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Media Discourse Analysis on Deforestation from the Perspective of Sustainable Development in Indonesia

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Abstract - Recurring floods on the island of Sumatra highlight the complex interaction between deforestation, climate change, and environmental governance; however, this relationship is often inadequately represented in media discourse. This study aims to analyze how national and international media frame deforestation and flooding issues from a sustainable development perspective.This research employs a qualitative case study approach, drawing on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which conceptualizes discourse as a social practice that reflects power relations and ideology. Data were collected from 30 national and international news articles published in 2025 using the NCapture feature and analyzed with NVivo 12 Plus. The analysis focuses on lexical patterns, actor representation, and the construction of relationships between deforestation, climate change, and responsibility distribution. The findings reveal significant differences in media framing. National media tend to emphasize extreme weather and disaster impacts, while international media consistently link flooding to deforestation and ecosystem degradation. These patterns indicate that media discourse can either naturalize environmental disasters or expose their structural causes. This study contributes theoretically by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13: Climate Action and SDG 15: Life on Land), offering a novel analytical framework to understand how media discourse shapes environmental accountability and sustainable development narratives in Indonesia.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Deforestation; Flooding in Sumatra; Environmental Communication; Sustainable Development

Introduction

This study aims to analyze how the mass media frames deforestation and flooding on the island of Sumatra from the perspective of sustainable development, using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, which includes text analysis, discursive practices, and social practices (Fairclough, 2023). Within the framework of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulated by the United Nations, this research directly falls within the scope of SDG 15 (Terrestrial Ecosystems) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) (Behnassi et al., 2021). It highlights deforestation as a major issue related to forest sustainability and the protection of terrestrial ecosystems in Indonesia.

However, this environmental crisis is not merely a natural phenomenon; it is also socially constructed through media representations. In this context, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public understanding of environmental disasters by selecting, emphasizing, and framing certain aspects of reality.

From a representation-theoretical perspective, media discourse functions not only to reflect reality but also to construct meaning through language, symbols, and narratives (Batel & Castro, 2018). Environmental issues such as flooding and deforestation are therefore presented through selective representations that highlight particular causes while obscuring others. This process gives rise to ideological contestation, where competing interpretations of environmental disasters, whether as natural events or as consequences of structural problems such as deforestation and governance failure, are produced and negotiated within the public sphere (Archontaki et al., 2024). In Indonesia, particularly in Sumatra, deforestation, land-use change, and weak environmental governance have been identified as key factors contributing to hydrometeorological disasters. Nevertheless, media narratives often differ in how they portray these issues.

Deforestation, land-use change, and weak environmental governance have been shown to increase the risk of hydrometeorological disasters across various regions of Indonesia (Raharjo et al., 2022). The island of Sumatra, in the period 2024–2025, is expected to be affected by widespread socio-economic impacts, culminating in late November to December 2025, when floods and landslides are anticipated to simultaneously hit the provinces of Aceh, West Sumatra, and North Sumatra (Rosaprana et al., 2025). Official data from the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) indicate that as of December 13, 2025, 1,006 people had been reported dead and 217 were missing due to floods and landslides in the three provinces, while millions of residents were directly affected by this disaster (BNPB, 2025).

The situation was exacerbated by international media reports describing the floods in Sumatra as one of the deadliest disasters in the region in 2025 (Igor O'Neill, 2025). In Aceh, floods repeatedly affected settlements in low-lying areas and river basins. Meanwhile, in West Sumatra, several areas experienced flooding accompanied by landslides in areas that were supposed to be protected. In North Sumatra, the level of socio-economic damage has increased due to deforestation for plantation and settlement activities (Basyuni et al., 2018).

This condition shows that flooding in Sumatra cannot be understood solely as a natural phenomenon, but rather as a consequence of the interaction between environmental factors, development policies, and weak natural resource management (Merten et al., 2020). Figure 1 below, obtained from Global Forest Watch (GFW), illustrates the significant loss of tree cover in Sumatra due to land clearing (GFW, 2025). Although there are laws in place, such as Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, which stipulates that all development activities must be based on the principles of sustainable development and prevent pollution and environmental damage (Arimurti & Najicha, 2023).

In the context of deforestation, this law serves as the primary legal basis for assessing the legality of land clearing and the responsibilities of state and business actors in protecting forest ecosystems (Salim & Palullungan, 2021). Law No. 18 of 2013 on the Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction (P3H) comprehensively regulates efforts to prevent, eradicate, and prosecute perpetrators of forest destruction (including illegal logging). This law emphasizes the need for strict law enforcement to prevent such activities and protect forest resources (Rosyadi et al., 2021). Therefore, to better understand the scale and distribution of this issue, an empirical picture is needed that shows the spatial distribution of forest cover. Therefore, the following tree cover map visualization is presented as an initial context for assessing the reality of deforestation in Sumatra. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

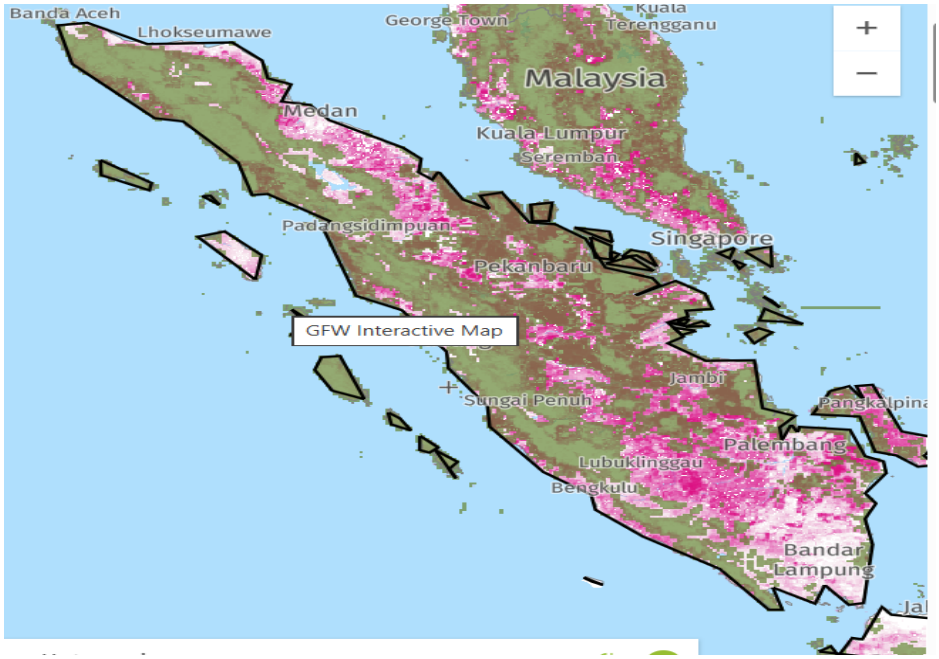


Figure 1. Tree Cover Map of Sumatra
Source: (GFW, 2025)

Figure 1 shows a map of tree cover in the Sumatra region, with green indicating intact natural forests and red indicating areas that have lost tree cover due to deforestation. Spatially, from north to south Sumatra, Aceh had 3.4 Mha of natural forest (59%) in 2020 and lost 13 kha in 2024, North Sumatra had 2.1 Mha (29%) with a loss of 8.1 kha, equivalent to 5.9 Mt CO_2, West Sumatra had 2.3 Mha (54%) with a loss of 11 kha (8.6 Mt CO_2), Riau had 3.7 Mha (41%) and recorded the largest loss of 27 kha (19 Mt CO_2), Riau Islands had 370 kha (45%) with a loss of 680 ha (350 kt CO_2); Jambi has 1.6 Mha (33%) with a loss of 10 kha (7.5 Mt CO_2), Bengkulu has 770 kha (39%) with a loss of 5.4 kha (4.8 Mt CO_2), South Sumatra has 930 kha (11%) with a loss of 3.8 kha (2.9 Mt CO_2), Bangka Belitung has 220 kha (13%) with a loss of 2.9 kha (1.8 Mt CO_2), and Lampung has 250 kha (8%) with a loss of 200 ha (150 kt CO_2) in 2024 (GFW, 2025).

Spatially, this pattern of tree cover loss indicates that deforestation in Sumatra is systematic and correlates with development activities, the expansion of oil palm plantations, and weak environmental governance, ultimately contributing to increased carbon emissions and vulnerability to hydrometeorological disasters, such as flooding (Suhendri & Purnomo, 2017). However, the structural link between deforestation and flooding is not always fully understood by the public. The interpretation of environmental disasters is greatly influenced by how the issue is represented in the public sphere, particularly through media coverage (Syaftiani et al., 2025).

Therefore, analyzing media discourse is crucial for understanding how deforestation and flooding are constructed within the discourse of sustainable development (Ozola et al., 2024). Through the choice of diction, emphasis on actors, and framing of narratives, the media not only conveys information but also constructs meaning, legitimacy, and certain orientations towards environmental policy (Fardogianni, 2025). In many cases, deforestation reporting is presented in a technocratic or economistic manner, while the dimensions of ecological sustainability and social justice are marginalized (Rosadha, Diva, et al., 2025). This condition can influence how the public perceives deforestation and shape support for or resistance to the sustainable development agenda.

Based on the previous statement, although various studies in Indonesia have discussed deforestation from a biophysical, natural resource economic, and environmental policy perspective, such as in studies conducted by Siregar et al (2024) and Aulia et al (2024), which focused on environmental damage and economic impacts, studies examining how the media frames deforestation and flooding are still very limited. Findings in the news suggest that the media often portrays flooding as a result of natural and climatic factors, while the roles of deforestation and environmental governance failures are less prominent. One example is a Detik.com news report on flooding in Sumatra, which was attributed to climate change (Yulianti, 2025). In contrast, foreign media focused more on flooding

caused by forest destruction, mining, and logging (Fransisca Nangoy & Stanley Widianto, 2025). Therefore, this study presents a novel approach by integrating Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model and the theoretical frameworks of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 and 15 to analyze media representations of deforestation and flooding in Sumatra. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships among media discourse, development policies, and environmental sustainability.

This study stems from questions about how the mass media frames deforestation and flooding on the island of Sumatra, the extent to which the media represents deforestation as a structural factor in disasters rather than as a natural factor, and how the construction of this discourse shapes public understanding and the direction of sustainable development policies in Indonesia. In line with this formulation, the objective of this study is to critically analyze media discourse on deforestation and flooding in Sumatra by identifying patterns of issue framing, the actors highlighted, and their relationship to the sustainable development agenda and the national environmental regulatory framework. Thus, this study analyzes media discourse that frames deforestation as an ecological and policy issue and assesses the media's role in shaping public narratives on environmental sustainability, forest governance, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Indonesia.

Theoretical Framework

Deforestation in the Context of Sustainable Development

Deforestation poses a significant challenge to sustainable development in developing countries, often triggered by an economic growth orientation that overlooks environmental carrying capacity (Prasetyanto et al., 2023). A study by Hasan (2025) reveals that increased economic activity and production in developing countries often lead to ecological pressures, including environmental degradation and increased emissions, indicating a weak integration of sustainability principles into development policies. Furthermore, research conducted by Siregar et al. (2024) in Sumatra, particularly in North Sumatra, from 1991 to 2020, reveals that deforestation had a significant impact on community economic development, accounting for 77.24 percent in North Sumatra. This can also influence the prevention of deforestation in areas that have been positively affected by deforestation.

The transformation of forests into oil palm plantations in Sumatra occurs through stages of logging, burning, and informal land legalization. This process is triggered by weak state supervision, economic pressures, and land clearing practices by communities and companies (Purnomo et al., 2019). This situation places deforestation as a consequence of a development model that is not yet fully aligned with the sustainability agenda (Tanveer et al., 2025). There are three main pillars of sustainable development, namely economic, social, and environmental. These three pillars are crucial to ensuring this sector can deliver benefits to all three. Thus, Indonesia can reduce the negative impacts of deforestation, strengthen its position in the international market, and support the transition to environmentally friendly renewable energy (Syaftiani et al., 2025). In addition, of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, at least three are most relevant, namely SDG 15 and SDG 13.

SDG 15 Life on Land

SDG 15 aims to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, including forests, land, biodiversity, and prevent land degradation and species extinction (Pan et al., 2025). This goal emphasizes the importance of balancing development activities with environmental sustainability as a prerequisite for long-term sustainability. SDG 15 identifies deforestation as a major threat to the sustainability of terrestrial ecosystems, particularly in forests such as those in Sumatra (Pokharel, 2025).

Loss of forest cover impacts environmental degradation, declines in watershed hydrological function, and increased risks of flooding and landslides (Berenguer et al., 2024). In media discourse, SDG 15 is crucial for evaluating how the media portrays deforestation as a structural issue of development or merely a natural phenomenon. Research by Siregar et al. reveals that the weak integration of SDG 15 principles into public policy and narratives has enabled forest destruction to persist despite the existence of a regulatory framework.

SDG 13 Climate Action

SDG 13 focuses on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Fernandez-Zarate et al., 2024). The main objective of SDG 13 is to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. SDG 13 emphasizes that climate change is a global challenge that necessitates immediate attention and collaborative efforts from governments, businesses, communities, and individuals worldwide (Filho et al., 2023).

This is crucial because climate change presents severe global challenges to social, economic, and ecological systems (Oweis et al., 2025). SDG 13 is closely related to this study because deforestation contributes significantly to carbon emissions and exacerbates the impacts of climate change, including the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme flooding in Sumatra. In media coverage, floods are often portrayed as the result of extreme weather or global climate change, while the connection between deforestation and environmental mismanagement is less frequently emphasized. Therefore, SDG 13 provides an important framework for analyzing how media discourse can obscure the relationships among human activities, development policies, and climate risks (Tanveer et al., 2025).

Deforestation and Flood Vulnerability in Sumatra

Several studies have shown that environmental degradation from deforestation increases regions' vulnerability to hydrometeorological disasters. Research by Aulia et al. (2024) found that environmental damage, including deforestation and forest fires, worsens environmental quality and increases the impact of disasters in Indonesia, despite ongoing economic growth. Deforestation has a significant impact on flooding in North Sumatra, particularly in Langkat Regency, where physical, economic, and environmental damage from deforestation is widespread (Siregar et al., 2024). The Indonesian government has implemented several policies to address deforestation, including a forest moratorium and REDD+ initiatives (Gatto & Sadik-Zada, 2025). These policies aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote sustainable forest management.

However, in reality, the effectiveness of these policies is often questioned due to conflicts of interest and inadequate law enforcement (Rahadian et al., 2024). Law No. 41 of 1999 on Forestry is a crucial legislative framework that aims to manage Indonesia's forest resources sustainably. This law regulates the functions, allocation, and management of forests in Indonesia (Nugroho & Eko Prasetyo, 2019). One of the primary causes of these floods is the expansion of oil palm and rubber plantations in Jambi Province and other parts of Sumatra, exacerbated by climate change (Merten et al., 2020). If this continues, it will lead to rising river levels and more frequent flooding (Alim & Anggraini, 2021). The above studies are relevant to understanding the floods that occur in various regions of Sumatra, which are part of the accumulation of long-term environmental pressures resulting from deforestation.

Media Discourse Analysis

There are many theories of discourse analysis, one of which is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an approach that combines several disciplines to examine the relationship between language, power, and society (Fairclough, 2023). CDA is based on the idea that the way we use language has a purpose, regardless of whether the choice of discourse is conscious or unconscious (Bodine Al-Sharif et al., 2025). CDA, as developed by Norman Fairclough, was chosen for this study because it views media discourse as a social practice that is neither neutral nor devoid of power relations and ideology (Fattahizadeh & Langeroudi, 2022).

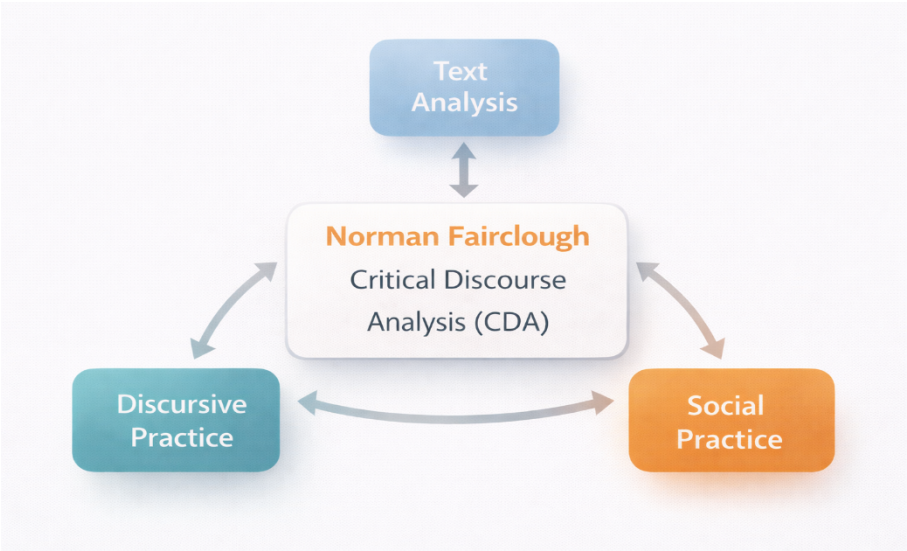


Figure 2. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Scheme
Source: Processed by the author

Figure 2 above illustrates the operation of the CDA scheme, beginning with text analysis that examines word choice, sentence structure, and how the media represent disaster events and deforestation. Furthermore, Discursive Practice examines the process of discourse production and consumption, including media framing patterns, source selection, and reporting trends that highlight natural factors or obscure the role of policy and human activity (Fairclough, 2023). The final stage is Social Practices, which situates media discourse within a broader context, namely power relations, development ideology, and political and economic interests that shape environmental narratives (Rosadha, Putri, et al., 2025).

CDA enables researchers to reveal how the media frames deforestation and flooding not only as natural phenomena, but also as products of dominant policies and development models (Shah & Race, 2024). The integration of these three dimensions enables researchers to understand media discourse not only as a representation of events but also as a social practice that operates through power relations and development ideologies, thereby framing and legitimizing environmental policies within the framework of sustainable development (Chagas & de Paula, 2023).

Material and Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, with critical discourse analysis as its primary method. In addition, the secondary data used includes official reports, journal articles, and relevant national and international news and media reports.

Data Collection Techniques

This study uses the NCapture feature to collect data from various media. 30 news articles have been collected: 15 from national media and 15 from international media, all highlighting the problems of deforestation and flooding in Sumatra in 2025. As well as articles and reports from non-governmental organizations. The data was selected from various sources. Table 1 presents the secondary data sources used in this study. The data was collected from various credible sources. The researcher chose these data sources because they were available and necessary to support the research.

Table 1. Research Data Sources

No	Source	Description
1	National and International Agency Reports	Deforestation index in the Sumatra region (GFW), Data on flood victims in December 2025 (BNPB)
2	Journal, Article	Publications discussing deforestation in the Sumatra region

3	National and international news	News media from Kompas.com, Antara News, Detikcom, Tempo.co, BBC, Al Jazeera, The Guardian, Reuters

Source: Written by the Author

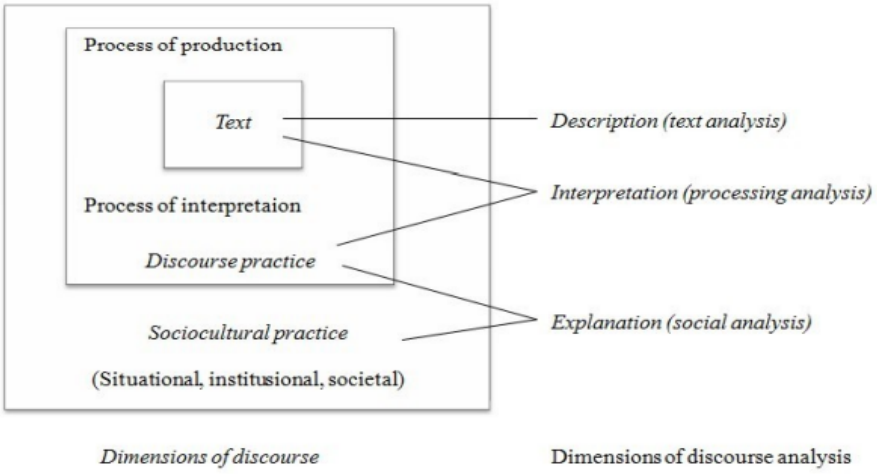


Figure 3. CDA Theoretical Framework
Source: Fairclough (2023)

Figure 3 illustrates Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, which conceives of discourse as a social practice comprising three interrelated dimensions: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. At the most micro level, Text, the analysis focuses on the description of linguistic elements such as word choice, sentence structure, and style, which are analyzed through the description stage (text analysis).

The intermediate level is Discourse Practice, which covers the process of production and the process of interpretation, namely how texts are produced, distributed, and interpreted by social actors; at this stage, analysis is carried out through interpretation (processing analysis). Meanwhile, the macro level, Sociocultural Practice, places discourse in a broader situational, institutional, and social context, enabling researchers to explain the power relations, ideologies, and social structures that underlie the emergence of discourse through explanation (social analysis) (Fairclough, 2023).

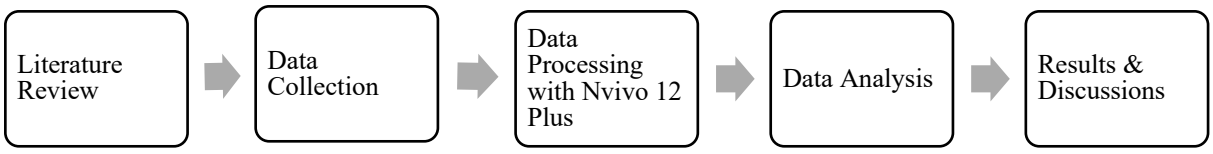


Figure 4. Research Flow
Source: Processed by the author

Data Analysis Techniques

The results of flood data analysis on the island of Sumatra, conducted by national and international media, processed using NVivo 12 Plus software, are presented in this section. Empirical findings, such as word patterns, term relations, and actor representations that appear in news texts, are discussed exclusively without providing theoretical interpretations or conceptual discussions.

This study has limitations in terms of the amount of data, specifically, 30 news articles, which is relatively limited for broad generalizations about the national and international media ecosystem. Therefore, the findings of this study are exploratory and qualitative. Further research is recommended using a larger dataset and a longer time period.

Result and Discussion

The results of flood data analysis on the island of Sumatra, conducted by national and international media, processed using NVivo 12 Plus software, are presented in this section. Empirical findings, such as word patterns, term relations, and actor representations that appear in news texts, are discussed exclusively without providing theoretical interpretations or conceptual discussions.

Dominant Word Patterns in Media Reporting (Text Analysis)

This section begins with a visualization of the text analysis results, intended to reveal patterns, trends, and semantic relationships in media coverage of flooding in Sumatra. It also provides an initial overview of trends in the words used in media coverage, particularly regarding environmental factors, governance, and actors' responsibilities.

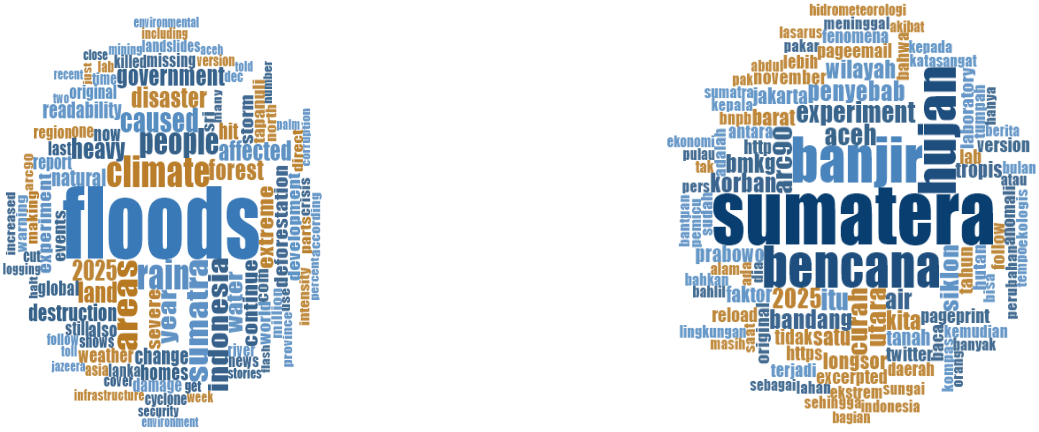


Figure 5. Word Cloud Visualization
Source: International & National News processed NVivo 12 Plus

Figure 5 illustrates the text level, where the dominance of certain words indicates how the media represents flooding, as evident in the word cloud visualization, which highlights the differences in lexical patterns between national and international media. In the international media, the most dominant words include floods, deforestation, climate, forest, destruction, and global. This pattern indicates that terms related to the environment and climate change consistently appear in the news. In contrast, the word cloud of national media is dominated by words such as floods, Sumatra, disaster, rain, victims, region, and water. The dominance of these terms shows that national media coverage focuses more on the aspects of the disaster, the affected areas, and the direct impact on the community.

Visualization Results of Text Search Query (Discursive Practice)

Results of text search query analysis to identify the relationship between terms and discourse context in media reports on flooding in Sumatra. This analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus. At the level of discursive practice, these findings show how the media constructs and links the issue of flooding to a specific context.

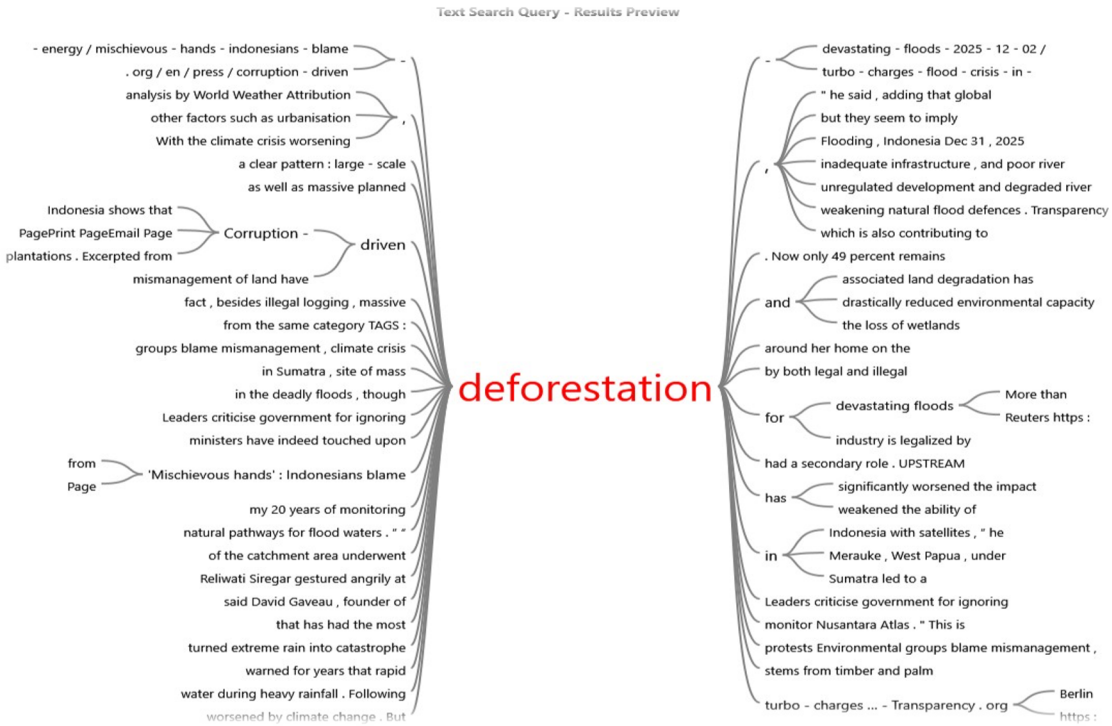


Figure 6. Visualization of Text Search Query
Source: Processed by the researcher using NVivo 12 Plus

The visualization results in Figure 6 show that the term deforestation appears as a main node connecting various text fragments, with recurring discourse branches such as illegal logging, plantations, land mismanagement, corruption-driven governance, degraded rivers, and loss of wetlands. This interconnectedness shows that deforestation consistently occurs alongside land management, plantation expansion, and environmental degradation. In addition, the visualization shows the link between deforestation and broader environmental impacts, including the weakening of natural defenses against flooding and the increasing scale and intensity of flooding in 2025.

Actor-Issue Relations in Media Coverage (Social Practice)

At the level of social practice, these findings show how actors and issues are represented in unequal relationships. The visualization in Figure 7 shows the pattern of interrelationships between actors, media, and environmental issues.

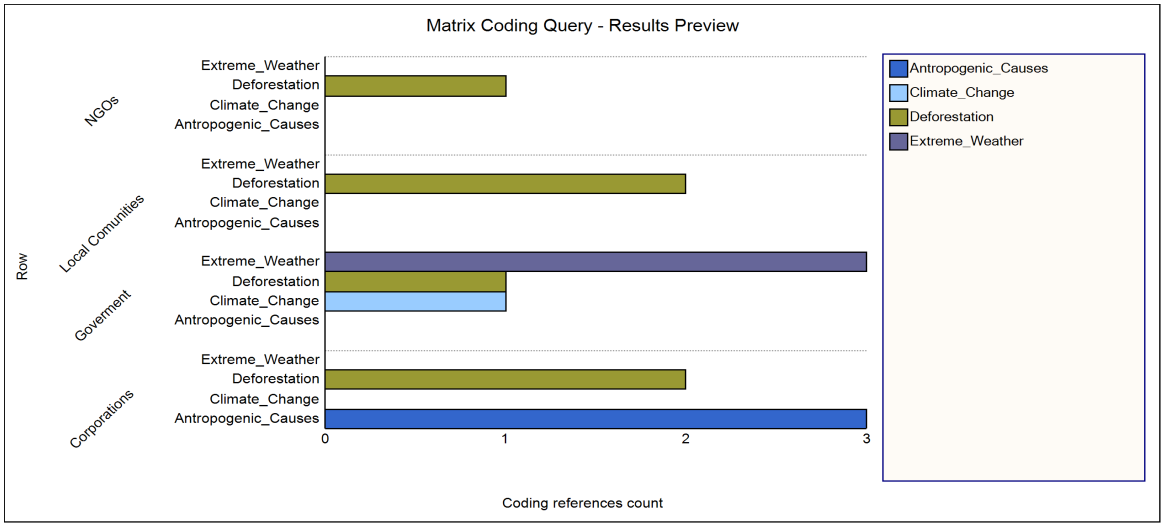


Figure 7. Visualization of Matrix Coding Query
Source: Processed by researchers using NVivo 12 Plus

Figure 7 illustrates the relationships among social actors (NGOs, local communities, government, and corporations) and the main issues in flood coverage on the island of Sumatra: anthropogenic causes, climate change, deforestation, and extreme weather. This visualization shows that deforestation and anthropogenic causes are most often associated with corporations and the government, while extreme weather is more often attributed to the government, reflecting the media's tendency to frame the state as a crisis manager rather than a structurally responsible party. On the other hand, local communities and NGOs are more often represented in discussions of the impacts of deforestation and climate change than as decision-makers. This pattern confirms the research findings that media discourse has not distributed environmental responsibility evenly, and tends to obscure the role of actors with economic and political power in the deforestation process (Rosadha, Diva, et al., 2025).

Furthermore, this study presents the results of matrix coding, visualized in a project map, to illustrate the structure of the relationships between the media analyzed, both national and international, in their reporting on flooding in Sumatra.

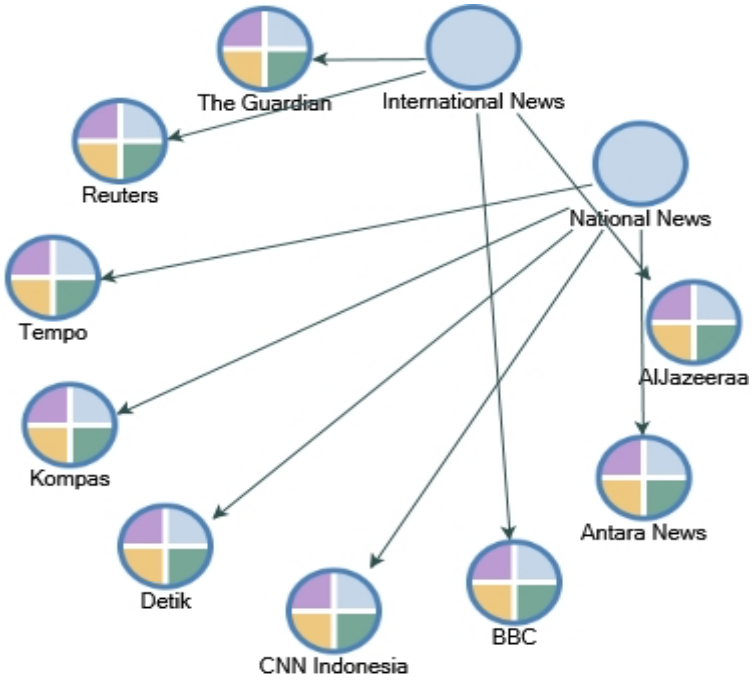


Figure 8. Visualization of Project Maps
Source: Processed by researchers using NVivo 12 Plus

Figure 8: Visualization of Project Maps shows the relationship between international and national news categories with the news sources analyzed in this study. National media such as Kompas, Tempo, Detik, CNN Indonesia, and Antara News have connections with The Guardian, Reuters, BBC, and Al Jazeera. The direction of the arrows indicates the relationship between categorization and discourse flow, as well as the placement of each media outlet within the national or international group. This visualization demonstrates that the analysis not only focuses on specific news texts but also on how the media ecosystem functions to generate and disseminate discussions about flooding and deforestation in Sumatra (Singha et al., 2025).

These empirical findings then form the basis for further discussion on media discourse construction, power relations, and their implications from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis and sustainable development.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a clear divergence between national and international media in framing flooding events in Sumatra, reflecting competing discourses on environmental responsibility, governance, and development interests.

Through the lens of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, these differences demonstrate how media discourse is embedded within broader power relations and ideological structures, particularly in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13 and SDG 15)

Framing Floods: Between Natural Phenomena and Structural Problems

The word cloud and text search query results in Figures 5 and 6 show the differences between how national and international media reported on the floods in Sumatra. National media often emphasized the disaster element through terms such as floods, rain, victims, and regions, which portrayed the floods as a natural and temporary event. In contrast, international media regularly associate flooding with deforestation, forest destruction, land mismanagement, and illegal logging, portraying flooding as a consequence of ecological damage and environmental mismanagement (Lubis et al., 2024). This contrast highlights a fundamental difference in how environmental risks are framed and communicated to the public.

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), these differences reflect not only editorial variations but also deeper ideological positions. The framing of floods in the national media tends to obscure structural factors such as deforestation and plantation expansion, thereby weakening public awareness and reducing pressure on policymakers (Adiprasetio et al., 2024). In contrast, the international media's reporting framework aligns more closely with sustainability discourse by explicitly linking environmental degradation to human activities and development policies (Ghanizadeh et al., 2020).

Actor Relations and Responsibility Distribution in Media Discourse

The Matrix Coding Query results in Figure 7 show a clearer and more structured pattern of actor relations in flood reporting on the island of Sumatra. The government is most dominant in relation to extreme weather issues, while its connection to deforestation and anthropogenic causes is relatively more limited. This pattern suggests that the media often portrays the government as an actor on stage during disaster response and management, rather than as a party with structural responsibility for long-term environmental issues. Corporations, on the other hand, are most strongly associated with anthropogenic causes and deforestation, though their representation is not as strong as the government's association with extreme weather. This implies an implicit acknowledgment of the role of economic and industrial activities in environmental damage; however, it remains secondary to the primary focus of media narratives (Ruzieva & Ruziev, 2024).

Meanwhile, local communities and NGOs are more often represented in discussions of deforestation and environmental impacts, positioning them as affected parties or critics rather than decision-makers. This distribution of responsibility in media discourse reveals an imbalance: the structural causes of flooding are often attributed to natural factors, while the role of actors with political and economic power is not clearly established as fully responsible. Within the framework of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this pattern shows how media discourse practices reproduce power relations by normalizing flooding as a natural phenomenon while limiting public pressure for accountability for unsustainable development policies and practices (Bodine Al-Sharif et al., 2025). This imbalance indicates that media discourse not only reflects but also reinforces unequal power dynamics, in which actors with greater political and economic influence largely evade accountability in environmental governance.

Implications for SDG 15 & SDG 13

The findings of this study suggest that the principles of SDG 15 have not been strongly internalized in the national media discourse. The lack of emphasis on deforestation as a structural cause of flooding reflects the weak representation of land ecosystem protection issues in the public sphere (Pokharel, 2025). In fact, the results of text search query visualization in Figure 6 of international media clearly show the link between deforestation, river basin degradation, and the loss of forest ecological functions as a buffer against disasters (Binsaeed et al., 2024).

In addition, the complexity of climate issues is simplified by framing floods as a result of global climate change without considering the role of deforestation. The study's results show that the national media tend to view climate change as external and beyond the reach of domestic policies. This approach is contrary to the perspective of SDG 13 because it obscures the contribution of human activities at the

national level, such as unsustainable forest management and land clearing, to increased emissions and climate vulnerability (Qasha et al., 2024).

In contrast, international media links deforestation to carbon emissions and the intensity of extreme flooding, thereby promoting a holistic understanding. This difference indicates that media discourse plays a significant role in shaping policy direction (Siril et al., 2022). This gap in media representation may hinder the effective implementation of SDG 13 and SDG 15 at the national level, as public awareness and policy prioritization are strongly influenced by how environmental issues are framed in the media.

Media as an Arena for Contesting Discourse on Sustainable Development

The integration of CDA with the SDG 13 and SDG 15 frameworks in this study demonstrates that media representations are deeply embedded in broader social practices, including power relations among the state, corporations, and society. Rather than acting as a neutral conduit of information, the media serves as a critical arena where competing narratives on development, environmental responsibility, and sustainability are constructed and debated (Rosemary, 2023).

These findings indicate that media discourse plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and influencing policy direction. When environmental issues are framed in ways that obscure their structural causes, the potential for transformative, accountable environmental governance is significantly weakened. Therefore, the role of the media extends beyond the mere dissemination of information; it also serves as a key actor capable of reinforcing or challenging dominant discourses regarding sustainable development in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study confirms that media discourse on flooding in Sumatra reflects a biased ideological construct. National media tend to frame floods as natural phenomena and extreme weather, while international media are more consistent in linking them to deforestation, ecosystem degradation, and environmental mismanagement. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, these findings show that media discourse practices contribute to the naturalization of disasters and obscure the structural relationship between development, environmental damage, and increased flood risk. This is also a novelty of this research, as it explicitly integrates Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13 and SDG 15) framework in media discourse analysis.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the role of CDA in revealing power relations and the distribution of responsibility in environmental media discourse. In practical terms, the study's results indicate that the limited coverage of deforestation in national media has implications for the limited internalization of the SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) principles in the public sphere. Therefore, strengthening media framing that positions deforestation as a structural development issue is key to promoting policy accountability and supporting the sustainable development agenda in Indonesia.

However, due to the specific time period and the very small amount of data, this study has limitations. It is therefore advised that future studies employ a longitudinal methodology to look at how media discourse evolves over time. Future studies could further broaden their focus by analyzing social media platforms such as X and TikTok, enabling comparisons between digital public conversation and mainstream media. This strategy will offer a more thorough comprehension of how environmental narratives are created, shared, and discussed across diverse media ecosystems.

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