

The policy narrative of the outsourcing system in Indonesia

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Abstract

Law No. 6/2023, which ratifies Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2/2022 on Job Creation, defines outsourcing as the delegation of part of work implementation to other companies through a written outsourcing agreement. This study aims to analyze the narrative structure of Indonesia's outsourcing policy using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), focusing on key elements such as characters (heroes, villains, and victims), setting, plot, and moral of the story. A total of 132 news articles were randomly selected using the keyword "outsourcing" from online sources between November 2, 2020, and December 31, 2023. The data were analyzed using the Discourse Network Analysis (DNA) application. The resulting narrative portrays both workers and outsourcing companies as victims, while the government, outsourcing companies, and service user companies appear both as villains and heroes. The setting includes various regions in Indonesia and covers aspects of job creation and enhancement, workers' income and welfare, internal company policies, and human resource management. The narrative plot highlights employment policies, associated challenges, and governance of labor regulations. The moral of the story emphasizes the need for effective labor regulations, strict enforcement of employment policies and laws, ongoing policy evaluation, and robust worker protection mechanisms. To foster synergy among stakeholders in shaping effective policies, the government must ensure clear communication of fair and accountable outsourcing principles and design a robust enforcement strategy to address systemic outsourcing issues.

Keywords: policy; policy narrative; narrative policy framework; outsourcing; workforce

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Indonesia guarantees every citizen the right to employment, as stated in Article 27, paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution: “Every citizen has the right to work and to earn a livelihood that is worthy of humanity.” Consequently, the government bears responsibility for designing and implementing employment policies that promote job creation, reduce unemployment, and ensure equal access to economic opportunities. By actively engaging in various policy initiatives and programs, the government can help citizens achieve a standard of living consistent with human dignity.

The state is likewise responsible for safeguarding citizens' welfare through relevant legislation. Indonesia's labor law system is aimed at promoting general welfare, protecting workers' rights, and preventing marginalization in response to technological disruptions such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Wijaya, Kurniawan, & Sood, 2019). Abduh (2023) emphasizes that justice in labor law plays a critical role in improving workers' well-being. In development planning, workers must be recognized as complete citizens—not merely as production factors. Ensuring social justice, equitable labor relations, fair wages, and adequate protections are essential for inclusive development. Labor is a pivotal driver of economic and social progress; thus, prioritizing workforce welfare contributes to more just, sustainable, and prosperous societal outcomes.

According to the National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas) for February 2023, Indonesia experienced a 2.61 million increase in its workforce compared to the previous year, with unemployment reaching 7.99 million. Research by Pratama & Rahadiana (2018) and Sujito & Bahagijo (2022) identifies educated unemployment as a pressing issue in Indonesia's labor market. The persistent mismatch between the growing labor force and insufficient job availability continues to drive unemployment. Addressing this challenge requires a collaborative approach involving government policy, private sector support, and joint efforts to strengthen economic growth and the labor market. Studies by Awaluddin et al. (2021) and Marliana (2022) show that economic expansion and

minimum wage increases have contributed to regional declines in unemployment.

One major government initiative to expand employment is the outsourcing policy outlined in Law No. 6/2023, which formalizes Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2/2022 on Job Creation. Article 64, paragraph (1) defines outsourcing as the partial delegation of work implementation to another company through a written agreement. Outsourcing emerged as a business strategy to reduce workloads and enhance efficiency amid growing competition. It enables companies to reduce labor costs, gain access to skilled professionals, and streamline recruitment through external vendors. Typically, outsourced employees are engaged for limited terms and trained by the service provider to meet specific client needs. Three actors are involved in this system: the service provider company, the client (user) company, and the workforce. The performance and credibility of the service provider are critical to ensuring client satisfaction (Finarsih, Setiawan, & Salim, 2023). Employment agreements—either fixed-term or indefinite—govern the relationship between outsourcing firms and their workers. Vendors are responsible for paying wages, providing insurance, and fulfilling labor protections. Workers may also benefit from upskilling programs organized by service providers.

However, several challenges persist. These include skill mismatches, failure by providers to fulfill workers' rights, and lack of social security coverage. Outsourced workers often earn below minimum standards, or face income instability due to arbitrary deductions. Sinuraya (2020) found that many employers in Bekasi Regency neglected to register workers for BPJS Ketenagakerjaan. Giri & Wiryawan (2019) highlighted similar lapses at PT Delta Duta Dewata regarding minimum wage compliance. Likewise, Putri Harlapan & Sarjana (2021) documented wage non-payment for three consecutive months at PT Caterison.

Another critical issue involves the misuse of work contracts. Research by Nevani (2020) revealed repeated renewals of fixed-term agreements at a call center company, ultimately changing workers' legal status to

indefinite employees. Pambudi (2021) echoed concerns about widespread deviations in outsourcing practices, particularly the denial of fundamental labor rights. Furthermore, many vendors now apply outsourcing to all job categories, not just non-core roles. According to Kesuma & Uwiyono (2022), although outsourcing may broaden employment access, a comprehensive evaluation is required to ensure that labor protections are upheld and workers receive fair treatment.

OUTSOURCING

Workers are individuals who possess the ability to perform labor with the intent of producing goods or services, either to meet personal needs or to serve the broader society (Sipayung et al., 2022). As part of the labor force, workers are engaged in employment relationships wherein they operate under the direction of an employer—be it an individual, company, legal entity, or other institution—and receive wages or other forms of compensation in return. Labor plays a vital role in Indonesia's economic structure, serving not only as a beneficiary of development but also as an active contributor through participation and productivity. Alongside natural resources, capital, and technology, labor is a fundamental factor in the production process.

In terms of qualifications, Rizal, Apriliani, and Rostika (2018) categorize workers into three groups: (a) unskilled workers with limited education and no specialized expertise; (b) skilled workers who possess practical experience or formal education in a particular field; and (c) educated workers with advanced academic backgrounds and field-specific competencies.

Despite this classification, many Indonesian workers remain in informal employment lacking social protection or legal safeguards. Minimum wages also remain a pressing issue in ensuring decent work conditions. Although a large portion of the workforce possesses basic skills, significant challenges persist in improving their qualifications. Enhancing education and vocational training is essential for increasing workforce competitiveness and national productivity. The quality and adaptability of the workforce are critical determinants of Indonesia's global competitiveness and its capacity to

absorb technological and innovative advancements. A well-trained, skilled workforce is a cornerstone of sustainable industrial development.

In response to labor market challenges, the government formulates employment policies intended to elevate workforce quality, expand job absorption, and strengthen worker protections. A key regulatory milestone was the enactment of Law No. 13/2003 on Manpower, which introduced provisions on outsourcing. However, Pally (2019) observed that while the law aimed to protect workers, gaps in implementation left room for exploitation. Irawan (2019) similarly pointed to ambiguity regarding the legal status of outsourced workers, particularly those engaged under non-permanent or contractual arrangements, which often undermines legal certainty and protection.

To streamline the regulatory framework, the government enacted the Job Creation Law (Law No. 11/2020) through the omnibus law approach, passed in October 2020. According to Prasetyo et al. (2022), the omnibus method consolidates various regulations into a unified legal package across sectors such as employment, investment, licensing, and environmental governance. This law sought to bolster the investment climate and employment absorption as a pathway to societal welfare.

In the employment sector, one of its most significant shifts was the deregulation of outsourcing provisions. As noted by Suyoko & Ghufon AZ (2021), previous limitations under Law No. 13/2003 regarding specific job categories permitted for outsourcing were lifted under the new law. However, Sjaiful (2021) warned that the Job Creation Law raises concerns about legal certainty—particularly regarding wage guarantees and dismissal procedures that appear to favor employers.

Initially, outsourcing emerged as a corporate strategy to reduce workload and increase efficiency amid intense market competition. It allows companies to cut labor costs and access skilled professionals. Recruitment responsibilities fall to the outsourcing service provider, which facilitates the temporary placement of workers in line with client needs.

Indonesia's workforce system defines outsourcing as the delegation of labor-related activities from one company to another. Izziyana (2018) describes outsourcing as a cost-reduction strategy to obtain specific expertise and maintain competitiveness in an evolving global landscape. Through contractual agreements with third-party vendors, companies can outsource non-core functions such as manufacturing, customer service, or IT management, enabling greater focus on their primary business operations.

Outsourcing may serve as a solution for companies facing operational inefficiencies. Dekker et al. (2020) suggest that outsourcing can help organizations overcome internal challenges and improve overall performance. Fahmi et al. (2021) emphasize the economic potential of outsourcing in terms of job creation but caution that adequate attention must be paid to the safety and social rights of workers.

To ensure fair and sustainable labor practices, strong state intervention is necessary. The government must provide robust legal frameworks and policy instruments that affirm workers' rights and guarantee their protection. As Nurcahyo (2021) notes, this includes comprehensive regulations covering wages, working hours, paid leave, occupational safety and health, and freedom of association.

NARRATIVE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Policy narratives are stories constructed by policy actors to frame problems and advocate for solutions. These narratives consist of elements such as setting, plot, characters (heroes, villains, and victims), and a moral of the story (Jones & McBeth, 2010). According to Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth (2011), the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), which places narratives at the center of policy analysis, rests on several assumptions: (a) policy narratives are fundamental to the policy process; (b) narratives operate across three analytical levels—micro (individual), meso (policy subsystem), and macro (institutional/cultural); (c) various actors—including elected officials, interest groups, and the media—produce and disseminate policy narratives; and (d) policies and programs reflect belief systems articulated and organized through these narratives.

The NPF is an analytical approach used to examine how stories influence the formation, evolution, and implementation of public policy. It offers a systematic methodology to explore how actors (e.g., interest groups, individuals, media) employ narrative structures strategically to promote policy positions and evaluate their outcomes (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). NPF integrates narrative data and content analysis within a broader scientific framework for policy research.

NPF comprises two key components: **narrative structure** and **narrative content**. The structure includes (1) characters—categorized as heroes, villains, and victims; (2) the plot—connecting the characters through a sequence of events; (3) the setting—defined spatially and temporally; and (4) the moral of the story—representing the policy solution. The content component encompasses the belief systems underlying the narrative and the strategic use of narrative elements to influence the policy process (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018).

Research on outsourcing in Indonesia reveals mixed findings. Several studies highlight concerns related to inequality and labor exploitation (Arifin, 2021; Giri & Wiryawan, 2019; Haidar, 2022; Harlaplan & Bachelor, 2021; Nevani, 2019; Pally, 2019; Pambudi, 2021; Putra & Sukranatha, 2020; Sabrie et al., 2019; Sinuraya, 2020), limited legal protection (Hidayah, Cloet, & Pradhan, 2021; Irawan, 2019; Izzati, 2022; Sjaiful, 2021), and weak regulatory oversight (Fitriani et al., 2022). However, other studies emphasize positive impacts, such as the expansion of job opportunities (Fahmi, Meiji, & Hadi, 2021; Kesuma & Uwiyo, 2022; Prasetyo, Budiono, & Hadiyantina, 2022), assistance for companies facing financial or capacity constraints (Dekker, Mooi, & Visser, 2020), improvements in worker performance (Wahyuni & Darma, 2022), cost and time efficiencies (Vivianty et al., 2023), enhanced user satisfaction (Finarsih, Setiawan, & Salim, 2023), and compliance with labor regulations (Billy & Ibrahim, 2019; Filia & Wijaya, 2019; Wicaksana & Markeling, 2019). Other findings underscore the existence of worker protection mechanisms (Abduh, 2023; Nurcahyo, 2021; Wijaya, Kurniawan,

& Sood, 2019) and the enforcement of sanctions against non-compliant companies (Indrawati & Simanjuntak, 2019; Mani, 2020; Sudrajat, Kunarti, & Nasihuddin, 2020). Additionally, numerous studies focus on the regulatory framework governing outsourcing in Indonesia (Aryani et al., 2022; Budiyo, 2021; Hernawan et al., 2022; Madeni Apriliani & Dwijayanthi, 2022; Manurung, 2022; Pratiwi & Andani, 2022; Putri, 2021; Santosa et al., 2021; Suntoro, 2021).

Despite growing scholarly attention, previous research has not explicitly mapped narrative elements—such as characters (heroes, villains, victims), plotlines, settings, and policy solutions—within the context of outsourcing in Indonesia. This study seeks to fill that gap by combining the Narrative Policy Framework (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018) with Discourse Network Analysis (Leifeld & Haunss, 2018) as complementary analytical tools to explore the dynamics of outsourcing discourse in Indonesian labor policy.

METHOD

This research utilizes primary data in the form of online news articles sourced from various platforms, including websites of news organizations, commercial entities, interest groups, and other institutions. These sources contained the keyword “outsourcing” and were published between November 2, 2020, and December 31, 2023. The selected timeframe corresponds to the

enactment of Law No. 11 of 2020 on Job Creation and the subsequent ratification of Law No. 6 of 2023, which transformed Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022 into formal legislation governing outsourcing practices.

Secondary data were drawn from relevant publications by governmental agencies, private institutions, and civil society organizations. These included legal documents, scientific journal articles, institutional reports, and officially sanctioned news releases that pertain to outsourcing policy and practice in Indonesia.

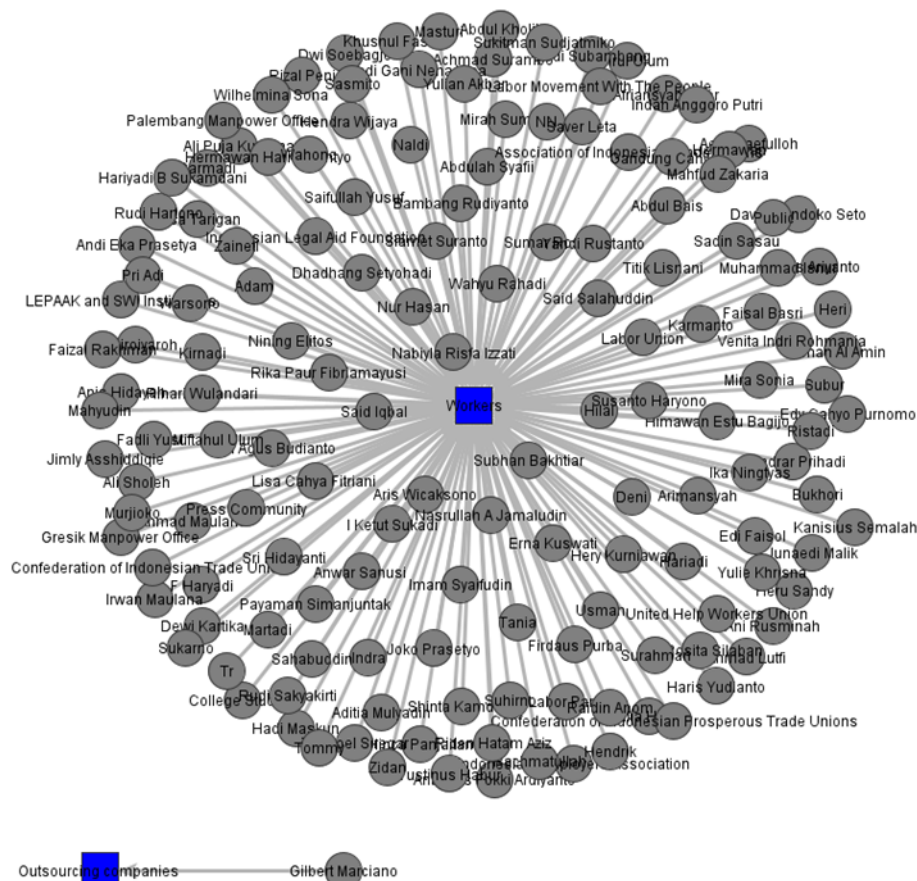
From Google search results, 132 websites containing news articles with the keyword “outsourcing” were accessed. The researchers initially collected a total of 200 news items, which were saved in plain text format (*.txt) to facilitate analysis. Referring to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, 132 news items were randomly selected using a simple random sampling technique via Microsoft Excel.

The textual data were then prepared for analysis using the Discourse Network Analyzer (DNA) software. The research proceeded in three stages: first, initial coding. Two coders independently reviewed the news texts to identify narrative elements related to policy discourse. This involved reading and interpreting each paragraph in relation to the study’s focus on outsourcing narratives. Inter-coder reliability was measured using Krippendorff’s alpha (Klaus, 2004) to

Table 1: Research Focus

Problem Statement	Description	
What is the narrative structure of the outsourcing system policy in Indonesia?	Character	Hero Problem solver for policy problems
		Villain Subjects that cause policy problems
		Victim People who are harmed by criminals
	Setting	The space or social context in which the action of the story takes place over time
	Plot	Storylines, or narrative elements that connect characters to each other
	Moral of the story	Policy solutions in policy narratives

Source: adopted from Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth (2018)



Source: Adapted from (Cinar et al., 2019a; Clausen et al., 2020)

ensure the consistency and objectivity of coding decisions. In the second phase, the processed news texts were imported into the DNA application, where segments were systematically coded according to Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) components—specifically, characters, setting, plot, and moral of the story. The final stage involved generating discourse network visualizations to illustrate the relationships between actors and narrative elements, allowing for a deeper examination of the narrative structure embedded in Indonesian outsourcing policy debates.

The central focus of this research is to map the narrative structure surrounding outsourcing policy in Indonesia—including the identification of characters (heroes, villains, and victims), settings, plot trajectories, and the overarching moral or policy solution—summarized in Table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability

The reliability values for the narrative structure of the outsourcing system policy, consisting of characters (victim, villain, hero), setting, plot, and moral of the story, were obtained respectively at 0.8538, 0.8854, 0.8674, and 0.8583. Documentation of reliability calculations can be seen in Appendix 1. These reliability scores indicate a high level of consistency between coders in identifying the narrative components, affirming the robustness of the coding framework applied in this study. The values—each exceeding 0.85—suggest that the classification of textual data into NPF categories was conducted with a strong degree of methodological rigor, minimizing subjective interpretation bias.

The high inter-coder reliability further supports the validity of subsequent analysis

using DNA, as the coded data reliably capture the presence and frequency of narrative elements across the sample. This foundational consistency strengthens the credibility of the narrative structures visualized and discussed in the following sections.

Building on this, the next subsection explores the narrative construction of outsourcing policies in Indonesia by dissecting the character roles (victim, villain, hero) and how these identities are distributed across actors such as workers, the government, outsourcing firms, and user companies. The dynamic interplay among these roles will be further contextualized within temporal and thematic settings, as well as the emergent plotlines and policy messages conveyed. Insights drawn from these narratives provide a nuanced understanding of how outsourcing is framed and contested in public discourse.

Narrative Structure

Character

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet. Aut According to Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth (2018), policy narratives feature characters such as victims (those who suffer harm), villains (those who cause harm), and heroes (those who seek to solve problems). These characters represent the entities that act or are acted upon, and may take the form of individuals, organizations, agencies, or collective groups—both public and private. The analysis below explores statements from policy actors that construct these characters within the narrative surrounding outsourcing policy.

Based on the coding results, two primary victims emerge in the outsourcing narrative: workers and outsourcing companies (see Figure 1). The majority of policy actors depict workers as the principal victims of outsourcing practices. These harms include wage deductions, salaries below the minimum standard, exclusion from employment and health-related social security programs,

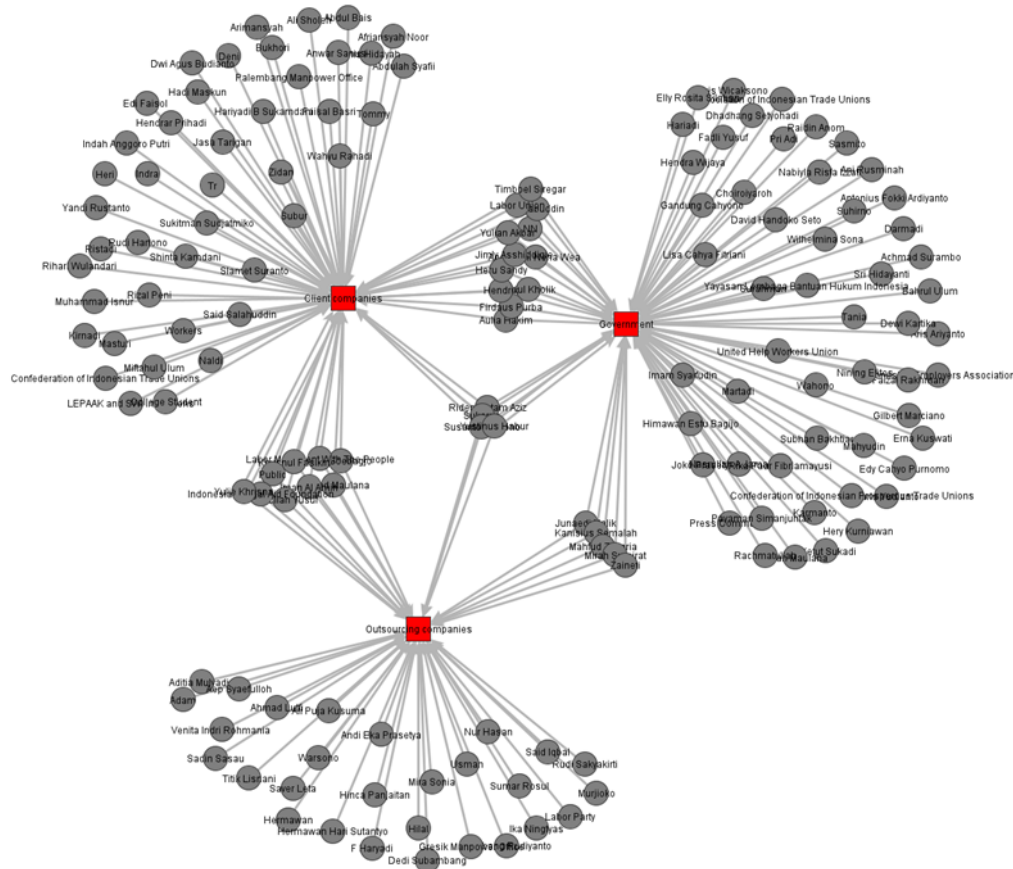


Figure 2: Character of the Villain

Source: Processed data

Source: Processed data

Figure 2 illustrates that policy actors also frame three villainous characters within the outsourcing system: the government, outsourcing companies, and client companies. The government is criticized for authoring and implementing the Job Creation Law, viewed by some as a catalyst for policies perceived to weaken labor protections. Additionally, several government agencies are depicted as failing to adhere to labor laws—specifically regarding unauthorized layoffs or salary delays that contradict agreed contractual terms. Companies—both outsourcing providers and users—are likewise portrayed as villains when they fail to uphold workers' rights as stipulated in labor regulations.

within the policy narrative. These include ministries, regional governments, manpower agencies, and corporate actors who are described as taking tangible actions to address labor grievances. Some policy actors highlight the government's positive role in fostering employment and mediating labor disputes. Similarly, outsourcing firms and user companies are presented as heroic when they resolve disputes and fulfill workers' entitlements in accordance with existing legal provisions.

According to Hidayah, Cloet, & Pradhan (2021) and Sjaiful (2021), the Job Cre-

ation Law undermines legal safeguards for labor, particularly in wage policy and termination procedures that disproportionately benefit employers. Arifin (2021) further argues that widespread misinterpretation of outsourcing in Indonesia has led to practices that violate human rights, where some companies prioritize profit by suppressing wages and disregarding labor regulations. Many also fail to register employees for social security—an obligation that, if neglected, results in administrative sanctions (Sudrajat, Kunarti, & Nasihuddin, 2020).

Nevertheless, a subset of policy actors describes the government and businesses in more favorable terms. The government is characterized as a hero for implementing job creation strategies and mediating conflicts. This view aligns with Prasetyo, Budiono, & Hadiyantina (2022), who note that the Job Creation Law aims to attract investment and stimulate employment, thereby enhancing societal welfare. On the corporate side, outsourcing companies and clients are praised when they comply with labor law provisions

and ensure worker rights.

Filia & Wijaya (2019) highlight a successful case at PT Garda Wibawa, where outsourcing workers were afforded protections consistent with labor regulations. Both employer and employee obligations were mutually respected, reflecting legal compliance and equitable employment relations. Likewise, Wicaksana & Markeling (2019) document the case of PT Indonesia Power UBP Bali, where outsourced workers were required to participate in the company's Occupational Safety and Health Management System (SMK3) and were integrated into the BPJS social security scheme.

Setting

The setting refers to the space and time in which narrative action unfolds (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). It encompasses geographic locations, empirical evidence—such as statistical data or legal interpretations—and social conditions that give rise to the outsourcing system. In this context, set-

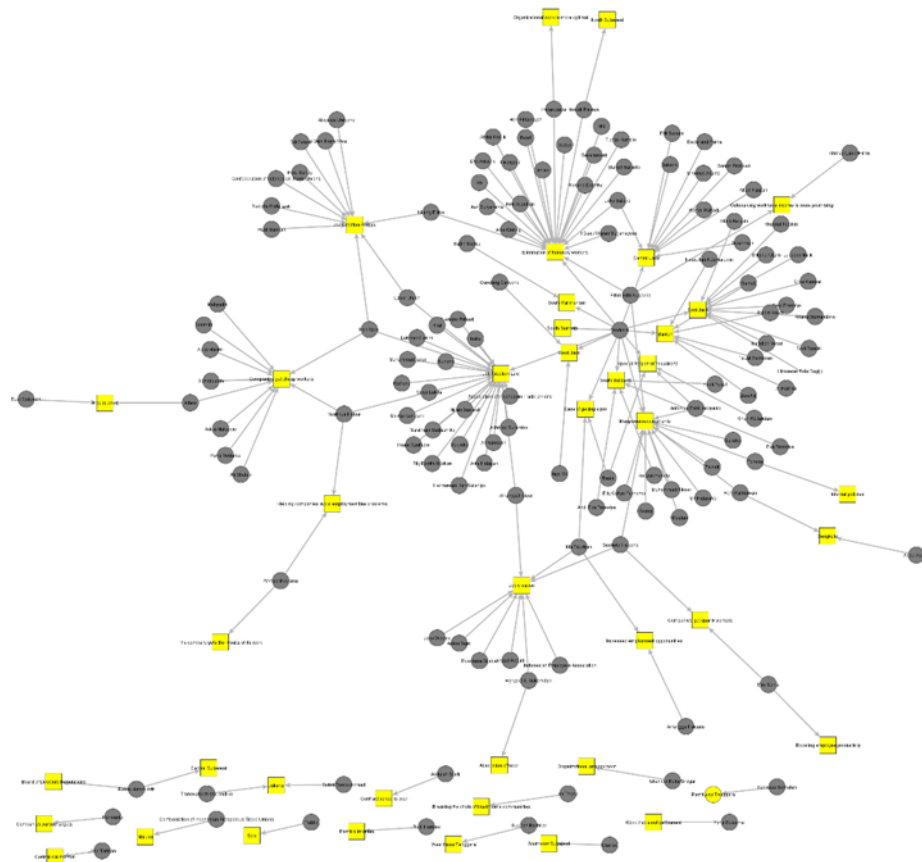


Figure 4: Policy Actors-Settings

Source: Processed data

Table 2: Narratives of Policy Actors Against Setting

Setting	Policy Actors						
	Government	Outsourcing Companies (including associations)	Companies Using Outsourcing Services (including associations)	Outsourcing Labor (including unions)	NGO	Academics	Public
	Job Creation Law, creation and increase in job opportunities, ease of getting a job, need for workers, more optimal organizational work, organizational structuring, more promising income from outsourcing workers, breaking the chain of low-income communities, elimination of honorary staff	Labor needs, encourage employee productivity, companies get quality workers, work that is not permanent	Internal policies, job creation, labor absorption, labor needs, the Company gets quality workers	Job Creation Law, Job Creation Perppu, board of directors regulations, Companies get cheap workers, Companies pursue targets, elimination of honorary staff, contract completion period, labor requirements, ease of getting a job	Job Creation Law	Job Creation Perppu, job creation	Elimination of honorary staff
							Job Creation Law, Job Creation Perppu, Companies get the results of their work, Companies get cheap workers, help companies avoid labor law problems

Source: Processed data

tings include socio-economic environments, legal circumstances, and testimonial accounts that frame the policy discourse.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the relationship between policy actors and the contextual backgrounds of the outsourcing system in Indonesia is visually mapped. Regionally, the settings span numerous provinces, including Banten, Bengkulu, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, the Riau Islands, Maluku, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, Solo, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, Southeast Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, and South Sumatra.

The settings identified through the narratives of policy actors comprise various sectors, including government agencies, companies (and their associations), workers (and labor unions), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, the general public, and other relevant actors such as observers and political parties. These categories are summarized in Table 2.

In simplified terms, the setting of the outsourcing system in Indonesia is situated within multiple domains: the creation and

expansion of employment opportunities, improvements to workers' income and welfare, internal and operational company policies, and human resource management systems. Each policy actor interprets this setting differently—shaped by variations in organizational affiliation, beliefs and values, individual perspectives, interests, access to information, experience, socio-cultural contexts, and media influence. These contextual differences become discursive resources through which actors construct and reinforce their policy narratives during deliberation and debate.

The coding results indicate that government actors (Figure 5) commonly associate the outsourcing system with several driving factors: the promulgation of the Job Creation Law, growing labor demands, easier access to employment, enhanced organizational efficiency, expanded job availability, potential increases in worker income, and institutional restructuring. These are seen as justifications for outsourcing as a policy solution to reduce poverty and address the phasing out of honorary staff positions in government institutions.

In contrast, company actors (outsourcing providers and users) and busi-

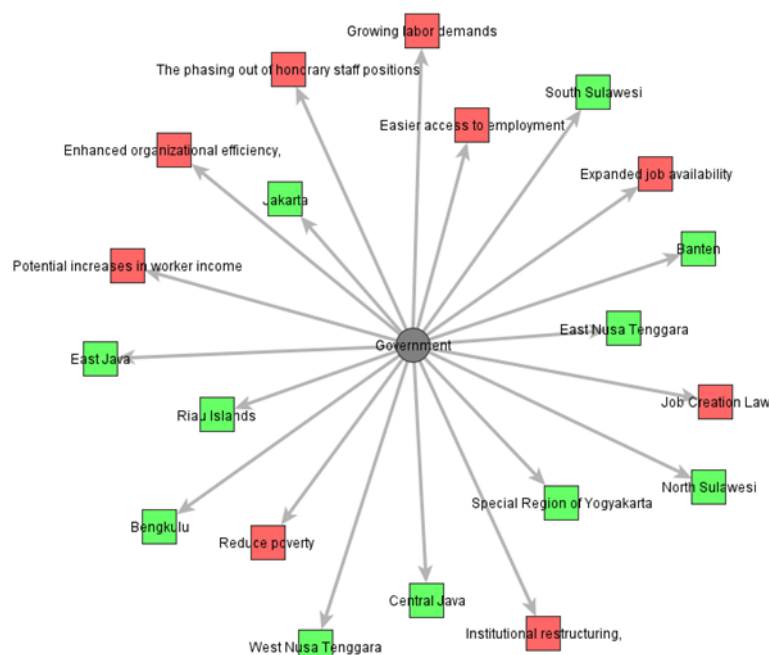


Figure 5: Government Policy Actors-Setting

Source: Processed data

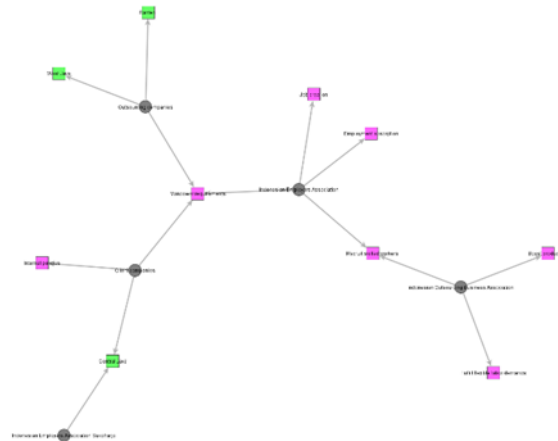


Figure 6: Corporate Policy Actors-Setting

Source: Processed data

ness associations (Figure 6) frame the setting in terms of internal policy priorities and labor supply needs. They cite efforts to boost productivity, fulfill flexible labor demands (precarious work), facilitate employment absorption, and recruit skilled workers as the contextual rationale for implementing the outsourcing model.

Worker-based policy actors—including individuals and trade unions (Figure 7)—point to job access, contract completion, institutional regulations, and the Job Creation Law (and its associated Gov-

ernment Regulation in Lieu of Law or Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang-Undang or Perppu) as contributing factors. From their perspective, these elements enable companies to acquire low-cost labor and meet performance targets. Similarly, regulations eliminating honorary staff positions in government entities are perceived as a key structural background to the proliferation of outsourcing.

Actors from NGOs, academia, and civil society (Figure 8) identify six primary drivers behind the outsourcing system: the

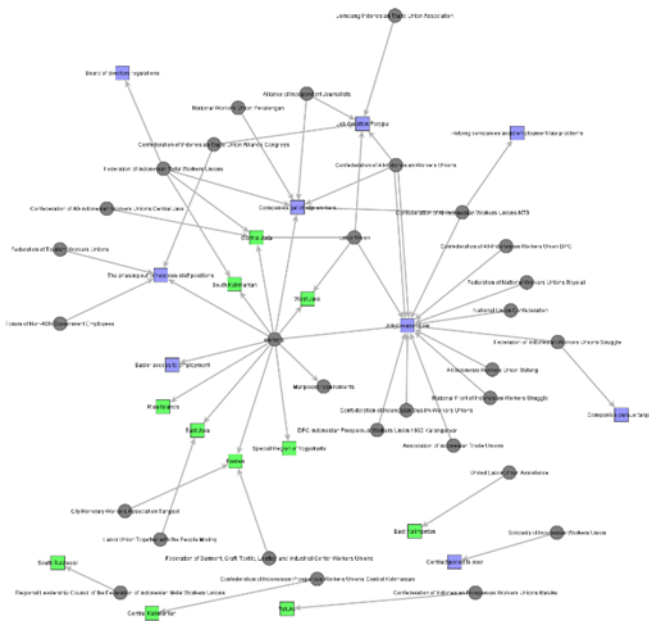


Figure 7: Worker Policy Actors-Setting

Source: Processed data

Job Creation Law and its Perppu, the general push for employment creation, companies' ability to reap work-related benefits at lower labor costs, the evasion of labor law obligations, and regulatory measures eliminating government honorary positions.

Although actors use varied terminology to articulate these backgrounds, their meanings are interrelated rather than isolated. These relationships can be causal (e.g., the issuance of the Job Creation Law leads to increased employment opportunities, enabling greater labor absorption), associative (e.g., the removal of honorary positions is linked to organizational restructuring and efforts to enhance productivity), or indicative (e.g., a company achieving performance targets is viewed as evidence of having obtained a skilled workforce).

Labor regulations aim to expand access to decent work and enhance job absorption through legal reforms. The Job Creation Law is expected to boost workforce quality, leading to higher organizational productivity. However, challenges remain—particularly concerning non-permanent employment and contract renewal policies—which must be carefully regulated to ensure equity for workers. As emphasized by Abduh (2023), justice in labor law is crucial to improving worker welfare in Indonesia. Workers must be viewed as full citizens—

not merely as production inputs. Promoting social justice and equality in labor relations, and strengthening the government's role in ensuring fair wages and adequate protections, are essential foundations for sustainable labor governance.

Policy actors are thus central to both the formulation and implementation of public policy. Their participation enriches the policymaking process by introducing diverse perspectives, producing policies that are more responsive and inclusive of public needs. These actors play active roles in data collection, issue identification, and the development of practical and innovative policy solutions. Supporting this, Noor, Suaedi, & Mardiyanta (2023) find that collaborative governance—defined by interactive processes among stakeholders—offers a promising approach to addressing community problems collectively and effectively.

Plot

The plot serves as the narrative element that connects characters to the setting. It organizes actions, highlights dimensions of the setting, and often points toward the moral or policy solution (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2018). Within the context of Indonesia's outsourcing system, although policy actors employ different rhetorical strategies and interpretive frames, their narratives

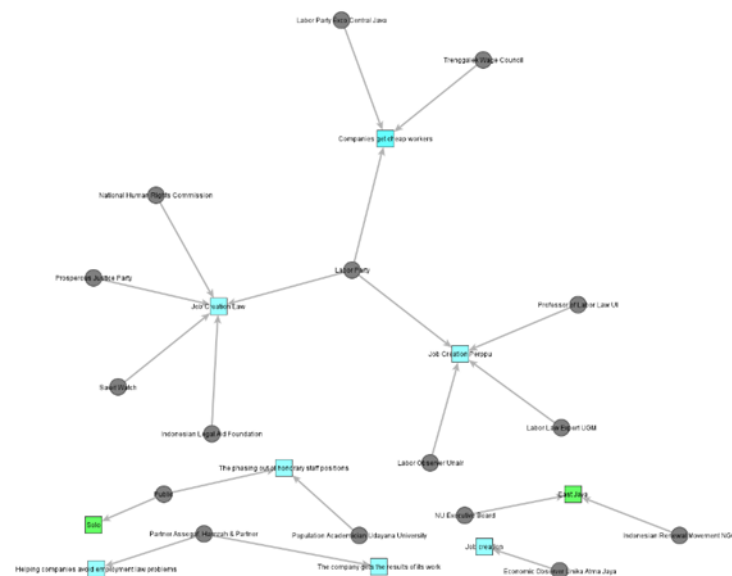


Figure 8: NGOs, Academics, Public Policy Actors – Setting

Source: Processed data

tend to follow a consistent storyline structure—consisting of problems, proposed solutions, and envisioned outcomes.

The opening segment of these narratives typically introduces a series of critical issues: the inadequacy of existing employment policies and regulations, persistent worker-related problems, and broader challenges confronting the labor sector. Once these problems are articulated, policy actors present solutions that include reformulating employment laws, enhancing workforce management, strengthening protections for workers, and improving coordination among stakeholders such as the government, employers, and labor representatives.

The trajectory of the narrative then moves toward broader policy aspirations—particularly the refinement of labor governance, the pursuit of inclusive economic growth, job creation, and the safeguarding of workers' rights. Central to this plotline is the emphasis on improving workforce skills and competencies as foundational to productivity and global competitiveness.

In essence, the plot reflects a linear progression: from diagnosing structural and regulatory flaws in Indonesia's employment system to proposing integrated solutions, and ultimately envisioning a policy environment that balances labor market efficiency with social equity. This culminates in a shared narrative commitment among many actors to promote a fair and sustainable work environment. As Syahwal (2022) affirms, such an environment is a constitutional responsibility of the state, encompassing not only the availability of employment but also its accessibility and adequacy in ensuring dignity and welfare for workers.

Moral of the Story

According to Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth (2018), the moral of the story in policy narratives typically refers to the proposed policy solution and often concludes with a call to action. These solutions are often framed as heroic interventions intended to protect or benefit the identified victims. However, not all narratives present solutions explicitly; many offers intermediate steps or cite existing policies as reference points toward broader policy reform.

In the context of Indonesia's outsourcing

system, the policy solutions articulated by actors can be grouped into four thematic categories: first, labor regulations. Policy actors emphasize the need for a solid legal foundation to safeguard workers' rights and interests. The government plays a central role by issuing and enforcing labor laws that guarantee various aspects of employment protection—including paid leave, wage provisions, working hours, occupational safety and health standards, and union rights. The expansion of social security and health programs is also seen as essential to protecting workers and ensuring equitable benefits (Nurcahyo, 2021). However, legal frameworks alone are insufficient without effective enforcement mechanisms.

Second, enforcement of employment policies and laws. There is a strong narrative emphasis on the need for equitable law enforcement. Legal violations must be addressed decisively to protect vulnerable workers. Fahmi, Meiji, & Hadi (2021) argue that a just and secure work environment requires active government intervention through legal and policy instruments.

Third, monitoring and evaluation of policies. Robust oversight is also a recurring theme. Monitoring mechanisms are needed to assess whether labor policies are achieving their intended goals. According to Pambudi (2021), the shifting perception of outsourcing—from a solution for job seekers to a widespread practice across all sectors—has led to an increase in workers' rights violations. Santosa et al. (2021) advocate for reforming the Job Creation Law to better align with the principles of a welfare state and to reinforce the state's role in industrial relations. This includes strengthening workers' legal protection and social welfare. Kesuma & Uwiyo (2022) echo the need for comprehensive evaluations to ensure the fair implementation of outsourcing policies. Fitriani et al. (2022) suggest that unannounced inspections by labor supervisory units and strict sanctions for violators can serve as deterrents and enhance regulatory compliance.

Fourth, employment management and worker protection. Effective employment management is critical to creating a just and supportive working environment. This involves not only ensuring safety and fairness in the workplace but also cultivating policies and

practices that uphold fundamental labor rights. Aryani et al. (2022) stress the importance of guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination as essential to improving societal welfare. Finarsih et al. (2023) highlight the importance of building trust between outsourcing service providers and user companies to enhance the quality and satisfaction of outsourced labor.

By integrating all these dimensions, a more inclusive and participatory policy environment can be fostered—one that emphasizes dignity, fairness, and shared responsibility in the evolving world of work. This is not merely a matter of economic efficiency but a moral imperative to uphold human dignity. A well-crafted and well-implemented outsourcing policy can yield substantial benefits: cost savings, access to specialized expertise, operational flexibility, and improved innovation.

According to Dekker, Mooi, & Visser (2020), outsourcing can be a strategic response for companies facing financial or competency constraints. However, companies must also manage associated challenges such as quality control, data security, and worker well-being. Quality assurance ensures service standards are met, while data protection is increasingly critical in an era of digital vulnerability. Outsourcing arrangements can also generate anxiety among workers, particularly concerning job security and motivation.

With a deliberate and strategic approach, firms can harness the full potential of outsourcing while mitigating its risks. As Wahyuni & Darma (2022) suggest, improved management of outsourced labor—such as in the irrigation sector—can enhance worker performance and organizational competitiveness. This underscores the importance of sound human resource management and the strategic value of outsourcing in the global economy.

Discussion

This research confirms that workers are framed as victims within the narrative of outsourcing policy in Indonesia. These findings reinforce prior studies that highlight patterns of inequality and labor exploitation (Arifin, 2021; Giri & Wiryawan, 2019; Haidar, 2022; Harlapan & Bachelor, 2021; Nevani, 2019; Pally, 2019; Pambudi, 2021; Putra & Sukranatha, 2020; Sabrie et al., 2019). Within the NPF framework, this is reflected in the narrative

structure of character, where workers are subjected to policy practices that violate labor norms, while companies that neglect or abuse regulations are constructed as villains. In contrast to previous research, however, this study also identifies outsourcing companies themselves as victims—particularly in instances where client companies breach contractual agreements. The moral of the story includes themes such as the enforcement of employment policies and laws, monitoring and evaluation, labor regulation, employment management, and worker protection.

Additionally, this study finds that both corporate actors and the government are frequently framed as villains in outsourcing narratives—echoing earlier research on the lack of effective legal protection for workers (Hidayah, Cloet, & Pradhan, 2021; Irawan, 2019; Izzati, 2022; Sjaiful, 2021). In NPF terms, these actors are assigned villainous roles within the character structure, while workers remain the victims. The policy moral centers on improving employment governance and enforcing oversight. This aligns with studies on regulatory weaknesses (Fitriani et al., 2022), which in the NPF map onto moral of the story elements such as policy enforcement and supervision.

Furthermore, this study contrasts with research that emphasizes the positive economic potential of outsourcing—particularly in expanding employment opportunities (Fahmi et al., 2021; Kesuma & Uwiyono, 2022; Prasetyo et al., 2022). While these earlier works often stress aggregate job creation, the current study foregrounds the rights and vulnerabilities of individual workers. Thus, the narrative structure reinforces characters as workers (victims) and companies (villains), while reiterating normative prescriptions through moral elements—such as employment management, legal compliance, and worker protection.

The study also identifies contributions to the regulatory narrative. Prior works on outsourcing legislation (Aryani et al., 2022; Budiyo, 2021; Hernawan et al., 2022; Apriliani & Dwijayanthi, 2022; Manurung, 2022; Pratiwi & Andani, 2022; Putri, 2021; Santosa et al., 2021; Suntoro, 2021) find resonance within the NPF as both background setting and moral of the story, reinforcing the need for coherent legal frameworks, monitor-

ing mechanisms, and firm policy enforcement. The call for strengthened protections is supported by findings from Abduh (2023), Nurcahyo (2021), and Wijaya, Kurniawan, & Sood (2019), who emphasize the legal and moral duty of the state to guarantee worker welfare.

Interestingly, this study also presents instances in which the government is framed as a hero—especially in narratives concerning the application of sanctions to non-compliant firms (Indrawati & Simanjuntak, 2019; Mani, 2020; Sudrajat et al., 2020). These instances are classified under the character structure as heroic actions and under the moral of the story as efforts to uphold employment law and maintain regulatory accountability.

In contrast, when outsourcing implementation is carried out in compliance with labor law—such as in the cases documented by Billy & Ibrahim (2019), Filia & Wijaya (2019), and Wicaksana & Markeling (2019)—the companies involved are narrated as heroes. Here, the government and private sector are depicted as collaboratively ensuring fair and ethical outsourcing practices. The corresponding moral focuses on labor regulations and robust systems of employment protection.

Beyond regulatory perspectives, the study also acknowledges economic and strategic rationales for outsourcing. These include resolving internal inefficiencies and resource constraints (Dekker, Mooi, & Visser, 2020), improving client satisfaction (Finarsih et al., 2023), enhancing labor performance (Wahyuni & Darma, 2022), and offering cost and time efficiency (Vivianty et al., 2023). Within the NPF, these considerations appear as setting components—especially in relation to internal corporate policies and human resource management.

Nevertheless, regulatory presence alone is insufficient. The fair and consistent enforcement of employment policies is crucial to ensure accountability. Violations must be addressed transparently and firmly to uphold public trust and equity. In addition, continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to determine whether existing policies function as intended. Regular assessments create opportunities for improvement and responsiveness over time.

Finally, effective labor management and protection are foundational to promoting equity and well-being in the workplace. This includes establishing inclusive work environments, guaranteeing basic labor rights, and ensuring that no group is marginalized. This is not merely an economic consideration—it is a reflection of our collective commitment to human dignity and social justice.

A well-designed outsourcing framework can yield diverse benefits, including cost savings, access to specialized expertise, operational flexibility, and accelerated innovation. When companies delegate tasks to specialized third-party providers, they are better able to focus on core competencies—improving adaptability and responsiveness in dynamic markets. However, alongside these benefits, companies must also manage risks such as quality assurance, data security, and workforce anxiety. These challenges demand ethical foresight and strategic planning to ensure that outsourcing becomes not just economically viable, but socially responsible as well.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the narrative surrounding outsourcing policy in Indonesia features a complex structure of characters, settings, plots, and moral themes. Within this narrative, workers and outsourcing companies are often portrayed as victims, while companies—both service providers and users—and government institutions alternate between villain and hero roles, depending on the actions attributed to them. The narrative is shaped by diverse regional contexts across Indonesia, with backgrounds tied to employment expansion, wage dynamics, corporate operational strategies, and human resource management. The plot typically unfolds from problem identification—such as inadequate labor laws and labor market challenges—toward the formulation of policy solutions, collaborative stakeholder efforts, and aspirations for improved labor governance, skill enhancement, and job creation. The moral of the story is reflected in four thematic areas: labor regulation, policy enforcement, monitoring and evaluation, and employment management and worker protection. Based on these findings, the study recommends fostering stronger synergy among stakeholders, enhancing transparent communication on equitable outsourcing practices, and imple-

menting firm law enforcement strategies. It further suggests that future research should explore the role of advocacy coalitions in shaping outsourcing policy to provide deeper insights into the interaction of policy actors and the evolution of governance mechanisms in Indonesia

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