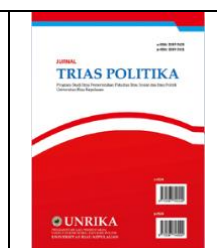


**JURNAL TRIAS POLITIKA**

2024, Vol 8. No.1 : 83 – 92

e-ISSN: 2597-7423 / p-ISSN: 2597-7431

Journal Homepage : <https://www.journal.unrika.ac.id/index.php/jurnaltriaspolitika>**TACKLING INDONESIA'S PLASTIC WASTE CRISIS: A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS****Ujang Komarudin<sup>1</sup>, Dinda Ayuningtyas<sup>2\*</sup>**<sup>1,2</sup>Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas of Al-Azhar Indonesia, Indonesia

**Abstract :** *The escalating plastic waste crisis in Indonesia, fueled by population growth and widespread plastic usage, presents a critical environmental challenge. This study examines the Indonesian government's response to this crisis through a political lens, aiming to uncover the policy implications of its initiatives. Employing qualitative methods and an extensive literature review, this research delves into the government's strategies. Using the theory of national interest, the study focuses on policy implementation, diplomatic efforts, and public participation to set ambitious targets for waste reduction, aiming for a 30 percent decrease in overall waste by 2025. To achieve these objectives, the government has enacted various regulations and measures aimed at curbing plastic pollution. Furthermore, Indonesia has engaged in diplomatic endeavors, collaborating with international partners and participating in multilateral forums to address plastic pollution regionally and globally. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of public participation in mitigating the plastic waste crisis. It assesses the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in combating plastic pollution. Through an in-depth analysis of these factors, this study offers valuable insights into Indonesia's response to the plastic waste crisis, with the aim of informing future policymaking and facilitating effective strategies for plastic waste reduction in the country.*

**Keywords :** indonesia; plastic; waste crisis; political perspective; policy implication.

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**INTRODUCTION**

In the fast-paced rhythm of our daily lives, it's easy to overlook the significant impact of our actions on the environment. However, amidst the convenience of modern life, one issue that stands out is the increasing problem of plastic waste in Indonesia. Whether it's the countless plastic bottles we use or the disposable wrappers that package our food, plastic has become an unavoidable aspect of our existence, leading to a continuous accumulation of waste. Every discarded plastic item contributes to the expanding pile that poses a severe threat to our environment and the health of future generations.

The ramifications of the widespread use of plastic stretch beyond just appearances; they deeply impact both our environmental sustainability and personal well-being. Plastic pollution has seeped into every corner of our nation, polluting our rivers, littering our beaches, and contaminating our food and water with harmful chemicals as it deteriorates. Indonesia was ranked eighth in the World Population Review's list of the top 10 countries producing the most plastic waste, generating 3.4 million tons. This situation is exacerbated by a per capita plastic consumption rate of 12.40 kg annually, resulting in a very high Mismanaged Waste Index

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**Article History :**

Received : (18032023)

Revised : (02042024; 04042024)

Accepted : (18042024)

(MWI) status. Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI) is the sum of uncollected and improperly managed waste, divided by the waste generated.

The differences in how Indonesia deals with plastic waste compared to its neighbors, like Malaysia and Singapore, are pretty striking when you look at the numbers from the World Population Review. Malaysia produces way less plastic waste, only about 1.4 million tons, but still struggles with managing it, with its MWI staying relatively high. Meanwhile, Singapore produces even less plastic waste, just 593.9 thousand tons, and has a super low MWI, showing they're doing a great job managing their waste.

Moreover, according to data from the World Population Review, Macau, despite having the highest waste production per capita at 328.00 kg, generates only 221.9 thousand tons of waste, resulting in a high MWI status. In contrast, the Faroe Islands, ranked 6th in the Top 10 Countries That Produce the Most Plastic Waste per Capita, produces 155.20 kg per capita and generates only 8.1 thousand tons of plastic waste annually, maintaining a low MWI status. Interestingly, Nigeria, with a similar MWI status to Indonesia (very high level), produces less plastic waste, totaling only 935.8 thousand tons, with a plastic waste consumption per capita of merely 4.50 kg per capita. (World Population Review, 2024)

The comparison of plastic waste production and management between Indonesia and other countries highlights significant differences and potential areas for development. Despite Indonesia's greater waste output and higher MWI status, there are lessons to be gleaned from nations like the Faroe Islands and Singapore, where waste management practices yield more favorable outcomes despite lower waste production. These insights underscore the need for Indonesia to refine its waste management strategies, aligning them with global best practices to mitigate the environmental repercussions of plastic waste.

Actually, the implementation of effective policies in dealing with the plastic waste crisis has been discussed in research conducted by Jesly Panjaitan. Her research addresses the plastic waste crisis, emphasizing its environmental and health impacts. He proposes a tax on plastic items to encourage sustainable consumption and manage waste effectively, despite potential concerns about price increases (Panjaitan, 2019). Furthermore, the study conducted by Yifan Wang and Rachel Karasik study delves into Indonesia's comprehensive approach to tackling plastic waste, showcasing a range of policies enacted from national to local levels. They highlight not only government efforts but also actions taken by agencies, cities, and provinces, such as banning single-use plastics. This collaborative, decentralized approach emphasizes Indonesia's concerted effort across various administrative levels to combat plastic pollution effectively. The research offers valuable insights into Indonesia's diverse strategies for waste management, paving the way for further analysis and improvement. (Wang & Karasik, 2022)

To assess plastic waste management in different nations, researchers often refer to prior studies for comparison with Indonesia. For instance, a study by Tammy Ho, et al., highlights Singapore's substantial efforts in this regard. Their government initiatives like the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint and voluntary actions by businesses such as the Plastic Action (PACT) initiative demonstrate Singapore's commitment to addressing plastic waste. These efforts, combined with increasing consumer awareness and a willingness to adopt eco-friendly practices, indicate positive progress in reducing plastic waste in Singapore (Ho, Causier, & Karlsson, 2020). While the research by highlights the substantial challenges confronting waste management in Nigeria, especially in Lagos State, despite endeavors to implement effective practices (Kehinde Oladipupo, 2020). Lastly, research conducted by Hui Ling Chen, et al., reveals significant challenges in plastic waste management in Malaysia despite government efforts. While initiatives like the 'No Plastic Bag Day' campaign and recycling programs aim to tackle the issue, persisting challenges include low waste recovery rates and public resistance to measures such as plastic straw bans. Although waste-to-energy plans hold promise as potential solutions, their successful implementation is vital. (Chen, et al., 2021)

Across multiple studies focusing on plastic waste management, it becomes evident that Indonesia has made strides in implementing a comprehensive policy framework to combat this crisis. However, a closer examination of past research reveals that many other countries encounter significant challenges when trying to enact and enforce similar policies to address their own plastic waste issues. While Singapore emerges as a shining example of successful policy implementation and its positive implications, nations like Nigeria find themselves grappling with the selection and execution of effective policies. Similarly, Malaysia faces obstacles in translating its policies into practical actions on the ground. This stark disparity in policy effectiveness prompts an inquiry into the extent of Indonesia's progress in terms of its legal and diplomatic efforts to tackle plastic waste. Moreover, there arises a profound curiosity about the broader societal implications of these policies, particularly given Indonesia's ongoing struggles in effectively managing plastic waste within its borders.

The researcher seeks to understand the extent of Indonesia's progress in enacting legal policies and diplomatic initiatives to address plastic waste. Additionally, there is a keen interest in uncovering the societal implications of these policies, considering Indonesia's ongoing struggles with plastic waste management. Through this inquiry, the researcher aims to shed light on the factors contributing to successful plastic waste management strategies and identify potential avenues for improvement in Indonesia and beyond.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research methods prioritize observing phenomena and uncovering their underlying meanings, placing significant emphasis on understanding the process and the implications of findings. These approaches are instrumental in providing detailed descriptions of phenomena, facilitating a nuanced understanding of events. Qualitative research typically begins with the formulation of research questions, guiding the selection of data collection methods and subsequent analysis. (Basri, 2014)

Through qualitative methods, researchers try to uncover further information about Indonesia's continuous endeavors in combating the plastic waste crisis. This research employs secondary data collection methods. These include sourcing data from government reports, published journal papers, books, news articles, case study reports, and other relevant sources. Specifically, published journal articles were chosen based on keywords related to plastic waste in Indonesia, Indonesia's regulations concerning plastic waste, Indonesia's efforts to address the plastic waste crisis, public awareness regarding plastic waste management, and Indonesia's diplomatic initiatives regarding the plastic waste crisis, among others.

In narrowing down the scope of this study, the researcher focused on data collected between 2019 and April 2024 due to the abundance of information available on the issue. Initially, the researcher gathered data from various sources, compiling a comprehensive dataset. Subsequently, the researcher engaged in data processing by identifying patterns and themes pertinent to the research question, while also exploring the relationships between these themes to address the research aims effectively. Throughout this analytical process, reflexivity played a crucial role, as the researcher continuously reflected on personal biases, assumptions, and preconceptions that could potentially influence data interpretation. Finally, in presenting the findings, the researcher ensured adequate context and explanation to enable readers to comprehend the rationale behind the analysis and interpretation of the research.

As a result, in the introduction section, researchers utilized five previous journal articles alongside a report from the World Population Review to compare the state of plastic waste in different countries. In the subsequent discussion section, the analysis was enriched with diverse sources, including a report from Greenpeace and the World Economic Forum, insights from a book, and findings from five additional journal articles and reputable websites. This extensive

integration of varied sources enabled the researchers to present a comprehensive and well-rounded discussion on Indonesia's efforts to tackle the plastic waste crisis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Indonesia's Efforts to Tackling Plastic Waste Crisis from the Political Perspective**

The governments hold a critical role in addressing urgent challenges like the plastic waste crisis. By issuing pertinent policy directives and initiatives, the government aims to alleviate the detrimental effects of plastic waste on both the environment and public health. This involves implementing various measures such as reducing plastic consumption, advocating for recycling and waste segregation practices, and enforcing regulations concerning plastic production and disposal. Through concerted efforts and effective policymaking, the government can play a significant role in mitigating the impacts of plastic pollution and fostering a more sustainable future for all. (GreenPeace, 2019)

The Indonesian government then showed its commitment to addressing waste management concerns in 2019 are showed through the enactment of Government Regulation No. 27 of 2020; stands out as another significant regulation concerning the management of specific types of waste and adopted via Presidential Regulation Number 97 of 2017, this regulation, delineates the National Policy and Strategy for the Management of Household Waste and Waste Similar to Household Waste. It aims to address waste reduction and handling through specified approaches and strategies outlined within these legislative frameworks (Gustiawati, Herdiansyah, & Frimawaty, 2023). The oversight of waste management also addressed in Government Regulation Number 43 of 2019 regarding Regional Policies and Strategies for Household Waste Management and Similar Waste. This regulation emphasizes the implementation of waste reduction policies through measures such as waste generation limitation, waste recycling, and reuses initiatives. (Satispi & Samudra, 2022)

The legislative framework also underscores the responsibilities of producers in waste management efforts. Producers are mandated to take proactive steps to manage packaging and goods that are non-biodegradable or pose challenges for natural decomposition processes. This includes implementing strategies to minimize waste generation and optimize resource utilization throughout the production process. Producers are mandated to develop comprehensive plans or programs aimed at reducing waste, with a specific focus on packaging materials. This involves adopting environmentally friendly packaging solutions and implementing practices to minimize waste production. The government's commitment to waste reduction by producers was further strengthened with the introduction of Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation (Permen) No. 75 of 2019, which outlines the Roadmap for Waste Reduction by Producers. This regulation targets key sectors such as manufacturing, food and beverage services, and retail. Companies operating within these sectors must submit detailed plans spanning from 2019 to 2030, outlining their strategies for the upcoming decade and initiatives for packaging recycling. The goal is to hold producers more accountable for their waste and encourage them to recycle and reuse materials. Through the implementation of these regulations and promotion of corporate responsibility, the government aims to make significant strides in managing waste more sustainably and protecting the environment. (Melina, 2022)

On the international stage, Indonesia has been proactive in addressing the plastic waste crisis. Since March 2019, the Government of Indonesia has partnered with the Global Plastic Action Partnership to establish the Indonesia National Plastic Action Partnership (NPAP). Under the leadership of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime and Investment Affairs, this initiative aims to cultivate collaborations with a wide range of stakeholders to effectively combat the plastic waste crisis. (Subekti, 2023)

This collaboration between Indonesia and GPAP underscores the government's commitment to addressing the complex challenges posed by plastic pollution through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach. The NPAP translates the Action Plan into actionable measures and a comprehensive roadmap that encompasses policy development, financing strategies, innovative solutions, behavior change initiatives, and performance indicators to monitor progress. Additionally, the NPAP serves as a platform for coordinating efforts across various sectors, including government bodies, businesses, academia, NGOs, communities, and faith-based groups. By leveraging the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders, the NPAP aims to accelerate progress towards achieving Indonesia's national targets for reducing plastic waste. Specifically, the partnership aligns with Indonesia's National Action Plan on Waste Management Policy and Strategy (Jakstranas) and corresponding initiatives at the local level (Jakstrada). These collective efforts are aimed at realizing the ambitious goal of a 70% reduction in plastic waste in Indonesia's oceans by 2025, thereby safeguarding marine ecosystems and promoting sustainable development. (World Economic Forum, 2020)

In February 2024, the Government of Indonesia took another significant stride in addressing the plastic waste crisis by launching the Redefining Solutions on Plastic Pollution towards Integrated Policy and Knowledge (RESIK) campaign. Spearheaded by the National Coordination Team for Plastic Waste Management (TKN PSL), this initiative received crucial support from the Canadian Embassy in Indonesia and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia. The RESIK campaign represents a groundbreaking endeavor aimed at tackling the multifaceted challenges posed by plastic pollution. Through collaborative efforts and innovative strategies, RESIK seeks to redefine solutions and establish an integrated approach to combatting plastic pollution. This underscores Indonesia's unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability and stewardship. (Media Indonesia, 2024)

On the regional level, since 2019, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has prioritized tackling the issue of marine debris, particularly plastic pollution, through two significant initiatives: the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region and the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris (FAMAD). These agreements reaffirm the region's collective commitment to addressing the various risks associated with pollution, including the threats posed to marine and coastal environments. By implementing the strategies outlined in these agreements, ASEAN aims to significantly mitigate the impacts of marine debris and foster a more sustainable blue economy across the region. These endeavors reflect ASEAN's unwavering dedication to safeguarding the ecological health of its marine ecosystems while simultaneously promoting economic growth in an environmentally responsible manner.

Indeed, the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework 2020 underscores the importance of implementing nature-based solutions (NbS) as a viable approach to addressing the plastic pollution crisis. NbS involves utilizing ecosystem services and biodiversity benefits to effectively tackle social, economic, and environmental challenges. These solutions ensure the sustainable use and management of natural resources while meeting the needs of communities. For example, alternatives to plastic, such as seaweed-based products and palm-based packaging, offer more sustainable options. Additionally, research and technologies can be harnessed to capture plastic in riverine environments, and initiatives like blue financing can be pursued with support from non-governmental and private sectors in the region. Through these multifaceted strategies, ASEAN aims to bolster resilience to plastic pollution and advance sustainable development goals across the region.

Moreover, on World Environment Day in 2023, the ASEAN Centre launched an awareness-raising campaign called "Oceans are Fitter without Our Litter" to address plastic

pollution in coastal and marine environments across the ASEAN region. This campaign advocates for reducing the use of single-use plastics and encourages the adoption of reusable everyday items such as eco-bags and water tumblers. Aligned with ASEAN's Guidelines on Green Meetings, the Centre promotes the reduction of disposable materials and excessive packaging in regional events, activities, and dialogues on biodiversity. (Mundita, 2023)

In conclusion, Indonesia has demonstrated significant efforts to address the plastic waste crisis from a political perspective, emphasizing the crucial role of government action in mitigating environmental challenges. Through the enactment of various legislative frameworks and regulations, Indonesia has aimed to reduce plastic consumption, promote recycling and waste management practices, and hold producers accountable for their waste. Furthermore, the concept of national interest, as highlighted by scholars like Umar Suryadi Bakry, underscores the importance of understanding a state's conduct in international engagements. Indonesia's proactive engagement at both regional and international levels, such as the establishment of the Indonesia National Plastic Action Partnership (NPAP) and participation in ASEAN initiatives, reflects its commitment to tackling the global challenge of plastic waste. Through these concerted efforts, Indonesia strives to pave the way for a cleaner, healthier environment and a more sustainable future for all stakeholders involved.

### **Addressing the Plastic Waste Crisis in Indonesia: Policy Implications**

Indonesia has undertaken numerous initiatives to address the plastic waste crisis, encompassing legal regulations and diplomatic endeavors as outlined in the preceding section. However, despite these efforts, plastic waste remains a significant challenge for the country. What factors contributed to this ongoing issue? This section delves into an analysis of the situation to uncover the underlying reasons.

Initially, it's evident that Indonesia lacks a dedicated legal framework solely for managing plastic waste. Existing regulations and laws merely establish fundamental principles for waste handling and control in general. Interestingly, the term "plastic waste" is not explicitly mentioned in current legal documents. Instead, phrases like "difficult to biodegrade," "reusable waste," and "recyclable waste" are commonly used across various articles and paragraphs within legislative instruments (Suasono, et al., 2023). Consequently, holding individuals, businesses, and industries accountable for their role in plastic waste generation and mismanagement becomes more challenging. The absence of specific laws targeting plastic waste also leads to inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Without clear legal guidelines, authorities may struggle to enforce waste management practices effectively, perpetuating plastic pollution.

The magnitude of the challenge becomes even more apparent when considering the annual data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. As of 2023, Indonesia was producing a staggering 18.1 million tons of waste, with plastic constituting a significant 19 percent share, roughly amounting to 3.5 million tons. This places plastic as the second-largest contributor to our waste stream (Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan, 2023). Moreover, the situation is compounded by the significant volume of waste classified as unmanaged, reaching around 6 million tons in 2023. This data highlights the urgent need for comprehensive and effective measures to address the plastic waste crisis in Indonesia. (Rahayu, Susanto, & Muliya, 2017)

While previous research by Wang and Karasik indicated the presence of local regulations and bans on single-use plastics in numerous regions (Wang & Karasik, 2022), including Bekasi, recent developments in 2024 reveal a concerning regression in sustainability practices across Indonesia. The resurgence of single-use plastic bags in many minimarkets highlights a significant setback in the country's journey towards sustainability and environmental stewardship. This reversal not only diminishes the progress made in curtailing plastic pollution

but also underscores the persistent challenge of shaping consumer behavior and preferences towards more eco-friendly alternatives.

Several factors contribute to the resurgence of single-use plastic bags in minimarkets. Firstly, there appears to be a lack of awareness and understanding among the general public regarding the ban on single-use plastics. Many consumers may not have been adequately informed about the ban or its implications, leading to a lack of compliance and adherence to sustainable practices. Despite the imposition of taxes on single-use plastic bags, consumers continue to gravitate towards the convenience of these products, thereby perpetuating the cycle of plastic consumption and waste. Additionally, there is a prevailing attitude of reluctance towards adopting sustainable behaviors, such as bringing reusable shopping bags. Some individuals may perceive the inconvenience of carrying reusable bags as a barrier to compliance with the ban, opting instead for the convenience of single-use plastic bags. Moreover, the reemergence of single-use plastic bags raises questions about the efficacy and enforcement of existing regulations, suggesting the need for more robust measures and awareness campaigns to instill lasting changes in consumer habits and foster a culture of sustainability. This situation highlights a prevalent trend where convenience tends to take precedence over sustainability, even in the face of environmental repercussions. It reflects a broader societal inclination towards prioritizing short-term convenience over long-term environmental stewardship.

Meanwhile, highlighting the pivotal role of the general populace in shaping domestic waste management is crucial, as collective responsibility is key to ensuring environmental well-being. Increasing awareness regarding environmental issues, particularly concerning the substantial volume of plastic waste generated from everyday items like bottles and bags, is imperative. Recognizing the profound impact of consumption patterns on the environment serves as a driving force for action. Through educational initiatives and advocacy campaigns, individuals can promote sustainable behaviors and reduce our environmental footprint, thus securing a healthier planet for future generations. (Sheany, 2018)

Additionally, fostering a shared commitment to action within communities is essential for addressing plastic pollution and advancing environmental sustainability. Improving public understanding and influencing community perspectives are essential steps in this process. By educating individuals about the hazards of plastic pollution and showcasing available solutions, society can empower more people and organizations to take meaningful action. This can lead to tangible changes, such as adopting eco-friendly purchasing practices and enhancing recycling efforts. Collectively, these endeavors drive positive transformations and cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship. (Plastic Smart Cities, 2023)

Furthermore, when examining the perspective of producers, it becomes apparent that despite the existence of legal regulations governing packaging materials, many continue to prioritize the use of plastic. This inclination towards plastic is primarily driven by its lower cost, which enables producers to streamline their production expenses and maintain profitability. In contrast, opting for more environmentally friendly and biodegradable packaging materials often translates to higher production costs. The increased expenditure associated with biodegradable materials presents a significant financial barrier for producers, especially for those operating within tight profit margins. Consequently, the perceived economic benefits of using plastic outweigh the environmental considerations for many manufacturers.

Moreover, it's worth noting that not all manufacturers possess a comprehensive understanding of the regulations pertaining to packaging material selection. Despite efforts to disseminate information about these regulations, gaps in awareness persist within the industry. Consequently, even when producers are cognizant of the regulatory requirements, they may choose to ignore them due to perceived loopholes or a lack of enforcement. The absence of

stringent consequences for non-compliance further incentivizes some producers to prioritize short-term gains over long-term environmental sustainability. In essence, the allure of maximizing profits often eclipses considerations of environmental responsibility, especially when the potential financial penalties for non-compliance are perceived as negligible compared to the financial benefits of using cheaper packaging materials.

In conclusion, the challenges surrounding plastic waste management in Indonesia stem from a combination of factors, including insufficient awareness and understanding among the public, economic incentives favoring the use of plastic among producers, and gaps in enforcement and compliance with existing regulations. By fostering greater awareness, promoting sustainable practices, and enhancing regulatory oversight, Indonesia can move towards a more environmentally responsible approach to plastic waste management, safeguarding its ecosystems and promoting a healthier future for all.

## CONCLUSION

From this research, it can be concluded that Indonesia's ongoing efforts to tackle the plastic waste crisis are evidenced in both its legislative framework and diplomatic endeavors for waste management. The legislative framework demonstrates a comprehensive approach to addressing environmental concerns and promoting sustainable development. Moreover, Indonesia's diplomatic efforts on the international stage, exemplified by engagement in initiatives like the Global Plastic Action Partnership, highlight its dedication to collaborative action in combating the plastic waste crisis. By leveraging partnerships with other nations and organizations, Indonesia aims to accelerate progress towards reducing plastic waste and preserving marine ecosystems.

Indeed, the challenges surrounding plastic waste management in Indonesia are multifaceted, influenced by various factors such as insufficient awareness among the public, economic incentives favoring plastic use by producers, and gaps in regulatory enforcement. To address these challenges, it is essential to prioritize initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the environmental impact of plastic waste and promoting sustainable alternatives. By educating the public and stakeholders about the importance of reducing plastic consumption and adopting eco-friendly practices, Indonesia can foster a culture of environmental responsibility.

For the government, the absence of dedicated regulations addressing the handling of plastic waste in Indonesia highlights a critical consideration to enact specific legislation targeting this issue. Given that plastic waste constitutes the largest portion of waste in Indonesia and its detrimental impact on health and the environment, the implementation of regulations specifically addressing plastic waste management becomes imperative. These regulations would address the unique challenges posed by plastic waste, including its persistence and harmful nature.

For researcher, I recommend that future studies focus on evaluating the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives in promoting sustainable behaviors and reducing plastic waste generation in Indonesia. Understanding the socio-economic factors influencing consumer preferences for plastic products and packaging materials could provide valuable insights into developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations. Additionally, investigating the role of technology and innovation in mitigating plastic pollution can inspire novel solutions for addressing the plastic waste crisis. By addressing these research gaps, future studies can contribute to evidence-based strategies and interventions for effectively managing plastic waste in Indonesia and fostering a more sustainable future.



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**How Cite This Article:**

Komarudin, U., & Ayuningtyas, D. (2024). TACKLING INDONESIA'S PLASTIC WASTE CRISIS: A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS. *JURNAL TRIAS POLITIKA*, 8(1), 49 - 59. doi:<https://doi.org/10.33373/jtp.v8i1.6193>