiment may also reflect broader economic dissatisfaction. As highlighted in the discussion, many Indonesians rely on small businesses like small retailers to survive, particularly due to limited job opportunities. The targeting of small retailers in the policy debate may have amplified the frustration of citizens already struggling with economic instability.

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c. Distrust Toward Government and Media

A significant number of comments may also express scepticism about the credibility of Metro TV's coverage. Given the network's perceived proximity to the government, some viewers might believe that the discussion was biased in favour of official narratives. This could explain a high volume of comments criticizing the framing of the discussion, particularly regarding the scapegoating of small retailers and the downplaying of deeper systemic problems.

2) Thematic Analysis of Public Concerns

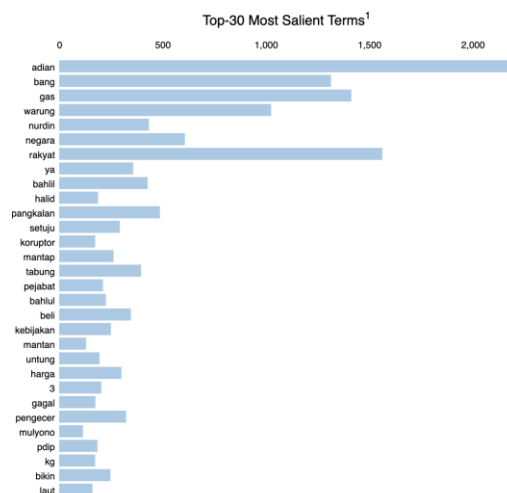


Figure 4 Thematic Distribution of Metro TV's video segment

The word frequency analysis in the "Top-30 Most Salient Terms" as seen in Figure 5 chart provides valuable insights into the dominant themes and narratives surrounding the discussion on subsidized LPG distribution. The high occurrence of certain terms suggests strong public reactions, either in support of or against the perspectives presented in the video.

Several names appear prominently, indicating that public discourse revolves significantly around these individuals:

- Adian (highest frequency): This suggests that Adian Napitupulu is the most discussed figure in the comment section. His strong critique of the government's policy implementation, particularly the scapegoating of small retailers, likely resonated with viewers.
- Nurdin and Halid: These likely refer to Nurdin Halid, a member of the Golkar Party who is part of the discussion. Compared to Adian, his name appears less frequently, suggesting that his stance did not provoke as much engagement.

These findings indicate that Adian's arguments and rhetoric had a significant impact on the audience, making him the focal point of the debate.

Several terms relate directly to the government's subsidized LPG policy and its implications:

- Gas, tabung, pangkalan, pengecer: These words highlight public concerns regarding the supply chain of LPG, including retailers (warungs) and distribution hubs (pangkalan). The presence of "pengecer" (retailers) suggests that many comments discuss how small vendors are affected by the policy.
- Kebijakan (policy): Indicates active discussion about government decisions regarding LPG.
- Harga (price): This suggests that a substantial portion of comments relate to the affordability of LPG, a crucial issue for low-income households.
- Kg, 3: These likely refer to the 3kg LPG cylinders, which are subsidized and primarily used by lower-income consumers.

These terms suggest that much of the public discourse revolves around the challenges of LPG distribution, affordability, and policy effectiveness.

From the Top-30 Most Salient Terms, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Adian Napitupulu dominates public discussion, suggesting that his arguments resonated the most with viewers.
- Public sentiment is critical of government policies, particularly regarding corruption, distribution failures, and the economic burden on small retailers.
- Warungs and small businesses are seen as victims of poor policy implementation, reinforcing the populist angle of the discussion.
- There is strong support for Adian's critique, with many commenters expressing agreement and frustration toward state officials.
- Political and economic contexts play a role, as references to PDIP, corruption, and former policies suggest that some commenters analyze the issue within a broader governance framework.

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These findings align with the sentiment analysis, which showed that most comments (53%) were negative, while neutral and positive comments were significantly lower. The strong emotional engagement, visible in terms like "koruptor," "gagal," and "rakyat," further confirms that public perception of the issue is largely critical.

3) Implications for Media Framing

The prevalence of terms related to LPG distribution, corruption, and small businesses suggests that public response is shaped not just by the news coverage, but also by lived experiences and economic concerns. Metro TV's framing of the debate, which included Adian's strong populist critique, contributed to a public discourse that leans toward government dissatisfaction.

This analysis suggests that future policy discussions on LPG subsidies must consider grassroots perspectives, particularly those of small retailers, to address the real concerns of the people.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of public sentiment, thematic concerns, and media framing regarding the government's subsidized LPG policy, as reflected in YouTube comments. The findings indicate that public discourse is predominantly negative, with 53% of comments expressing dissatisfaction with the policy and its implementation. The high frequency of words such as "koruptor" (corruptor), "gagal" (failure), and "rakyat" (people) suggests that the dominant narrative revolves around government inefficiency, mismanagement, and the disproportionate impact on lower-income communities. This aligns with broader concerns regarding policy transparency, affordability, and accessibility of subsidized LPG.

The thematic analysis reveals three primary areas of concern among the public: (1) the economic burden on small retailers (warungs), (2) perceived government mismanagement and corruption, and (3) the broader implications of the policy on the general public. The frequent mention of "warung," "tabung," and "pengecer" highlights the belief that small businesses are unfairly impacted by distribution restrictions, reinforcing the argument that regulatory measures must account for the realities faced by these vendors. Additionally, the presence of words like "kebijakan" (policy) and "harga" (price) indicates that affordability remains a central issue, with many commenters concerned about potential price hikes and limited access to LPG.

From a media framing perspective, the analysis suggests that Metro TV's coverage played a crucial role in shaping public discourse. The dominance of the name "Adian" in the comment section—far surpassing other key figures—indicates that his framing of the issue as a failure of governance resonated strongly with the audience. His argument that small retailers were scapegoated for systemic distribution problems gained significant traction, reinforcing anti-government sentiment and populist narratives. The relatively lower mention of "Nurdin" and "Halid" suggests that their perspectives were either less influential or did not align with public sentiment. Additionally, the appearance of political terms such as "PDIP" and "mantan" (former) suggests that some viewers contextualized the issue within broader political dynamics, potentially linking LPG policy failures to historical governance issues and partisan interests.

In terms of policy implications, the findings suggest that the government must adopt a more inclusive approach to LPG subsidy distribution, ensuring that small retailers and vulnerable populations are not disproportionately affected. Given the strong public scepticism toward state officials and the perception of corruption, improving transparency in LPG allocation, pricing, and oversight mechanisms could help restore trust. Moreover, the presence of words like "koruptor" and "pejabat" (officials) in the discussion suggests that public demand for accountability remains high. Addressing these concerns through clearer regulations, better monitoring, and stakeholder engagement—particularly with small businesses—could lead to more effective policy implementation.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of social media as a platform for public discourse on policy issues. The extensive engagement in the YouTube comment section demonstrates that policy debates are no longer confined to traditional media but are actively shaped by public participation in digital spaces. Future research should explore how media framing influences policy perception over time and whether similar public reactions occur across other economic policies. Additionally, an investigation into the role of coordinated commenting, misinformation, or political bias in shaping online narratives would provide deeper insights into the intersection of public opinion, media, and governance.

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