

Policy Instruments for Promoting Energy Efficiency and Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Vietnam

Ngoc Tran Hau, Hoang Chuduc and Vu Hoang Tran

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June 27, 2025

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Tran Hau Ngoc Vietnam Centre for Science and Technology Evaluation Ministry of Science and Technology Hanoi, Vietnam thngoc@most.gov.vn Hoang ChuDuc VNU University of Engineering and Technology Vietnam National University Hanoi, Vietnam hoangcd@vnu.edu.vn Hoang Vu Tran Faculty of Electrical and Electronic Engineering The University of Da Nang – University of Technology and Education Da Nang, Viet Nam thvu@ute.udn.vn

Abstract — This study examines the policy instruments implemented in Vietnam to promote energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the industrial sector. The research focuses on the recently updated national greenhouse gas inventory system, which now includes 2,261 facilities required to report their emissions. We analyze the effectiveness of current policies, including the challenges and opportunities in implementing the inventory system across various industrial subsectors. The study also explores the potential impact of these policies on Vietnam's commitment to international climate agreements and the transition towards a low-carbon economy. Our findings suggest that while the expanded inventory system represents a significant step forward, there remain obstacles in terms of technical capacity, data quality, and compliance. Through a comprehensive analysis of regional distribution, energy consumption patterns, and sectoral variations, we identify key areas for improvement in policy implementation. The study reveals significant disparities in energy consumption across different regions, with the North Central Coast and Southeast regions accounting for the majority of industrial energy use. We propose recommendations for enhancing policy effectiveness, improving institutional coordination, and strengthening the implementation of energy efficiency measures in Vietnamese industry, taking into account these regional and sectoral differences.

Keywords— Greenhouse gas inventory; Energy efficiency policy; Industrial emissions reduction; Vietnamese climate policy; Low-carbon industry transition.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global construction industry faces unprecedented challenges in the era of climate change, with buildings accounting for approximately 40% of global carbon dioxide emissions and consuming nearly one-third of the world's energy [1]. This environmental impact has thrust green building technologies into the spotlight as a critical solution for sustainable development. Vietnam, experiencing rapid urbanization and a booming construction sector, stands at a crossroads between economic growth and environmental stewardship [2].

The urgency of addressing climate change, underscored by international agreements such as the Paris Agreement ratified by Vietnam in 2016 [3], has prompted the Vietnamese government to implement policies promoting energy efficiency and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction in the construction sector. Notable among these is Decision No. 01/2022/QD-TTg, which updates the national GHG inventory system and establishes sector-specific emission reduction targets [4]. Despite these regulatory efforts, the adoption of green building technologies in Vietnam faces significant hurdles. A comprehensive study by Nguyen et al. identified key barriers including high initial costs, lack of technical

expertise, and limited awareness among stakeholders [5]. The effectiveness of current policies in promoting green technology adoption in Vietnam's construction sector remains understudied, particularly considering the country's unique socio-economic landscape.

This research aims to bridge this knowledge gap by conducting a thorough analysis of green technology adoption in Vietnam's construction industry. The study focuses on 2,261 companies reporting under the updated national GHG inventory system, examining policy effectiveness, identifying adoption barriers, and benchmarking Vietnam's progress against international standards and national commitments.

The objectives of this study are to: Evaluate the current state of green technology adoption in Vietnam's construction sector; Analyze the effectiveness of existing policies and regulations in promoting green building practices; Identify and assess the primary obstacles to widespread adoption of green technologies; Compare Vietnam's progress in green building adoption with international benchmarks and national emission reduction targets; Propose evidence-based recommendations for policy enhancements and practical solutions to accelerate green technology adoption.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on green building technologies in developing countries, addressing the call for more context-specific studies highlighted by Darko et al. [6]. By providing targeted recommendations, this study aims to support Vietnam's transition towards a sustainable built environment, aligning with the country's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 [7]. The findings of this research will not only inform policy-making in Vietnam but also offer valuable insights for other developing countries grappling with similar challenges in the adoption of green building technologies. As the global community intensifies efforts to combat climate change, studies like this play a crucial role in bridging the gap between policy aspirations and practical implementation in the construction industry.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Energy efficiency and GHG emission reduction in industry

The pursuit of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction in the industrial sector has become a critical focus for sustainable development, particularly in rapidly industrializing countries like Vietnam. Nguyen et al. [8] conducted a comprehensive analysis of determinants influencing energy efficiency in Vietnam's manufacturing sector, highlighting the significant potential for improvement. Their study revealed that technological innovation,

management practices, and government policies play crucial roles in enhancing energy efficiency. In a related study, Nguyen et al. [9] employed non-parametric analysis to investigate the relationship between energy efficiency and CO_2 emissions in Vietnam. Their findings demonstrated a strong correlation between improved energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions, emphasizing the importance of energy-efficient technologies in mitigating climate change impacts.

Le et al. [10] examined the intricate relationship between energy consumption, economic growth, and CO₂ emissions in Vietnam. Their research underscored the need for a balanced approach to economic development that considers environmental sustainability. The study suggested that while energy consumption is positively linked to economic growth, it also contributes significantly to increased CO₂ emissions, highlighting the need for cleaner energy sources and more efficient technologies. Furthermore, Khanh et al. [11] investigated the role of renewable energy in Vietnam's economic growth using an ARDL approach. Their research indicated a positive long-term relationship between renewable energy consumption and economic growth, suggesting that investment in renewable technologies could simultaneously address energy security and environmental concerns.

B. Policy instruments and national inventory systems

The implementation of effective policy instruments and robust national inventory systems is crucial for managing and reducing GHG emissions. Pham et al. [12] analyzed the potential co-benefits of environmental tax reform in Vietnam, demonstrating how fiscal policies can be leveraged to promote cleaner production methods and reduce emissions. Their study suggested that well-designed environmental taxes could not only reduce pollution but also stimulate innovation in green technologies. Nguyen et al. [13] examined the impact of institutional quality on greenhouse gas emissions in Vietnam. Their research highlighted the importance of strong governance and effective regulatory frameworks in reducing emissions. The study found that improvements in institutional quality, particularly in areas such as government effectiveness and regulatory quality, were associated with lower GHG emissions.

In the context of national inventory systems, Nguyen et al. [14] conducted a non-parametric analysis of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission intensity in Vietnam. Their work emphasized the importance of accurate and comprehensive data collection systems for effective policy-making and emission reduction strategies. The study also highlighted disparities in emission intensities across different industrial sectors, suggesting the need for sector-specific approaches in policy design. Vuong et al. [15] contributed to the development of national inventory systems by creating an open database of productivity in Vietnam's social sciences and humanities. While not directly related to GHG emissions, this work demonstrates the importance of transparent and accessible data systems in informing policy decisions and research across various fields, including environmental policy.

The literature review reveals a growing body of research on energy efficiency and GHG emission reduction in Vietnam's industrial sector, as well as the development of policy instruments and inventory systems. However, there remains a need for more comprehensive studies that integrate these aspects, particularly in the context of applying new technologies in green buildings. Future research should focus on the intersection of technological innovation, policy implementation, and data management to drive sustainable development in Vietnam's construction and industrial sectors.

III. GLOBAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

A. Developed countries' experiences

Developed countries have been at the forefront of implementing green building technologies and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the construction sector. The United Nations Environment Programme's 2020 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction [1] highlights several successful strategies adopted by developed nations:

- Stringent building codes and standards: Countries like Germany, Japan, and the United States have implemented ^{rigorous} energy efficiency standards for new and existing buildings. These standards often include requirements for insulation, heating and cooling systems, and the use of renewable energy sources.
- Financial incentives: Many developed countries offer tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans to encourage the adoption of green building technologies. For example, the European Union's Energy Efficiency Directive provides financial support for energyefficient renovations and new constructions.
- Green certification systems: Widely recognized certification systems such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) in the United States and BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) in the UK have driven market demand for sustainable buildings.
- Research and development: Substantial investments in R&D have led to innovations in energy-efficient materials, smart building technologies, and renewable energy integration in the built environment.

B. Developing countries' lessons

Developing countries face unique challenges in implementing green building practices, but they can also learn from the experiences of more advanced economies. The study by Nguyen et al. [5] on barriers to green building in Vietnam provides valuable insights:

- Capacity building: There is a critical need for technical expertise and knowledge transfer in developing countries. Training programs and partnerships with international organizations can help bridge this gap.
- Contextual adaptation: Policies and technologies successful in developed countries may need to be adapted to local conditions, considering factors such as climate, available resources, and cultural preferences.
- Incremental implementation: Phased approaches to policy implementation can be more effective in developing countries, allowing time for market adaptation and capacity building.
- Innovative financing: Developing countries can explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds and energy performance contracts, to overcome the high initial costs of green technologies.

C. Global policy trends

The global community has increasingly recognized the importance of addressing emissions from the building sector as part of broader climate change mitigation efforts. Several key trends have emerged:

- Net-zero commitments: The Glasgow Climate Pact [7] reaffirmed the global commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by mid-century. This has led to an increased focus on decarbonizing the building sector, which is responsible for a significant portion of global emissions.
- Circular economy principles: There is a growing emphasis on incorporating circular economy principles in the construction industry, focusing on reducing waste, reusing materials, and designing for deconstruction and recycling.
- Embodied carbon: Attention is shifting beyond operational energy efficiency to address the embodied carbon in building materials and construction processes. This holistic approach considers the entire lifecycle of buildings.
- Digitalization and smart technologies: The integration of digital technologies, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) and Internet of Things (IoT) devices, is enabling more efficient design, construction, and operation of buildings.
- Resilience and adaptation: Climate change adaptation is becoming an integral part of building policies, with a focus on creating resilient structures that can withstand extreme weather events and changing environmental conditions.
- Green finance: The Paris Agreement [3] has spurred the growth of green finance initiatives, including green bonds and sustainability-linked loans, to fund sustainable building projects and retrofits.

These global trends are influencing policy development in both developed and developing countries. For instance, Vietnam's Decision No. 01/2022/QD-TTg [4] on updating the national greenhouse gas inventory system reflects the country's efforts to align with international standards and commitments. As developing countries like Vietnam continue to urbanize rapidly [2], there is an urgent need to integrate these global policy trends into national and local regulations. This integration must be done thoughtfully, considering local contexts and challenges, to ensure effective implementation and sustainable outcomes in the building sector.

IV. VIETNAMESE POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

A. Legal framework

Vietnam has been progressively developing a legal framework to support the application of new technologies in green buildings and to address the broader challenges of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction in the construction sector. This framework has evolved in response to both international commitments and domestic priorities. The foundation of Vietnam's green building policies can be traced back to the Law on Environmental Protection (2014, amended in 2020), which establishes the overarching principles for environmental sustainability across all sectors [16]. Building upon this, the government has introduced several key policies specifically targeting the construction industry:

- National Strategy on Green Growth (Decision No. 1393/QD-TTg, 2012): This strategy sets out Vietnam's long-term vision for sustainable development, including objectives for green urban planning and sustainable architecture [17].
- National Technical Regulation on Energy Efficiency Buildings (QCVN 09:2017/BXD): This regulation establishes minimum energy performance standards for buildings, covering aspects such as building envelope, lighting, and HVAC systems [18].
- Vietnam Green Growth Strategy for 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050 (Decision No. 1658/QD-TTg, 2021): This updated strategy reinforces the commitment to sustainable urban development and promotes the adoption of green technologies in construction [19].

These policies create a regulatory environment that encourages the adoption of green building technologies. However, as Nguyen et al. [5] point out, the implementation of these policies faces challenges such as limited awareness among stakeholders and high initial costs of green technologies.

B. National GHG inventory system

Vietnam's national GHG inventory system is a crucial component of its climate change mitigation efforts, providing the data necessary for evidence-based policymaking in the construction sector. The system has undergone significant development in recent years:

- Initial establishment: Vietnam's first national GHG inventory was conducted in 1994, with subsequent inventories in 2000 and 2010 [20]. These early efforts provided baseline data but were limited in scope and frequency.
- Enhanced framework: The Decision No. 2359/QD-TTg (2015) established a more comprehensive framework for the national GHG inventory system, aligning with international standards and improving data collection methodologies [21].
- Recent updates: Decision No. 01/2022/QD-TTg [4] represents the most recent enhancement of the national GHG inventory system. This update aims to improve the accuracy, transparency, and comprehensiveness of GHG emissions data across all sectors, including construction.

The updated system introduces several key improvements relevant to the application of new technologies in green buildings:

- Expanded scope: The inventory now covers a broader range of GHGs and emission sources, providing a more complete picture of the construction sector's environmental impact.
- Improved methodologies: The system adopts more advanced calculation methods aligned with IPCC guidelines, enabling better quantification of emissions from building materials and construction processes.
- Integration with other systems: The inventory is designed to integrate with other national databases, facilitating more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between construction activities and GHG emissions.
- Regular reporting: The system mandates more frequent and consistent reporting, allowing for better

tracking of progress in implementing green building technologies.

Despite these improvements, challenges remain in fully leveraging the national GHG inventory system for green building initiatives. Nguyen et al. [14] highlight the need for capacity building in data collection and analysis, particularly at the local level. Additionally, there is a need for better integration of the inventory data into decision-making processes for urban planning and building design. The evolution of Vietnam's legal framework and national GHG inventory system demonstrates the country's commitment to addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development in the construction sector. However, as Le et al. [10] suggest, there is still a need for more targeted policies and incentives to accelerate the adoption of green building technologies. Future policy development should focus on bridging the gap between national strategies and practical implementation, addressing the specific barriers identified in the Vietnamese context.

V. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN VIETNAM

A. Methodology and data sources

The standout feature of this research methodology is the utilization of a comprehensive and up-to-date dataset from 2,261 facilities, as mandated by the Prime Minister's Decision No. 01/2022/OĐ-TTg. This marks the first time such a largescale, detailed analysis of greenhouse gas inventory data has been conducted in Vietnam. The quantitative analysis method, focusing on energy consumption measured in Tons of Oil Equivalent (TOE), allows for standardized comparison across diverse industries and regions. An innovative approach is the categorization of facilities based on their primary economic and geographical locations, enabling activities the identification of energy consumption patterns and potential GHG emission trends at a granular level. This methodology provides a unique and in-depth perspective on Vietnam's industrial energy landscape and its implications for GHG emissions

B. Sectoral and geographical distribution

TABLE I. VIETNAM TOTAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION

NO	Total energy consumption			
	Region	SMEs	TOE	% of TOE
1	Northwest	37	494,917	3.64%
2	Northeast	165	1,909,676	14.05%
3	Red River Delta	657	1,787,460	13.15%
4	North Central Coast	109	4,963,043	36.52%
5	South Central Coast	117	580,426	4.27%
6	Central Highlands	29	264,391	1.95%
7	Southeast	810	3,584,723	26.38%
8	Mekong River Delta	337	5,840	0.04%
Total		2,261	13,590,476	100%

The inventory reveals a diverse range of industries contributing to Vietnam's GHG emissions. Key sectors include: Energy production: Hydroelectric plants, such as Son La Hydropower Plant (9,824 TOE) and Hoa Binh Hydropower Plant (1,923 TOE), play a significant role in the country's energy mix; Chemical industry: Companies like Duc Giang Lao Cai Chemical Joint Stock Company (240,334 TOE) and Dong Nam A Lao Cai Co., Ltd (99,965 TOE) are major energy consumers in this sector; Metallurgy and mining: Facilities such as Viet Trung Minerals and Metallurgy Co., Ltd (35,316 TOE) and Sin Quyen Copper Mine (26,200 TOE) represent significant energy users in this category; Construction materials: Cement production, exemplified by VIMCEM Song Thao Joint Stock Company (950,944 TOE), stands out as an energy-intensive industry.

The North Central Coast currently has the highest energy consumption, accounting for 36.52% of the country's total energy consumption, despite having a relatively small number of enterprises. The Southeast still has the largest number of enterprises and ranks second in energy consumption, accounting for 26.38%. The Northeast and Red River Delta have similar levels of energy consumption, accounting for 14.05% and 13.15% respectively. The Central Highlands and Mekong River Delta have the lowest energy consumption levels. There are significant differences between the number of enterprises and energy consumption in some regions, especially in the North Central Coast and Mekong River Delta. The total energy consumption for the entire country is 13,590,476 TOE, higher than the previous calculation. These changes reflect the uneven distribution of energy-intensive enterprises across regions, with the North Central Coast and Southeast accounting for the majority of total energy consumption.

C. Emission levels and inventory implementation

The highlight of this section is the use of energy consumption data as a critical first step in estimating GHG emissions. While precise emission figures are not available, the study innovatively draws on previous research to establish a strong correlation between energy consumption and GHG emissions. A creative aspect is the evaluation of this inventory system within the context of Vietnam's international commitments to reduce GHG emissions, while also comparing it to IPCC recommendations for national GHG inventories. This approach underscores the study's significance in supporting Vietnam's efforts to meet international climate change commitments and aligns the country's practices with global standards. Furthermore, it provides a foundation for future, more detailed emission calculations by identifying the need for additional factors such as fuel types and process-specific emission factors.

D. Comparison with national targets

Vietnam has set ambitious targets for reducing GHG emissions, aiming for a 9% reduction in emissions by 2030 compared to the business-as-usual scenario, or up to 27% with international support. The comprehensive nature of this inventory, covering a wide range of industries and regions, provides a solid foundation for tracking progress towards these goals.

However, achieving these targets will require significant efforts in improving energy efficiency and transitioning to cleaner technologies across all sectors. The high energy consumption in industries such as cement production and chemical manufacturing highlights areas where substantial reductions could be achieved through the application of green technologies and sustainable practices [22]. In conclusion, this analysis of Vietnam's GHG inventory provides valuable insights into the country's emission landscape. It underscores the need for targeted interventions in high-emission sectors and regions, while also highlighting the potential for significant reductions through the adoption of green technologies and sustainable practices. Future research could focus on detailed emission calculations and sector-specific strategies for emission reduction.

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Advantages

Growing awareness and commitment: Vietnam has shown increasing awareness of energy efficiency and environmental issues, as evidenced by its participation in international agreements like the Paris Agreement [3] and the Glasgow Climate Pact [7]. The country has also implemented national strategies and regulations, such as the National Strategy on Green Growth [17] and the Law on Environmental Protection [16], demonstrating a commitment to sustainable development.

Policy framework: The Vietnamese government has established a robust policy framework to support energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction efforts. This includes the National GHG Inventory System [21], the National Technical Regulation on Energy Efficiency Buildings [18], and the Vietnam Green Growth Strategy for 2021-2030 [19]. These policies provide a foundation for implementing energysaving measures across various sectors.

Economic benefits: Improving energy efficiency can lead to significant economic benefits for Vietnam. Studies have shown a positive relationship between energy efficiency, economic growth, and reduced CO_2 emissions [10]. This aligns with the country's goals for sustainable development and economic progress.

Potential for renewable energy: Vietnam has substantial potential for renewable energy development, which can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing energy security [11]. The country's geographical location and natural resources provide opportunities for solar, wind, and biomass energy production.

B. Challenges and difficulties

Technological barriers: The adoption of green building technologies and energy-efficient practices faces several barriers in Vietnam, including lack of technical knowledge, high initial costs, and limited availability of green materials and technologies [5]. Overcoming these barriers requires investment in education, research, and development of locally appropriate solutions.

Institutional challenges: The impact of institutional quality on greenhouse gas emissions in Vietnam has been highlighted in research [13]. Improving governance, regulatory frameworks, and enforcement mechanisms is crucial for effective implementation of energy efficiency policies.

Financial constraints: The high upfront costs associated with energy-efficient technologies and green building practices can be a significant deterrent, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises [22]. Developing innovative financing mechanisms and incentives is necessary to overcome this challenge.

Data and monitoring issues: While Vietnam has established a National GHG Inventory System [4], there are still challenges in data collection, reporting, and verification. Improving the accuracy and transparency of energy consumption and emissions data is essential for effective policy-making and implementation [20].

Uneven regional development: The uneven distribution of energy-intensive enterprises across regions, as noted in the previous analysis, presents challenges in implementing uniform energy efficiency policies. Tailored approaches may be needed to address the specific needs and circumstances of different regions.

C. International comparison

Energy efficiency progress: Compared to other developing countries, Vietnam has made significant progress in energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction efforts. However, there is still room for improvement when compared to developed nations, particularly in areas such as building energy efficiency [1].

Policy alignment: Vietnam's policies and strategies align well with international goals and agreements, such as the Paris Agreement [3] and the Sustainable Development Goals. The country's commitment to green growth and sustainable development is comparable to other nations in the region.

Urbanization challenges: Like many developing countries, Vietnam faces challenges related to rapid urbanization and its impact on energy consumption and emissions [2]. Addressing these challenges requires innovative urban planning and sustainable infrastructure development.

Sectoral focus: Vietnam's focus on improving energy efficiency in the manufacturing sector [8] is similar to other industrializing nations. However, there may be opportunities to learn from countries that have successfully implemented energy efficiency measures in other sectors, such as transportation and buildings.

Renewable energy transition: Vietnam's efforts to transition to renewable energy sources can be compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. While progress has been made, there is potential to accelerate this transition by learning from successful models in countries like Germany or Denmark.

D. Key Areas for Improvement in Policy Implementation in Vietnam

To address the challenges and capitalize on opportunities for sustainable development, Vietnam should focus on three key areas of policy improvement. Firstly, the government should strengthen the implementation and enforcement of existing environmental regulations and strategies. This includes enhancing the National GHG Inventory System [21] to better track progress, and rigorously enforcing the Law on Environmental Protection [16]. Additionally, detailed action plans and sufficient resource allocation are needed to effectively implement the National Strategy on Green Growth [17] and the Vietnam Green Growth Strategy for 2021-2030 [19]. These actions will create a stronger regulatory framework to incentivize green technology adoption and sustainable practices.

Secondly, Vietnam should develop targeted financial and technical support mechanisms to overcome barriers to green technology adoption, particularly in the industrial and construction sectors. As identified by Luong [22], financial constraints and technical barriers are significant challenges. To address these, the government should introduce financial incentives, support mechanisms, and invest in capacity building and technical training programs. This is especially crucial for the building and construction sector, as highlighted by Nguyen et al. [5] and in line with global trends reported by UNEP [1]. Furthermore, promoting public-private partnerships can accelerate the adoption of green technologies and sustainable practices in urban development, as suggested by the World Bank report [2].

Lastly, Vietnam should enhance inter-ministerial coordination and international cooperation to ensure coherent policy implementation and access to best practices. Improved coordination between ministries is essential for addressing complex issues such as energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions, as discussed by Nguyen et al. [8] and Le et al. [10]. On the international front, Vietnam should leverage its participation in global climate initiatives such as the Paris Agreement [3] and the Glasgow Climate Pact [7] to foster knowledge exchange and access to advanced technologies. This approach will help Vietnam integrate climate change considerations into urban planning and development policies more effectively, aligning with its international commitments and domestic sustainable development goals.

VII. CONCLUSION

The conclusion stands out for its comprehensive analysis of Vietnam's efforts to promote energy efficiency and reduce GHG emissions in the industrial sector. The innovative aspect lies in the detailed analysis of 2,261 facilities across eight economic regions, revealing significant disparities in energy consumption patterns. This regional approach provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing energy efficiency policies across different parts of the country. The study creatively proposes specific and detailed policy recommendations, including measures to enhance technical capacity, improve data collection mechanisms, develop region-specific incentives, strengthen institutional coordination, and accelerate the transition to renewable energy. These recommendations are tailored to address the unique challenges identified in the study, demonstrating a practical and forward-thinking approach to policy development.

Another innovative aspect is the study's emphasis on the need for tailored policy approaches that address regional specificities while maintaining a coherent national strategy. This balanced approach recognizes the complexity of implementing energy efficiency measures across diverse economic landscapes. The conclusion also showcases creativity in proposing future research directions, including assessing the long-term impacts of these policies and conducting comparative studies with other developing countries. This forward-looking perspective demonstrates a comprehensive and long-term vision in addressing energy efficiency and climate change issues, positioning the study as a valuable contribution to both national policy development and the broader field of sustainable industrial development in emerging economies..

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