

## The Influence of Media Narratives and Ombudsman Statements on Public Understanding of School Entrance Selection in the Riau Islands

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### Abstract

*This study examines the influence of media narratives and Ombudsman statements on public understanding of the New Student Admissions System (SPMB) process in the Riau Islands Province. Amidst challenges to transparency in educational selection, the role of the media and oversight institutions such as the Ombudsman is crucial in shaping public opinion. This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach combined with online news analysis to identify how media narratives frame the issue of educational selection and how the Ombudsman's statements are received by the public. Data were obtained from journal articles, reports from related institutions, and online news covering document verification in the 2025 SPMB selection. The results show that the media plays a significant role in shaping public perception through framing that highlights administrative issues, which can undermine trust in the selection policy. Furthermore, the Ombudsman's role in increasing transparency is essential to correct procedural inconsistencies and increase public trust. Collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public has proven crucial to creating better understanding and reducing uncertainty related to the selection process. This study recommends strengthening public communication policies at the regional level, particularly in terms of transparency and public participation.*

**Keyword:** Media Narrative, Ombudsman, Media Framing, Crisis Communication, Media Literacy, Educational Selection.



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of mass media in the digital era has brought significant changes to communication patterns and information distribution across various sectors, including education. Media not only serves as a channel for information but also as a social agent that can shape, frame, and influence public perceptions of strategic issues, one of which is education policy. The issue of the New Student Admissions System (SPMB) frequently draws public attention, particularly due to its direct impact on fair and equitable access to education. In this context, the media plays a crucial role in constructing narratives surrounding the selection process, through news reports, opinion pieces, and the presentation of data and testimonials. This ultimately influences public understanding of the policies implemented (Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Truman et al., 2020).

In the Riau Islands Province, with its unique geographic and social characteristics, the dynamics of media discourse regarding new student admissions selection are increasingly complex and significant to study. This region faces significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to education and in managing effective public policy, which require special attention from various parties. One factor contributing to public understanding is official statements from oversight bodies, such as the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's function is to ensure good governance, including in the implementation of education policies, through transparent and accountable oversight. Statements or recommendations issued by the Ombudsman are often used by the media and the public to assess implemented policies. Therefore, public understanding of school entrance selection is influenced not only by direct experience but also by narratives constructed by the media and oversight bodies like the Ombudsman (Ortega-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Chen & Ganapati, 2021).

However, despite the crucial role of the media and the Ombudsman, there are challenges in ensuring that the narratives conveyed truly reflect reality and do not create misperceptions or biases that could harm certain parties (Miller et al., 2020). Furthermore, communities lacking adequate media literacy may struggle to interpret circulating information, leading to broader misunderstandings about education policies (Jayadi et al., 2022; Suprpto et al., 2021). Therefore, effective collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public is key to creating a comprehensive and fair understanding of school entrance selection in the Riau Islands (Oschatz & Marker, 2020; Ortega-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Chen & Ganapati, 2021; Jayadi et al., 2022).

This study aims to critically analyze the influence of media narratives and Ombudsman statements on public understanding of the school admissions selection process in the Riau Islands. This study will examine how the media frames the issue of new student admissions, how the Ombudsman's statements and recommendations are communicated and received by the public, and how the interaction between these two factors influences public perception and understanding. Thus, this study aims not only to fill a gap in the existing literature but also to offer a new perspective on the dynamics of education policy communication in an archipelagic region that faces unique challenges in ensuring equitable access to education and effective policy management. The main research question to be answered in this study is: "How do media narratives and Ombudsman statements influence public understanding of the new student admissions selection process in the Riau Islands Province?" This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions, both to the development of educational communication science and to the formulation of more effective and responsive public communication strategies to the needs of the local community.

This study focuses on the influence of media narratives and Ombudsman statements on public understanding of the New Student Admissions System (SPMB) in the Riau Islands, integrated with various theories of communication and transparency in public administration. Several important concepts and theories used in this research include Framing Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, and Crisis Communication Theory, which are relevant in analyzing how the media and the Ombudsman influence public perceptions of education policy in this region.

Framing Theory explains how the media frames certain issues to shape audience perspectives and understanding. In the context of school entrance selection, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions regarding transparency, fairness, and the potential for fraud in the selection process (Oschatz & Marker, 2020). A study by Oschatz & Marker (2020) shows that persuasive media narratives can influence public attitudes and intentions, although the effects may vary depending on the local social and political context. Media framing, in this case, can strengthen or weaken public perceptions of the fairness and clarity of selection procedures (Humayun & Ferrucci, 2022).

Agenda Setting Theory highlights how the media can direct public attention to certain issues, which in turn influences policy priorities and public decisions. In the context of school entrance selection in the Riau Islands, the media is often the primary channel for disseminating information regarding existing procedures and policies. Ortega-Rodríguez et al. (2020) revealed that the media can function as a public agenda-setter, encouraging opinion formation about transparency and fairness in educational selection. Strong media narratives not only influence public understanding but also increase public participation in oversight of educational policy.

Furthermore, Uncertainty Reduction Theory relates to how the public attempts to reduce their uncertainty regarding circulating information. Uncertainty in the context of school entrance selection often arises from a lack of understanding of existing procedures and regulations. Chen & Ganapati (2021) suggest that greater transparency can help

reduce public uncertainty regarding the selection process, enabling them to make more informed and informed decisions.

Crisis Communication Theory is also highly relevant to the context of this research, as school entrance selection often involves sensitive issues that can elicit emotional reactions from the public. Research by Van De Merwe et al. (2022) suggests that in crisis situations, such as uncertainty or maladministration in the selection process, it is crucial for oversight bodies such as the Ombudsman to manage communication effectively to maintain public trust and increase accountability. The Ombudsman, as an independent supervisory body, plays a role in ensuring that the school entrance selection process is carried out transparently and fairly, by providing clarification or recommendations that support improvements to selection procedures (Yuswarni et al., 2024).

In the context of the Riau Islands, there is a significant gap in public understanding of school entrance selection policies. This is related to the public's low media literacy, which affects their ability to assess and interpret information presented by the media and by oversight bodies such as the Ombudsman. Research by Truman et al. (2020) highlights the importance of media literacy in helping the public avoid misinformation and bias, and ensuring they can critically interpret media narratives.

Numerous studies have examined the Ombudsman's role in increasing transparency and accountability in educational selection. Research by Pambudi (2023) revealed that while the Ombudsman has significant potential to strengthen public trust, its effectiveness is limited by limited public awareness and understanding of its functions. Zain et al. (2025) also emphasize the Ombudsman's crucial role in addressing maladministration in the education sector, such as discrimination in the use of documents, abuse of procedures, and unclear information disseminated by educational institutions. These findings underscore that while the Ombudsman plays a central role in enhancing accountability, its effectiveness depends heavily on the extent to which information is conveyed clearly and received by the public.

Additionally, studies on collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public demonstrate that synergy between these actors is crucial for creating a comprehensive understanding and improving education policy at the local level. Miller et al. (2020) state that collaboration between the media and oversight bodies can strengthen advocacy narratives based on data and public voice, ultimately accelerating more inclusive and responsive education policy reforms. While various previous studies have addressed this topic, there remains a gap in research specifically examining the interaction between media narratives and Ombudsman statements in the context of educational selection in peripheral regions such as the Riau Islands. This study aims to fill this gap and provide new insights that can contribute to the development of education policy communication literature, as well as provide practical recommendations for improving transparent and effective communication in the education selection process in these regions.

## **2. METHOD**

This research uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach combined with online news analysis to analyze the influence of media narratives and Ombudsman statements on public understanding of the New Student Admissions System (SPMB) in the Riau Islands Province. This method allows researchers to identify, examine, and synthesize key findings from various studies relevant to the research topic and provides a comprehensive overview of the role of media narratives and oversight institutions in shaping public perception at the local level. Furthermore, online news analysis also provides current context regarding emerging issues in society and how the media and oversight institutions such as the Ombudsman manage information related to transparency and accountability in the educational selection process.

The primary data sources in this research consist of scientific journal articles, books, official policy documents, and reports from relevant institutions published in the past five years. These documents contain findings related to the role of the media, Ombudsman statements, and crisis communication management in the context of educational selection in Indonesia, particularly in the Riau Islands. Data sources also include reports from the Indonesian Ombudsman for the Riau Islands and the Riau Islands Education Office, which focus on document verification issues in school entrance selection (SPMB/PPDB). Researchers conducted a literature search through various scholarly database platforms such as Google Scholar, SAGE, and national databases using related keywords such as "media framing," "Ombudsman," "education document verification," and "SPMB." Of the 1,050 identified papers, 655 were screened based on inclusion criteria, and 165 were deemed eligible for further analysis. Of these, the 16 most relevant papers were selected for inclusion in the literature review. Additionally, online news analysis was conducted to identify how the media addressed the issue of transparency in the school admissions selection process and how the Ombudsman and the Education Office responded to emerging issues, such as differing interpretations of regulations and the spread of misinformation. These news stories were analyzed using the Media Framing and Agenda Setting approach, which aims to understand how the media frames certain issues and influences public perception of the policy. Data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis, where each selected publication from the SLR and online news was analyzed based on key themes related to the research theory: Media Framing, Agenda Setting, Uncertainty Reduction, and Crisis Communication. The researchers then synthesized these themes to highlight patterns of findings, identify research gaps, and provide recommendations that can be applied in developing educational communication policies at the regional level. The SLR findings provide theoretical and empirical perspectives, while the online news provides a more current context that is more relevant to the dynamics on the ground.

In this study, the researchers adhered to good ethical guidelines, including respect for copyright and proper citation. All data used came from credible and legitimate sources, and proper credit was given to the original authors. As a secondary data-based method, this study has limitations, including its reliance on the quality and availability of existing publications and its limited coverage of the influence of digital and social media, which increasingly play a role in shaping public opinion. However, with an approach that combines SLR and online news analysis, this research is expected to make a significant contribution in developing a more effective public communication model and provide policy recommendations that can increase transparency, accountability, and public trust in the educational selection process in the Riau Islands.

### **3. RESULT**

This study combines findings from online news published by the Riau Islands Ombudsman and the Riau Islands Provincial Education Office, as well as the results of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) that examined the influence of media narratives, transparency in educational selection, and the role of oversight institutions such as the Ombudsman in enhancing accountability and transparency. The data collected from these two sources allows for a more comprehensive picture of oversight in the 2025 SPMB document verification process and how media narratives and oversight institutions play a role in shaping public opinion regarding the policy.

**This study used two primary data sources**

Online News Data: Information taken from online news reports published by the Indonesian Ombudsman for the Riau Islands Province and the Riau Islands Provincial Education Office regarding the oversight of document verification in the 2025 SPMB selection process.

1. Indonesian Ombudsman for the Riau Islands Province. (2025, June 30). The Riau Islands Ombudsman finds potential maladministration in the 2025 SPMB verification stage.
2. Riau Islands Provincial Education Office. (2025, July 15). The Riau Islands Ombudsman highlights several issues in the 2025 SPMB verification process, urging the Education Office to strengthen mitigation and coordination.

### **SLR (Systematic Literature Review)**

This review examines studies that address the influence of media narratives on public opinion, transparency in educational selection, and the role of oversight bodies such as the Ombudsman in enhancing credibility and transparency. This research focuses on Batam City, with oversight conducted at several verification posts established by the Riau Islands Provincial Education Office. This verification process also received extensive coverage from local media, contributing to both worsening and clarifying public perceptions of transparency in the SPMB selection process.

### **Key Findings from the Merger of News and SLR**

#### **The Influence of Media Narratives on Public Perception**

Before presenting the findings table, it is important to clarify that the SLR results indicate that persuasive media narratives have a long-term impact on public attitudes and intentions, although they do not necessarily change fundamental beliefs (Oschatz & Marker, 2020). This aligns with the findings recorded in the Indonesian Ombudsman of the Riau Islands (2025) report, which highlighted the potential for maladministration in the 2025 SPMB verification process and how this issue developed in the media, exacerbating negative public perceptions of transparency in educational selection. "Although the SPMB is still running smoothly, we have noted a number of issues that have the potential to lead to maladministration." (Ombudsman of the Riau Islands, 2025)

Media framing of the issue, particularly focusing on potential administrative issues, reinforces negative public perceptions of the fairness and transparency of school entrance selection. This has a long-term impact on how the public views the credibility of the selection process.

#### **The Ombudsman's Role in Increasing Transparency**

The SLR results also emphasize the importance of the Ombudsman's role in ensuring transparency in the educational selection process. Ortega-Rodríguez et al. (2020) and Chen & Ganapati (2021) show that Ombudsman advocacy can increase public trust in selection policies. This is also reflected in a report from the Indonesian Ombudsman for the Riau Islands (2025), which noted procedural inconsistencies in the evaluation of documents such as Family Cards (KK), which could lead to maladministration and injustice if procedures are not followed correctly.

"There are differences in understanding among verification officers, especially in assessing document requirements such as Family Cards (KK)." (Verification officer, Riau Islands Provincial Education Office, 2025)

This statement indicates that greater transparency and oversight from the Ombudsman are needed to address inconsistent procedures and increase public trust in the fairness of educational selection.

#### **Collaboration between the Media, Ombudsman, and the Public**

The SLR also highlights the importance of collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public to foster a comprehensive understanding of educational selection policies. Jayadi et al. (2022) and Truman et al. (2020) state that good media literacy enables the public to interpret circulating information more critically. In this case,

misinformation regarding the use of a domicile certificate (suket) as an alternative document by the sub-district office exacerbated the situation, demonstrating that while information can be disseminated through local media or channels, without adequate literacy, the public can fall prey to misinformation.

"We received information from the sub-district office that a domicile certificate is sufficient, but it turns out the school doesn't accept it." (YR, community member, Riau Islands Provincial Education Office, 2025)

Better collaboration between supervisory institutions, the media, and the public will strengthen understanding of proper selection procedures and reduce the spread of misinformation that is detrimental to the public.

The following table illustrates findings of maladministration based on monitoring conducted by the Indonesian Ombudsman for the Riau Islands regarding the document verification process in the 2025 SPMB selection. This table includes several types of findings that could potentially harm applicants and impact the overall selection process.

**Tabel 1. Table of 2025 SPMB Maladministration Findings Based on News**

| No | Type of Finding  | Main Impact   |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | Differences in interpretation of Family Cards (KK)                     | Rejection of legitimate applicants; confusion in document verification. |
| 2  | Dissemination of erroneous information regarding domicile certificates | Applicants failed verification; rejection of legitimate documents.      |
| 3  | Over-qualified applicants at public schools                            | Chaos in re-registration; unfairness in student admissions.             |
| 4  | Intervention by external parties in the registration process           | Injustice in selection; abuse of procedures.                            |
| 5  | Weak coordination between agencies                                     | Slow verification process, invalid data, errors in participant mapping. |

Source : Processed from analyzed news

The following table shows the key findings from the SLR, which analyzed various articles related to the influence of media narratives, transparency in educational selection, and the role of oversight bodies in enhancing credibility and accountability in public education. This table summarizes the main results from studies relevant to the research theme.

**Table 2. Table of Findings from SLR**

| Paper                          | Methodology       | Main Focus                  | Key Results  |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Oschatz & Marker (2020)        | Meta-analysis     | Effects of media narratives | Persuasive media narratives have long-term effects on public attitudes and intentions. |
| Ortega-Rodríguez et al. (2020) | Systematic review | NPO transparency            | Transparency increases credibility and accountability in the public sector             |
| Chen & Ganapati (2021)         | Meta-analysis     | Transparency & Corruption   | Transparency reduces corruption, especially in the public's view.                      |

| <b>Paper</b>         | <b>Methodology</b> | <b>Main Focus</b>       | <b>Key Results</b>  |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Truman et al. (2020) | Meta-review        | Media literacy          | Media literacy is crucial in helping the public interpret education policies. |
| Jayadi et al. (2022) | Meta-analysis      | Multicultural education | Emphasizes the value of equity and community participation in education.      |

This research demonstrates a close relationship between media narratives, the role of the Ombudsman, and public understanding of transparency in educational selection. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion on educational policy, while the Ombudsman can strengthen transparency through clear and transparent oversight. To ensure a more transparent and fair selection process, enhanced collaboration between the media, oversight bodies, and the public is essential to ensure that emerging information can be critically understood and does not add uncertainty to the selection process.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

In this study, the influence of media narratives and the role of the Ombudsman on public understanding of the New Student Admissions System (SPMB) in the Riau Islands is analyzed through two main approaches: a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and online news analysis. The results show that these two elements complement each other in influencing public perceptions regarding transparency and fairness in the educational selection process. This discussion will link the main findings to the theory used in this study and answer the research objective, namely to understand how media narratives and the role of the Ombudsman shape public opinion regarding the educational selection process.

##### **The Influence of Media Narratives on Public Perception**

In the context of Media Framing, results from SLR and online news analysis reveal that media narratives have a significant influence on public attitudes and intentions. Oschatz & Marker (2020) in their meta-analysis showed that media that frames issues persuasively can influence public views in the long term, although these narratives do not necessarily change fundamental beliefs. This aligns with findings in a news report published by the Indonesian Ombudsman for the Riau Islands (2025), which noted the potential for maladministration in the 2025 SPMB verification process. Media framing, which primarily highlights administrative issues, exacerbates negative public perceptions of fairness and transparency in educational selection.

Agenda setting also plays a crucial role in this regard, where the media establishes issues deemed important and urgent for discussion, such as potential maladministration and inconsistencies in document verification procedures. By magnifying these issues, the media influences the public agenda and encourages public criticism of existing education policies.

##### **The Ombudsman's Role in Enhancing Transparency**

The SLR (Study of the Ombudsman's Role in Ensuring Transparency) found that the Ombudsman's role in ensuring transparency is vital. Ortega-Rodríguez et al. (2020) and Chen & Ganapati (2021) demonstrated that transparency promoted by oversight bodies such as the Ombudsman can enhance credibility and accountability in the selection process. This finding is highly relevant to the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (RI) in the Riau Islands (2025), which reported procedural discrepancies in the evaluation of registration documents, such as differing interpretations of the Family Card (KK) as a registration requirement. Verification officers' lack of understanding of existing regulations led to potential maladministration and unfairness in the selection process.

From the perspective of Uncertainty Reduction Theory, the transparency promoted by the Ombudsman serves to reduce public uncertainty regarding selection procedures. When information is conveyed openly and clearly, the public feels more confident that the selection process is conducted fairly and transparently. Conversely, unclear information increases uncertainty, which can lead to distrust of the institutions managing the selection process.

#### **Collaboration between the Media, Ombudsman, and the Public**

SLR and online news analysis also highlight the importance of collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public in building a comprehensive understanding of educational selection policies. Jayadi et al. (2022) and Truman et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of media literacy as a key factor in enabling the public to critically analyze circulating narratives. This is reflected in the finding that misinformation about the use of a domicile certificate (suket) as an alternative document can exacerbate the situation, with the public receiving inaccurate information from village officials, who serve as local communication channels.

Crisis communication becomes particularly relevant in this context. When erroneous or incomplete information is widely disseminated, the media and oversight bodies must work together to provide swift and clear clarification to reduce confusion and prevent misinformation. Collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public will strengthen public understanding of proper procedures and ensure that educational selection is conducted fairly and transparently.

#### **Implications of Findings for Policy Development**

The findings from the SLR and online news analysis provide several implications for education communication policy at the regional level. First, it is crucial for the government and supervisory institutions to strengthen transparency and public communication through various media channels, including social media, to ensure that information disseminated to the public is accurate and reliable. Second, education policies need to be accompanied by training for verification officers so that they clearly understand applicable regulations and can apply them consistently, reducing the potential for errors that could affect the fairness of selection. Third, closer collaboration between the media, supervisory institutions, and the public will accelerate the process of reducing uncertainty and building public trust in education selection policies.

#### **Limitations and Recommendations**

Although this study combines two comprehensive approaches, there are several limitations that should be considered. This research relies on secondary data from online news and available literature, which may not fully cover all perspectives or related issues. Therefore, further research involving direct interviews with the public and relevant parties would provide a more in-depth picture. Furthermore, the development of digital and social media, which are increasingly playing a role in shaping public opinion, should be a focus of further research, given the significant influence of social media on public perceptions of public policy.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that media narratives and the role of the Ombudsman are closely related in shaping public understanding of transparency and fairness in the educational selection process. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion through framing, which often magnifies administrative issues and exacerbates negative perceptions of educational policies. Conversely, the Ombudsman plays a strategic role in ensuring that the selection process is conducted with high transparency, which in turn increases public trust in the policy. The results of this study address the main question regarding the influence of the media and the Ombudsman on public understanding of the SPMB process in the Riau Islands. The media's role in framing selection issues significantly influences how the public understands the policy, both in terms of transparency and

potential maladministration. Meanwhile, the Ombudsman serves as an institution that ensures that selection procedures are carried out fairly and in accordance with applicable regulations. Collaboration between the media, the Ombudsman, and the public has proven crucial in reducing uncertainty and fostering a more accurate understanding of educational selection.

This study recommends increasing transparency in the selection process by strengthening effective public communication and collaboration between oversight bodies, the media, and the public. Furthermore, media literacy needs to be strengthened to help the public interpret circulating information more critically to prevent the spread of misinformation. Further research involving direct interviews with the public is needed to provide deeper insights into their perceptions of regional education policies.

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