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# Media Perspectives on Indonesian Policies against Illegal Online Gambling: A Framing Analysis

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**Abstract:** *Online gambling is illegal in Indonesia, both legally and socially. Nevertheless, it has gained popularity among various segments of society, including teenagers, adults, and even government employees. This study aims to understand the media's perspective on the handling of online gambling in Indonesia. Utilizing Robert Entman's framing analysis theory, the research focuses on four elements: defining the problem, diagnosing the cause, making moral judgments, and providing treatment recommendations. The sample consists of news articles from Kompas.com between June 2023 and July 2024. The findings reveal that Kompas.com emphasizes government actions such as the arrest of gambling operators, online gamblers, and celebrities promoting online gambling as the defined problem. In diagnosing the cause, the reports highlight online gambling as a complex crime involving international networks and cybersecurity issues. The moral judgment presented by Kompas.com underscores the negative impacts of online gambling, press freedom, and societal morality. The treatment recommendations suggested include stringent enforcement and deterrent penalties, as well as international cooperation to eradicate online gambling in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Framing Analysis, Government Responses, Media Perspective, Online Gambling, Indonesia.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has implemented a stringent zero-tolerance policy towards online gambling. Since July 2023, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics has successfully removed nearly one million instances of online gambling content. This aggressive action underscores the government's firm commitment to safeguarding the digital environment against illegal activities. Despite these rigorous governmental efforts, Indonesia houses an estimated four million online gamblers. Notably, 40% of this demographic falls within the age range of 31 to



50 years. Alarmingly, 80,000 of these gamblers are under the age of 10, and an additional 440,000 are between the ages of 11 and 20. This situation highlights a significant challenge in enforcing the zero-tolerance policy effectively across diverse age groups (1).

Between 2021 and 2022, Indonesia witnessed a remarkable increase in online gambling transactions, escalating from IDR 57 trillion to IDR 104 trillion. In response to this alarming trend, the Indonesian government, through the Minister of Communication and Informatics, declared an online gambling emergency in April 2024. This declaration was prompted by a report from the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), which indicated that the turnover from online gambling reached IDR 427 trillion during the period from 2023 to 2024. This significant financial volume underscores the urgent need for stringent regulatory measures to curb the proliferation of online gambling activities (2).

Online gambling is an illegal activity in Indonesia, governed by several legislative frameworks. Indonesia has taken a particularly stringent approach. The country's legislation under Article 27 Paragraph (2) of Law No. 1/2024, the second amendment to the Information and Electronic Transaction Law (UU ITE), explicitly prohibits online gambling. This law prescribes severe penalties for those operating gambling sites, including up to ten years of imprisonment and fines reaching up to Rp 10 billion. This demonstrates Indonesia's firm commitment to combating online gambling, emphasizing severe repercussions as a deterrent against the proliferation of unauthorized gambling activities.

In Indonesia, a significant challenge in regulating online gambling stems from the lack of explicit regulation within the broader prohibitions on gambling activities. This gap in the regulatory framework has led to a proliferation of illegal online gambling operations, which are challenging to monitor and enforce effectively. Furthermore, the existing legal framework established by Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions does not provide specific guidelines for law enforcement agencies, making it difficult to address the complexities associated with online gambling. As a result, the absence of clear regulatory guidelines complicates efforts to combat these illegal activities efficiently (3).

The lack of specific regulations on online gambling in Indonesia, combined with challenges in enforcing existing laws, has created a situation where illegal operators can function with relative impunity. These operators exploit regulatory gaps, significantly undermining the effectiveness of the law. The absence of targeted regulations and the difficulties associated with enforcement contribute to a permissive environment that fosters the proliferation of illegal online gambling activities. This, in turn, is linked to the growth of organized crime and other associated social ills, as these illegal networks often operate unchecked, posing significant challenges to societal and legal order.

The Indonesian government has initiated various measures to combat online gambling, such as establishing a Special Task Force for Online Gambling, blocking websites, and apprehending individuals involved in online gambling activities. Despite these efforts, the impact remains suboptimal as online gambling continues to victimize many Indonesians. Besides involving substantial amounts of money, illegal online gambling is frequently associated with fraud, money laundering, and other criminal activities. Research indicates that all forms of gambling present serious social issues, necessitating earnest and comprehensive intervention strategies (4).



Despite strict prohibitions under Indonesian law, enforcing online gambling regulations presents significant challenges. Many online gambling operations circumvent domestic laws by hosting their servers in foreign countries, complicating the Indonesian authorities' ability to take direct action. This geographical loophole not only hinders legal enforcement but also enables the persistence of these illegal activities, further complicating the regulatory landscape. As such, the effectiveness of Indonesian governance in this area is significantly diminished, requiring innovative and cooperative international solutions to address these cross-border regulatory challenges (5).

On the other hand, media coverage plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and the effectiveness of policies. The way media frames an event significantly influences public reception and perception of that event. Recent scholarly investigations provide a nuanced exploration into the interplay between media framing and government policy. Importantly, these findings reveal that newspaper coverage was strategically aligned with the Australian government's agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such media strategies are instrumental in bolstering governmental efforts, demonstrating the media's pivotal role in both informing the public and shaping societal response to policy initiatives (6). This alignment underscores a complex interplay wherein media coverage not only reflects government priorities but also potentially shapes public perception.

Entman identifies the inherent strength of the multidisciplinary nature of communication studies, which, in his view, facilitates the incorporation of framing studies into this field (7). The concept of framing refers to the capacity of text in communication to organize perceived reality for the audience (8). Experts define framing in various ways, yet they agree broadly that it involves the thematic, stylistic, and factual organization of news to convey a specific narrative (9).

This research focuses on the handling of online gambling by the media during the period from July 2023 to July 2024, a significant timeframe during which Indonesia reported online gambling transactions amounting to IDR 427 trillion and the government declared an emergency situation twice. There have been other studies on online gambling for example, research conducted in Banten focused on the effects of online gambling on mental health found that engaging in online gambling significantly impacts mental health. This line of inquiry underscores the broader implications of online gambling beyond legal and economic dimensions, highlighting its profound effects on individual well-being (10). The analysis highlights the influential role that media assumes during crisis situations, serving not merely as a conduit for information dissemination but also as an active agent in policy formulation through its use of specific framing techniques. According to the author's comprehensive review, existing research has not yet explored the phenomenon of online gambling through the lens of media framing. Consequently, this gap in the literature prompts the research question: How does the media frame its reporting on the Indonesian government's approach to online gambling?

## **2. RELATED WORK**

Adolescents involved in online gambling exhibit significantly higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression compared to their peers who do not gamble. Research further reveals a



positive correlation between online gambling and impulsive behavior among teenagers, influencing their decision-making capabilities in daily life. Specifically, a study conducted with teenagers highlighted that those engaged in online gambling tend to display elevated levels of impulsivity (10). This increased impulsiveness can lead to poor decision-making and heightened risk-taking behaviors, resulting in more extensive social and personal repercussions.

Internationally, a study from Spain observed notable effects following the legalization of online gambling. It found that over half of the underage adolescents had engaged in gambling, with the prevalence of pathological gambling being three times higher than in the general population. This underscores how cultural factors, such as the legalization and promotion of gambling, can significantly impact gambling harm, particularly among the youth. These findings suggest that policy and regulatory frameworks need to consider cultural contexts to effectively mitigate gambling-related harms among adolescents (11).

Given the detrimental effects of online gambling identified in these studies, it is evident that online gambling requires comprehensive policy interventions and government oversight. Governments must carefully consider the ethical merits of various approaches, weighing harm reduction strategies against the outright prohibition of illegal gambling. Harm reduction could involve measures such as setting stringent regulations, offering educational programs about the risks of gambling, and providing support services for those affected. Conversely, outright prohibition tackles the issue more directly but may drive the activity underground, making it harder to regulate and potentially exacerbating the associated risks. Ultimately, the choice of strategy should aim to effectively mitigate the negative impacts of gambling while considering the broader social, economic, and cultural contexts (12).

The phenomenon of online gambling as an illegal activity extends beyond the borders of Indonesia, reflecting a global issue driven by increased internet access and advancements in digital technology. For example, in South Africa, the widespread occurrence of illegal online gambling and the related issue of server-based computer gambling delinquency have necessitated the formulation of an exhaustive investigative model aimed at addressing these challenges. This model serves to counteract the proliferation of such illegal activities, demonstrating a proactive approach to regulatory enforcement in the digital age (13).

Furthermore, a systematic review published by Springer reveals that individuals engaged in online gambling are more likely to experience psychological distress, including anxiety and depression, compared to those who do not gamble problematically. This review elucidates the evolving epidemiology of gambling disorders and emphasizes the consequential public health concerns, highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy adjustments to address these challenges effectively (14).

In the Philippines, a study examined the interplay between consumer attitudes, government regulations, and online gambling behaviors (15). The findings from the study in the Philippines suggest that consumer attitudes and government regulations significantly shape online gambling behavior. Interestingly, the impact of promotional advertisements on gambling tendencies appears to be minimal.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, online gambling is prohibited due to its illegality and the influence of religious and societal norms that emphasize decency. These countries have significant Muslim populations for whom gambling is often considered haram (forbidden)



under Islamic law. This cultural and religious backdrop plays a crucial role in shaping the legal frameworks surrounding gambling, reflecting a broader commitment to uphold moral standards and societal well-being (16). The enforcement of these prohibitions is also a reflection of governmental efforts to align legal practices with prevailing ethical and religious convictions, which are deeply ingrained in the societal fabric of both nations.

Frames can generally be divided into two types: episodic and thematic. Episodic frames focus on specific, individual events and are often linked to individual-level solutions. Conversely, thematic frames provide a broader, multidisciplinary perspective that depicts issues holistically and emphasizes systemic solutions (17).

By emphasizing these disparities and fostering a dialogue about the ethical implications of gambling, the media can play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy. This multifaceted approach can help create a more comprehensive and effective strategy to combat online gambling, ultimately leading to better outcomes for public health and social equity. Integrating these perspectives can also support the development of more targeted and culturally sensitive interventions that address the root causes of gambling-related harm (18).

It indicates that media framing can play a crucial role in shaping government policy, particularly in areas of public health and safety. By framing issues in specific ways, media can influence public perception and, consequently, policy decisions (19). This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding media strategies and their impact on policy formulation and public opinion. It also highlights the need for responsible media practices that consider the broader implications of their framing choices on societal outcomes (20).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study is a qualitative analysis that employs thematic analysis using a cause-consequences-solution coding scheme to examine online gambling coverage in Kompas.com and Tempo.co from July 2023 to July 2024. The use of this qualitative method is based on Entman's argument that frames can be identified through the interpretation of media texts in qualitative research (21). This timeframe was selected based on the government's declaration of an online gambling emergency in June 2023 and April 2024, reflecting a surge in gambling cases and related financial transactions. Kompas.com and Tempo.co were chosen as the primary sources due to their status as major media outlets in Indonesia.

Data for the study were initially collected using Python 3.11 software with the keywords "online gambling" and "Indonesia." Following data scraping, Kompas.com was identified as the news website with the highest coverage of online gambling, with 1,103 articles compared to other websites. Therefore, this research focused exclusively on news coverage on Kompas.com. From the 1,103 articles comprising the population, the authors employed purposive sampling based on the following criteria: non-advertorial articles, unique events, and the most comprehensive coverage of the same event. From the population of 1,103, the resulting sample size that met these criteria was 214 articles. The sampling results indicated that Kompas.com often published multiple articles sourced from a single event, leading the authors to manually select the most complete article for analysis.







relation to the Indonesian government's efforts to combat it, other related cases, and the challenges faced in addressing online gambling.

The findings highlight Kompas.com's emphasis on the detrimental impact of online gambling on the country by detailing the financial losses. The research sample identifies various actors actively involved in addressing online gambling in Indonesia, including the police, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo), the House of Representatives (DPR), local government officials, the military (TNI), the Financial Services Authority (OJK), the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK), the President, and other executive officials. Generally, the government's approach to tackling online gambling involves both preventive and strict enforcement measures against online gambling offenders. Preventive measures by the Indonesian government include raising public awareness about the sanctions. Additionally, finding highlights stringent supervision of government employees as a preventive measure. This is evident in the news sample about Wi-Fi monitoring in Padang City Hall, which underscores the supervision of Wi-Fi usage in Padang.

In terms of enforcement, the police are a key source of information for Kompas.com in reporting the extent of online gambling law enforcement. Attention is given to cases of online gambling ring busts across Indonesia, such as the raid on an online gambling headquarters. The news sample depicts online gambling as a crime closely associated with violence, with Kompas.com emphasizing the discovery of an airsoft gun during the raid.

Beyond the arrests of online gambling operators and participants, enforcement efforts also include the apprehension of social media influencers promoting online gambling on Instagram. Kompas.com highlights prominent national and local celebrities in headlines, such as the arrest of 29 individuals involved in promoting online gambling. Interestingly, while national-level influencers are typically only summoned for interviews, local influencers in various regions face arrest.

Apart from news on online gambling, there are several other related cases from 2023-2024. The first involves a journalist's house fire, resulting in death after the journalist reported on online gambling. This incident not only poses a personal threat but also endangers press freedom.

The second case involves a policewoman who set her husband on fire due to his online gambling addiction. This case draws attention as it shows that even police officers tasked with combating online gambling can also be participants in it.

The third case involves hacking incidents. Several research samples indicate that official government websites have been hacked and turned into online gambling sites. This highlights the government's weak cybersecurity measures and the technical prowess of online gambling operators who easily execute these hacks. This is a critical concern since online gambling is a digital-based activity.

## **B. Diagnose Cause**

Diagnose Cause is an element of framing that emphasizes understanding the causes behind the issue. In this study, Kompas.com highlights several factors contributing to the prevalence of online gambling.



Firstly, the involvement of social media influencers actively promoting online gambling is a significant concern. This involvement illustrates a lack of awareness among public figures regarding the dangers of online gambling. This report underscores how celebrities can be implicated in online gambling activities. Even if they only post links, the sanctions imposed are the same as those for other online gamblers, under Article 45 paragraph 3 in conjunction with Article 27 paragraph 2 of Law Number 1/2024, which amends Law Number 11/2008 on electronic information and transactions.

Secondly, the presence of international syndicates plays a crucial role. Research samples indicate that the international cooperation among online gambling operators highlights the extensive scale and profitability of online gambling, suggesting that this issue cannot be resolved solely within the country. This also relates to the substantial financial turnover in a short period.

Thirdly, there is a low level of awareness among both the public and the government regarding the dangers of online gambling. The involvement of government officials, including police, military personnel, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), and local government heads in online gambling activities, illustrates the lack of awareness among government officials. On the public side, there is still a lack of understanding about the losses and dangers associated with online gambling.

### **C. Make Moral Judgement**

In the Make Moral Judgement element, this research emphasizes several moral values highlighted by Kompas.com through its news reporting. Firstly, the negative impact of online gambling is underscored as an unequivocally detrimental activity that cannot yield any positive outcomes for its participants. This is emphasized in reports such as the news article that highlights the negative financial impact of online gambling, amounting to IDR 170 billion in just three months, reflecting substantial losses in a short period.

Secondly, the value of press freedom is stressed. This value is evident in the news sample about a journalist covering online gambling whose house was subsequently set on fire. Press freedom is an absolute value in Indonesia, and threats or violence against the media represent a direct threat to this fundamental freedom.

Thirdly, the integrity of government officials is called into question. Numerous cases involving government officials in online gambling raise serious concerns about their moral integrity. Government officials, as stewards of the state, should exhibit high integrity and serve as role models for the public. If these officials are themselves involved in online gambling, it undermines their role as exemplars. For instance, the news article titled "Nilai Taruhan Judi Online oleh Pegawai dan Eks Pegawai KPK" highlights the involvement of current and former Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) employees in significant online gambling bets, indicating a severe issue that demands immediate attention. However, the article "KPK Sebut Nilai Deposit Judi 'Online' 8 Pegawai Hanya Rp 168 Juta" uses the word 'only,' which is contradictory, as the focus should be on the compromised integrity rather than the monetary amount.

The government's steps to discipline its members are seen as contradictory to another moral value, namely privacy. This is illustrated in the news sample titled "Sapu Bersih Judi Online, Pemkot Jakut Juga Akan Razia HP ASN," where it is mentioned that the North Jakarta City





Government plans to conduct raids on civil servants' mobile phones. This approach contradicts the value of privacy for the civil servants. The government needs to find alternative methods of monitoring its employees without violating other values.

The moral judgments made by Kompas.com emphasize the unequivocal harm of online gambling, the paramount importance of press freedom, the crucial need for integrity among government officials, and the balance between enforcement and respecting privacy rights.

#### **D. Treatment Recommendation**

The Treatment Recommendation element pertains to the solutions offered to address the issues at hand. Kompas.com's reporting highlights the importance of stringent law enforcement as a critical measure. This necessity arises due to the widespread involvement of individuals from various professional backgrounds in online gambling, which leads to significant financial losses.

Regarding government employees, there is a need for stricter sanctions, as the issue extends beyond financial losses to questions of the integrity of government officials. Effective law enforcement is essential to address these concerns and restore public trust in governmental institutions.

Additionally, raising public awareness is crucial. The public needs to understand that online gambling not only causes personal financial loss but also has broader negative impacts. Other research indicates that online gambling is particularly dangerous for college students, affecting their psychological well-being, involvement in other criminal activities, and academic performance (23).

Kompas.com also stresses the need for non-discriminatory law enforcement. There have been disparities in the treatment of national and local celebrities who promote online gambling, and this inconsistency must be addressed. The government should implement severe sanctions that serve as a deterrent, demonstrating their commitment to tackling online gambling. Furthermore, Kompas.com highlights the necessity of media protection, particularly when covering online gambling cases.

Violence against journalists remains a significant issue in Indonesia, with 1,030 cases reported between 2006 and 2023, according to data from the Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) Indonesia. Ensuring the safety of journalists is crucial for maintaining a free and independent press (24). In 2023, there were 79 cases of violence, including detention, physical violence, threats, intimidation, kidnapping, hostage-taking, equipment confiscation, and more. These actions are in direct contradiction to the spirit of democracy and press freedom espoused by Press Law Number 40 of 1999. Ensuring the safety of journalists is crucial for maintaining a free and independent press.

Given that online gambling is a digital-based activity that transcends geographical boundaries, international cooperation is essential to combat this crime effectively. This includes efforts to shut down online gambling websites, conduct in-depth investigations to dismantle online gambling syndicates, and trace the flow of gambling funds to and from other countries. Additionally, Indonesia needs to strengthen its cybersecurity measures. The hacking incidents perpetrated by online gambling operators reveal the country's inadequate cybersecurity infrastructure. Similar recommendations are made in other research,



emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of online gambling, as it primarily operates within the digital realm.

In summary, Kompas.com emphasizes four key recommendations: enforcing stringent and impartial legal measures, enhancing public awareness of the broader detrimental effects of online gambling, providing protection for journalists, and fostering international cooperation and improved cybersecurity. These actions are essential for mitigating the financial, psychological, and social harms associated with online gambling and ensuring the integrity and safety of those addressing these issues (4).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The research findings indicate that Kompas.com highlights the complexity and urgency of the online gambling issue in Indonesia. Kompas.com emphasizes financial losses, the handling of cases by authorities, and legal sanctions associated with online gambling.

The coverage predominantly uses episodic framing, focusing on arrests and seizures by authorities, as opposed to thematic framing, which discusses data and theories related to the rise of online gambling and its moral implications.

The analysis through four framing elements reveals that online gambling is constructed as a serious issue with significant detrimental impacts, particularly financial losses. The Indonesian government is actively engaged in prevention and enforcement efforts against online gambling, despite facing various challenges. The main factors contributing to the widespread nature of online gambling include promotion by social media influencers, involvement of international syndicates, and a lack of awareness among the public and government officials about the dangers of online gambling.

Kompas.com uncompromisingly underscores the negative impacts of online gambling. The value of press freedom is strongly emphasized, particularly in relation to threats against journalists reporting on online gambling cases. The integrity of government officials is also called into question, especially those involved in online gambling activities.

Kompas.com recommends stringent and fair law enforcement, increased public awareness about the negative impacts of online gambling, protection for journalists, as well as international cooperation and enhanced cybersecurity measures to effectively combat this crime.

This research is limited to textual analysis. Future studies could explore audience reception of these texts or how journalists as communicators convey messages related to online gambling.

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