



# “From Sea to Screen”: Government Digital Communication Strategies in Framing Maritime Security in the Riau Islands

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**Abstract:** The strategic location of the Riau Islands Province places it at the frontline of Indonesia’s maritime security challenges, particularly in relation to transnational crime and border governance. In the digital era, local governments increasingly rely on digital communication to frame maritime security issues; however, the communicative construction of these narratives remains insufficiently examined. This study aims to analyze how the Riau Islands Provincial Government frames maritime security through digital communication strategies. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using Robert N. Entman’s framing analysis. The data of the study comprises official digital communications produced by the Riau Islands Provincial Government, including selected social media posts, official website content, press releases, and policy-related digital materials on maritime security. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with representatives from government offices. Secondary data were collected through documentation, digital observation, and content archiving. Data were analyzed using Entman’s four framing dimensions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. The findings reveal that maritime security is predominantly framed as an issue of sovereignty and national identity rather than merely an economic or technical concern. Disruptions to maritime security are constructed through narratives of external transnational threats and internal coastal governance challenges, reinforced by moral values of patriotism and coastal solidarity. Policy solutions emphasize institutional synergy among maritime agencies and maritime legal education for coastal communities. This study concludes that digital communication effectively builds symbolic legitimacy for maritime security policies but remains largely top-down and representational. The findings imply the need for more inclusive and participatory digital governance to strengthen substantive public engagement in maritime security.

**Keywords:** Digital Media, Framing, Government Strategy, Maritime Security

## 1. Introduction

The Riau Islands Province (Kepri) is one of Indonesia’s provinces with a highly strategic geographical position. Kepri is located along major international shipping routes that connect the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean through the Malacca Strait and the North Natuna Sea (Nasoha, dkk., 2025). This strategic position not only provides significant advantages in trade and economic activities but also places Kepri in a vulnerable position with regard to various maritime security issues (Sodikin, 2014). Threats such as drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal fishing, and even the potential for border conflicts constitute real challenges faced by both local governments and coastal communities. As a region that directly borders other countries, Kepri serves as one of the front lines in safeguarding Indonesia’s maritime sovereignty (Aprilia, Widia dkk., 2022). In the context of globalization and rapid developments in information technology, these issues are no longer solely of national concern but have also attracted the attention of the international community.

In the current digital era, local governments face both challenges and opportunities in utilizing modern communication technologies as tools for public advocacy and education. Digital platforms—such as social media, official websites, and community-based applications—have become strategic media for conveying narratives of maritime security to the public (Sulaeman & Islami, 2024). Through structured message framing, govern-

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ments can shape public perceptions regarding the urgency of safeguarding maritime sovereignty and encourage the participation of coastal communities in maintaining maritime security. This digital communication strategy is particularly important given the heterogeneous characteristics of the Riau Islands population, which is dispersed across an archipelagic region (Agma, Asty Raisha, 2025). Effective communication of maritime security messages must therefore take into account local cultural contexts, levels of digital literacy, and existing social dynamics. Moreover, framing issues through digital platforms is not merely about information dissemination but also about constructing narratives that engage emotions, identity, and a sense of collective ownership of the sea as a living space.

This digital communication transformation is evident in the way the Provincial Government of the Riau Islands utilizes social media and official websites as strategic tools to build public awareness of the importance of maritime security. Through online posts, infographics, and public officials' speeches disseminated digitally, the government seeks to produce meaning that frames the sea not merely as an economic space, but also as a symbol of national identity and dignity. Furthermore, previous studies have predominantly focused on law enforcement or physical policy measures in maintaining maritime sovereignty, while preventive strategic communication remains relatively underexplored. In fact, public communication through digital media plays a crucial role as a preventive measure against maritime crimes and as a medium for empowering coastal communities. However, how are these narratives constructed and managed within digital spaces? This study addresses this question by employing framing analysis to examine the government's digital communication strategies in shaping maritime security issues.

Studies on maritime security within international law and maritime governance have largely focused on normative regimes, law enforcement, and state institutional authority, while giving limited attention to how legal authority and the legitimacy of maritime security policies are constructed through political communication in digital spaces. In fact, government digital communication functions as a normative mechanism that shapes public understanding of the rule of law, sovereignty, and legal compliance in maritime areas. This gap indicates a lack of attention to digital communication as an integral part of maritime security governance, particularly at the subnational level in border regions that play a strategic role in legal implementation and the formation of state authority. Based on this gap, this article aims to analyze how government digital communication operates as a legal-political practice in framing maritime security. Using framing analysis, this study examines how maritime security narratives shape meanings of sovereignty, legal authority, and policy legitimacy, as well as how these practices influence governance patterns and the limits of public participation in maritime security. This approach is expected to broaden the understanding of maritime security not only as a matter of law enforcement, but also as a governance process mediated through digital communication.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Materials

#### a. Digital Media and Government Communication

Digital transformation in public governance marks a paradigm shift in public communication from a linear model toward a more interactive and participatory one. Social media enables governments not only to disseminate information but also to build two-way relationships with the public. Through strategically communicated narratives in digital spaces, governments can construct institutional images and legitimacy. This perspective aligns with Andrew Chadwick's concept of the hybrid media system, in which government actors, mass media, and the public interact dynamically to shape policy agendas and meanings.

In the context of local governance, platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and official websites are used to articulate regional values, policies, and identities to the public.

However, the effectiveness of government digital communication remains highly dependent on the level of public digital literacy and the equitable distribution of technological infrastructure (Badan Informasi Geospasial, 2020). According to Manuel Castells, digital media give rise to a network society that enables the formation of new symbolic arenas in which social, political, and cultural meanings are constructed. In this context, digital space functions not merely as a communication channel but also as an arena for contestation over identity and power. Governments can utilize this space to build symbolic legitimacy and expand their public diplomacy. Nevertheless, significant challenges persist, particularly the digital divide and low levels of public participation. Inequalities in internet access in coastal areas cause government communication to remain largely top-down rather than dialogical, thereby reducing the effectiveness of fostering inclusive collective awareness (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Kepulauan Riau, 2022).

#### b. Framing Analysis in Political Communication

Framing analysis is an important approach for examining how meaning is constructed and disseminated through the media. Robert N. Entman (1993) argues that framing involves four core functions: (1) defining problems, (2) diagnosing causes, (3) making moral judgments, and (4) suggesting remedies. Framing, therefore, is not merely a matter of language use, but a process of social reality construction that influences how the public understands particular issues (Entman, 1993). In the context of government communication, framing is employed to build positive perceptions of public policies and to reinforce political legitimacy. Through Entman's framework, maritime security issues can be presented as matters of sovereignty, external threats, and the moral responsibility of citizens (Soesatyo, 2024). Accordingly, framing analysis serves to reveal how governments structure symbolic narratives in order to shape and direct public opinion.

## 2.2 Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method using Robert N. Entman's framing analysis approach (Kusuma dkk., 2021). The primary focus of the analysis is to identify how the government selects, emphasizes, and connects specific elements in digital communication in order to construct narratives of maritime security. The data sources consist of: (a) Primary data: in-depth interviews with public relations officials, representatives of the Communication and Informatics Office, and the social media team of the Riau Islands Provincial Government. (b) Secondary data: documentation of official government social media posts (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and the official website [kepriprov.go.id](http://kepriprov.go.id)), press releases, and online media coverage related to maritime security issues.

Data collection techniques include content scraping of digital posts, online observation, and digital archival documentation. The data are analyzed by examining the four framing dimensions proposed by Entman: (1) problem definition, (2) causal interpretation, (3) moral evaluation, and (4) treatment recommendation.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Problem Definition: The Sea as an Issue of National Sovereignty

The findings of this study indicate that within the digital communication strategy of the Riau Islands Provincial Government, the sea is not understood merely as a geographical space or an economic resource, but is instead interpreted as a symbol of sovereignty and national identity. The government deliberately frames maritime security issues as matters directly related to the integrity and dignity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. This framing is evident in representations of the sea as a "guardian of borders" and a "bulwark of national honor" in official website content and social media accounts such as Instagram [@kepriprov.go.id](https://www.instagram.com/kepriprov.go.id). These narratives are constructed through various forms of visual and verbal communication, ranging from policy infographics and public officials' speeches to digital campaigns using hashtags such as

#JagaLautKita and #MaritimBerdaulat. This strategy demonstrates that the government is not merely disseminating security-related information, but is also producing symbolic meanings attached to the sea. As a result, maritime security issues are placed within a geopolitical and nationalistic framework, positioning the sea as a strategic space that represents the existence and honor of the state.

The findings further reveal that the government's digital messages emphasize maritime security as a collective responsibility of all elements of the nation. The government stresses that maritime security is not solely a technical issue involving military or security apparatuses, but a shared obligation that includes coastal communities and younger generations. This emphasis reflects a conscious effort to expand the subject of security from the state alone to citizens at large. Such an approach indicates a shift in communication paradigms from an economic-instrumental perspective toward a geopolitical and nationalistic awareness of the sea (Subiakto, Henry, 2019). In this context, the sea is not positioned merely as a space of production, but as a space of collective identity. This framing strategy broadens the legitimacy base of maritime security policies, directing the public to perceive the sea as a common interest intrinsically linked to national identity.

The use of social media and official government websites in constructing maritime security narratives constitutes a significant finding of this study. This practice reflects the transformation of governance in the digital era, where public communication operates within an interconnected media system. Andrew Chadwick (2013) describes this condition as a hybrid media system, in which state authorities, the media, and the public interact within the same symbolic space. Within this system, government communication is no longer merely administrative but performative, presenting the state as a present, vigilant, and sovereign entity (Chadwick, 2013). The digital narratives produced can also be understood as a form of political spectacle that utilizes symbols, visuals, and moral messages to create impressions of stability and control (Edelman, 2002). Representations of security forces, cross-institutional collaboration, and patriotic campaigns function to normalize state authority. Consequently, digital space becomes a crucial arena for the production of political legitimacy.

The maritime security framing employed by the Riau Islands Provincial Government carries strategic implications for state legitimacy and state-citizen relations. This framing serves to reinforce the position of the local government as a frontline guardian of maritime sovereignty while simultaneously fostering a sense of collective ownership of the sea as a space of national identity. By emphasizing the dimension of sovereignty, the government not only communicates security policies but also internalizes moral values of patriotism within public consciousness. This practice aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the state's symbolic power in shaping social reality through language and symbols (Bourdieu dkk., 2003). Furthermore, this approach strengthens the argument that maritime security is multidimensional and cannot be detached from symbolic and legitimacy-related aspects (Bueger, 2015). By emphasizing narratives of external threats such as illegal fishing and smuggling, the government constructs a security logic that positions itself as the legitimate actor. As a result, the sea is framed as a contemporary arena of struggle, where safeguarding the sea is equated with safeguarding Indonesia.

### ***3.2 Causal Interpretation: External Threats and Local Complexity***

The research findings indicate that within the digital narratives of the Riau Islands Provincial Government, disruptions to maritime security are predominantly framed as the result of external threats originating from cross-border activities. These threats are represented through issues such as illegal fishing, the smuggling of goods and people, and violations of maritime boundaries by foreign vessels in border waters. In digital media posts, the government presents data on the apprehension of foreign vessels and maritime patrol operations as concrete evidence of threats to national sovereignty. This representation positions maritime threats as serious problems that go beyond ordinary legal violations. Cross-border illegal activities are interpreted as major challenges to the stability of coastal states and national territorial security. This framing aligns with mari-

time security scholarship that identifies transnational crime as a primary source of regional instability (Storey, Ian, 2009). Through this framing, threats to the sea are symbolically linked to threats to national existence. Digital narratives shape public understanding that disturbances in maritime areas are directly related to state sovereignty. Consequently, maritime security is constructed as a strategic issue requiring firm and sustained state responses. Overall, external threats are positioned as the principal causal factor legitimizing state action in the maritime domain.

Beyond being framed as security problems, external threats also emerge as significant findings in relation to the legitimacy of state sovereignty. The government implicitly frames foreign vessel incursions and transnational crimes as disruptions to state authority over its maritime territory. This narrative positions external activities as direct challenges to national sovereignty. Such an approach demonstrates that maritime security is understood not only in technical terms but also symbolically and politically. External threats are interpreted as tests of the state's capacity to maintain control and legitimacy. This perspective is consistent with arguments that maritime security cannot be separated from the symbolic and political dimensions of sovereignty (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017). By emphasizing external threats, the government strengthens its position as the legitimate and authoritative actor responsible for safeguarding maritime territorial integrity. Digital narratives function as tools of legitimation for surveillance and law enforcement actions at sea, directing the public to view maritime security operations as rational responses to tangible threats. In this way, the framing of external threats reinforces the image of the state as the primary protector of national interests in border regions.

The findings further reveal that the Riau Islands Provincial Government also frames the causes of maritime security disruptions through the lens of internal complexities within coastal areas. Government digital narratives highlight limitations in surveillance infrastructure, weaknesses in communication facilities, and low levels of legal literacy among coastal communities. These factors are presented as elements that exacerbate maritime security conditions. This emphasis reflects how the state maps local problems in ways that make them manageable through public policy. Internal complexity is interpreted as a structural challenge rather than merely an issue of individual behavior. This perspective is consistent with James C. Scott's argument regarding the state's tendency to simplify social realities for the purpose of policy intervention. By framing local complexity as a governance issue, maritime security is positioned as a matter of institutional development (Scott, 2020). Coastal communities are depicted as part of a broader security ecosystem whose capacities need to be strengthened. This narrative underscores that maritime resilience is determined not only by security apparatuses but also by the social conditions of local communities. Overall, internal factors serve as an argumentative basis for coastal development and educational policies.

The construction of internal complexity also reveals a shift in narratives regarding responsibility for maritime security. The government emphasizes that limitations in state surveillance must be balanced by the involvement of coastal communities. This narrative presents local communities as supporting actors in maintaining maritime security. Such an approach reflects an interpretation of maritime security as a shared concern between the state and society. This view aligns with ideas of commons governance that stress collaboration between state institutions and local communities (Ostrom, 2015). Responsibility for security is not placed solely on state apparatuses but is extended to local social structures. In digital communication contexts, coastal communities are positioned as moral subjects with strategic roles. However, community involvement is more often represented symbolically rather than participatorily. This participatory narrative expands policy legitimacy without fully transforming top-down communication patterns. As a result, public participation functions more as a symbol of legitimacy than as a mechanism for substantive dialogue.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the combination of external threats and internal complexities functions as a strategy for legitimizing maritime security policies at the local government level. External factors are emphasized as threats, while internal

factors are framed as structural challenges. This combination forms a rational basis for policy intervention and cross-sector collaboration. Such patterns reflect a regime of sovereignty that relies not only on territorial control but also on the management of social relations and local legitimacy (Agnew, 2005). Issues such as illegal fishing and smuggling are used as moral justifications to promote coordination among local governments, security agencies, and fishing communities. Within the framing perspective, the government does more than merely present factual causes of maritime insecurity; it constructs a social reality that positions itself as the protector and driver of regional stability. This narrative shapes public perceptions that safeguarding the sea is a collective project involving both the state and coastal communities. However, as noted by Brian Loader and Dan Mercea, participatory digital narratives still face limitations in achieving genuinely equal dialogue. Thus, causal interpretation functions both to reinforce state legitimacy and to reveal the boundaries of digital participation (Schmidle, 2011).

### ***3.3 Moral Evaluation: Patriotism and Coastal Solidarity***

The research findings indicate that the moral dimension of maritime security framing emphasizes the values of patriotism and coastal community solidarity. These values are consistently represented in the digital narratives of the Riau Islands Provincial Government. The use of visual symbols—such as hashtags, national colors, and representations of local fishermen—constitutes a central element in the communication of moral messages. This strategy can be understood as a reproduction of nationalism in everyday life. Such practices align with the concept of banal nationalism, in which nationalism is reproduced through simple yet effective symbols (Billig, 2010). The sea is thus interpreted not merely as an economic space, but as a symbolic space imbued with national values. In this context, moral framing functions to construct a collective imagination of the sea as a shared space that must be protected. Moral messages are directed toward fostering a sense of ownership over maritime territory. Consequently, nationalism is subtly internalized through digital communication practices. Overall, this moral framing forms a symbolic foundation for national consciousness in the maritime domain.

Additional findings reveal that moral narratives of maritime security also reflect the construction of national identity through digital communication practices. Social media serves as the primary medium for cultivating a sense of togetherness among citizens. This is evident in the way the government presents the sea as a unifying symbol within digital spaces. Such narratives resonate with the concept of imagined communities, in which national identity is constructed through communication practices that enable individuals to feel connected to one another (Anderson, 2006). In the context of an archipelagic region characterized by geographical fragmentation, digital media function as symbolic connectors. National identity no longer relies on physical proximity, but on narrative connectivity. Digital space thus becomes an arena for the construction of national identity, where maritime security is positioned as part of a shared national experience. This narrative extends the symbolic reach of the state into coastal areas. Overall, moral framing reinforces national identity through digitally imagined communities.

The findings further indicate that the digital nationalism constructed through these narratives tends to be symbolic and representational in nature. Maritime security messages achieve high visibility in digital spaces; however, public engagement largely remains at the level of symbolic consumption. This phenomenon suggests that emotional engagement does not necessarily translate into substantive participation. Zizi Papacharissi describes this condition as affective publics, characterized by strong emotional engagement that is nonetheless limited to symbolic expression (Papacharissi, 2015). In this context, the public responds to patriotic messages without being involved in the co-production of policy. Consequently, digital nationalism generates emotional resonance rather than dialogical spaces. Maritime security is understood as an important issue, yet it has not fully materialized as a participatory practice. This condition highlights the boundary between symbolism and collective action. Overall, moral evaluation reveals a paradox between the visibility of messages and the depth of public participation.

At the stage of moral evaluation, the Riau Islands Provincial Government actively utilizes digital media to instill national values and a collective ethos within maritime society. Symbolic approaches and visual aesthetics are consistently employed in digital narratives. Symbols such as ocean-blue color schemes, the Indonesian red-and-white flag displayed on fishing boats, and inspirational quotations from public officials serve as primary vehicles for moral messaging. Patriotism is positioned at the core of the moral construction of maritime security. Digital campaigns such as #JagaLautKita, #Maritim-Berdaulat, and #MaritimTangguh invite the public to interpret the protection of the sea as a form of service to the nation. These messages are performative in nature, as they do not merely inform but also evoke emotions and collective pride (Indra, 2021). In addition to patriotism, values of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and coastal solidarity are emphasized through representations of collaboration between the state and fishing communities. Coastal communities are framed as moral subjects who actively contribute to safeguarding maritime sovereignty. This moral framing reinforces the legitimacy of the local government as a moral authority within maritime discourse. Overall, moral evaluation presents the sea as a shared arena of struggle to preserve national dignity and Indonesia's identity as a resilient maritime nation.

### ***3.4 Treatment Recommendation: Institutional Synergy and Maritime Legal Education***

The research findings indicate that within the dimension of treatment recommendation, the Riau Islands Provincial Government does not stop at explaining problems and the underlying moral values. Instead, the government explicitly proposes concrete and sustainability-oriented policy solutions. These solutions are directed toward two main pillars: institutional synergy among maritime agencies and maritime legal education for coastal communities. Both pillars are framed as the foundation of a policy narrative that emphasizes collaboration and legal literacy as prerequisites for long-term maritime security. This approach demonstrates that maritime security is understood as an issue requiring both institutional and social governance. This perspective aligns with studies suggesting that effective maritime security governance requires a combination of institutional coordination and social capacity building (Germond, 2015a). Within the framing framework, treatment recommendations function to redirect public attention from threats toward rational and socially acceptable solutions. The government positions itself as a solution manager rather than merely a problem identifier. This strategy strengthens the legitimacy of maritime security policies in the public eye. Thus, treatment recommendation operates as an instrument for legitimizing local government policy.

Further findings show that institutional synergy is framed as a strategic necessity in maritime security governance. The government emphasizes the importance of coordination among maritime actors at both national and regional levels. Maritime security is not understood as the responsibility of a single institution, but as the result of integrated roles and authorities across multiple agencies. In digital communications, collaboration among the Indonesian Navy, the Indonesian Coast Guard (Bakamla), the Water Police (Polairud), and the Marine and Fisheries Agency is consistently highlighted. These representations are interpreted as symbols of a cohesive state presence in border waters. This approach is consistent with studies emphasizing that inter-agency coordination is a key element of modern maritime security governance (Bateman, 2009). In the context of digital communication, visualizing cross-institutional collaboration functions to build public trust in state capacity. The public is directed to understand that maritime security is maintained through coordinated collective mechanisms. Institutional synergy therefore serves not only a technical function but also a symbolic one. Overall, inter-agency collaboration operates as a narrative of state legitimacy in safeguarding maritime sovereignty.

The findings also demonstrate that maritime legal education constitutes a central pillar of treatment recommendations for maritime security. This dimension is directed toward strengthening legal awareness among coastal communities as part of a preventive strategy. The government utilizes digital platforms to disseminate outreach pro-

grams, online seminars, and informational campaigns related to maritime issues. Topics include prohibitions on illegal fishing, protection of marine resources, and the rights and obligations of fishers. This approach reflects an understanding of maritime security as a knowledge-based compliance issue. Such a strategy aligns with research indicating that increased legal literacy among coastal communities contributes to the reduction of maritime violations (Joshi, 2023). Within the framing perspective, legal education is constructed as an empowering rather than punitive solution. Coastal communities are positioned as active and knowledgeable legal subjects. In this way, compliance is framed as the outcome of awareness rather than coercion. Overall, maritime legal education functions as a preventive instrument of maritime security.

The use of digital media for maritime legal education emerges as another significant finding. This practice reflects a transformation in government communication approaches from purely informative toward more educative models. The government not only communicates legal regulations but also explains the rationale and social impacts of maritime violations. This approach indicates a shift in the state's role toward that of a facilitator of social learning within digital spaces. Policy communication studies suggest that digital media can function effectively as a public learning space when linked to citizens' everyday experiences (Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016). In the context of coastal communities, digital legal education bridges the gap between national regulations and local practices. This approach expands public access to maritime legal understanding. However, its effectiveness remains contingent on levels of digital literacy and access to technology. These structural factors limit the even distribution of legal education initiatives. Thus, maritime legal education is both strategically important and constrained by structural challenges.

Overall, the findings reveal that the treatment recommendations constructed by the Riau Islands Provincial Government are holistic and integrative in nature. Maritime security is not understood solely as a matter of national defense. Instead, it is also positioned as an issue of education, participation, and collaborative governance. Institutional synergy and maritime legal education are presented as two complementary strategies. This approach aligns with the view that sustainable maritime security requires integration between state policy and local community involvement (Germond, 2015b). Within the framing framework, treatment recommendations function to conclude the policy narrative with normative and rational solutions. The public is directed to understand that safeguarding the sea is a shared responsibility between the state and coastal communities. This narrative broadens the legitimacy base of maritime security policies. In this way, the vision of "from the sea to the screen" is reinforced as a sustainable socio-political project.

### *3.5 Effectiveness and Challenges of Digital Communication*

The research findings indicate that the digital communication strategy of the Riau Islands Provincial Government has been effective in building symbolic awareness of maritime security. Digital media are intensively utilized through visual narratives, social media campaigns, and the consistent presentation of policy information. This strategy has succeeded in increasing the visibility of maritime security issues within the digital public sphere. This success is reflected in the construction of the government's image as a protector of maritime sovereignty and an active actor in safeguarding border areas. In the context of political communication, such image-building strengthens positive public perceptions of the state's role. The digital strategy is also effective in fostering imagined solidarity, namely a form of symbolic togetherness between the government and citizens in interpreting the sea as a symbol of national honor (Nursafitri & Ramadhan, 2022). However, this effectiveness primarily operates at a representational level. The awareness generated tends to be symbolic rather than rooted in social praxis. While the government successfully constructs meanings and images, it has not fully encouraged active public engagement. Thus, government digital communication demonstrates strength in the symbolic representation of maritime security.

Behind this representational success, the study identifies limitations in public participation within government digital communication. Digital media are predominantly used as one-way communication channels rather than as spaces for interactive dialogue. The dominant communication pattern remains top-down. These findings suggest that the public is more often positioned as message recipients than as communicative partners. This condition reinforces critiques of digital government practices that prioritize symbolic legitimacy over citizen empowerment (Meijer & Torenvlied, 2016). From a participation perspective, this situation reflects what (Arnstein, 1969) describes as tokenism. Citizens are granted access to information but are not meaningfully involved in decision-making processes. Social media platforms, which ideally function as participatory spaces, instead operate as policy showcases. Consequently, the framing of maritime security functions more as an instrument of symbolic stabilization. In this sense, digital communication has not yet transformed into a medium of substantive participation.

Further findings indicate that limitations in participation are closely linked to structural factors in coastal regions. Digital access disparities, limited internet infrastructure, and low levels of media literacy constitute major barriers. Ironically, communities most affected by maritime security issues tend to have the most limited access to government digital narratives. This condition confirms arguments that the digital divide is not merely technological but also social and cultural in nature (Dijk, 2020). As a result, the impact of government digital communication is more strongly felt among urban populations and bureaucratic actors. Coastal communities, which are the primary targets of maritime security policies, are less effectively reached. This phenomenon reveals a paradox in government digital communication: it is strong in image-building but weak in driving social transformation. The success of legitimacy-building is not accompanied by behavioral change or enhanced community capacity. Therefore, more participatory, contextual, and inclusive communication strategies are required. In conclusion, the digital communication of the Riau Islands Provincial Government can be characterized as representational rather than transformative.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study finds that the Riau Islands Provincial Government frames the sea as a symbol of sovereignty and national identity rather than merely as a geographical space or an economic resource. Through digital communication strategies, maritime security is positioned as a geopolitical issue and a matter of national honor that collectively involves both the state and its citizens. Through this framing, the sea is constructed as a strategic space that represents state existence while simultaneously strengthening the legitimacy of maritime security policies. The findings demonstrate that disruptions to maritime security are framed through two primary sources: transnational external threats and the internal complexities of coastal regions. External threats are used to emphasize the urgency of sovereignty and to legitimize state action, while local complexities are positioned as structural challenges that require policy intervention and community participation. In this way, causal interpretation functions as a strategy of legitimation that positions the state as both the primary protector and the manager of collaborative maritime security.

This study concludes that the moral framing of maritime security emphasizes the values of patriotism and coastal community solidarity through symbols, visual aesthetics, and national narratives. These values foster emotional engagement and collective identity within the framework of digital nationalism, although participation tends to remain symbolic in nature. This moral evaluation strengthens the government's position as a moral authority while simultaneously revealing the boundary between emotional resonance and substantive public engagement. The findings further show that treatment recommendations are directed toward two main strategies: institutional synergy among maritime agencies and maritime legal education for coastal communities. These strategies underscore the understanding of maritime security as an issue of collaborative governance that integrates institutional capacity with public legal awareness. Through this

framing, treatment recommendations function to conclude the policy narrative with rational solutions while expanding the legitimacy of local government.

The digital narratives examined in this study successfully construct symbolic awareness that safeguarding the sea is equivalent to safeguarding national honor, while reinforcing the image of the government as a protector of national sovereignty. However, the communication remains largely top-down and has not yet become fully participatory, particularly due to limited access to information in remote coastal areas. Thus, while the government's digital strategy is effective in building symbolic representations, it remains insufficiently transformative at the social level. Theoretically, this study affirms the role of digital media as an arena of social construction and local maritime diplomacy, where sovereignty, public policy, and national identity interact within a symbolic space "from sea to screen." This study contributes to government communication research by conceptualizing digital communication not merely and constructs symbolic legitimacy, shaping state authority, collective identity, and public perceptions of sovereignty. It also advances non-traditional security studies by demonstrating that maritime security is produced not only through material practices such as law enforcement but also through symbolic and discursive processes mediated by digital communication that influence legitimacy, compliance, and public participation in contemporary security governance.

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