



Analysis of the non-linear impact of digital economy development on energy intensity: Empirical research based on the PSTR model

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A R T I C L E

A B S T R A C T

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With the rapid development of digital technologies, digital economy development gradually plays a crucial role in changing the pattern of economic and social development. However, the relationship between the development of digital economy and energy intensity is still unclear. To fill this gap, this investigation firstly evaluates the development level of the digital economy in provincial regions in China from 2003 to 2020. Then the non-linear relationship between the development of digital economy and energy intensity is investigated based on the panel smooth transition PSTR model taking real GDP, urbanization rate, the proportion of the secondary industry in GDP, R&D funds for industrial enterprises above designated size, and foreign direct investment as transformation variables. The empirical analysis tests that the development of digital economy can promote the energy intensity and the relationship between the development of digital economy and energy intensity tends to be an inverted U-shape under the influence of transformation variables. Besides, the influence coefficients of conversion variables in most provincial regions have not crossed thresholds. Especially, the influence coefficients of the development of digital economy on energy intensity have great space to decline under the impact of urbanization rate and the proportion of the secondary industry in GDP. Therefore, the industrial structure should be continuously optimized and the process of green urbanization should be accelerating. Moreover, it is necessary to stimulate the integration of digital technologies and energy system so as to improve energy allocation efficiency and realize energy conservation and emissions reduction.

1. Introduction

The emergence of digital economy development opens a new era theme in the later stage of industrialization and urbanization process. It is a new economic form taking digital resources as the main production factors and information network as a crucial supporter to efficiently utilize multiple production resources in the society through modern information communication and internet technologies. Through the development of digital economy, the latest information technologies, such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data, have provided technical assistance for the scale expansion of new-type economies and industries. Hence, the transformation of production mode, social governance, and lifestyle can be promoted and greater economic benefits can be obtained. Thus, digital economy will gradually become the crucial drivers of economic growth and the booster to enhance the national strength in the future. The

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forward that the IE can decrease energy consumption, optimize energy allocation, and reverse the traditional energy consumption concept [10], [11].

Through summarizing the existing literature, three primary limitations can be discovered. Firstly, the existing researches primarily focused on investigating the influence of the IE on economic growth, carbon emissions, and other issues. It is difficult to find an investigation on the relationship between the IE and energy consumption from the perspective of historical development, the economic growth greatly relied on energy consumption. Since the IE becomes the new engine of economic development, the growth of IE depends on information technology infrastructure which requires a huge amount of energy, hence, the relationship between the IE and energy consumption should be investigated. Secondly, the previous literature mainly conducted linear relationship analysis based on panel data model. However, the relationship between the IE and energy consumption exists disputes. The unclear part is whether the IE will lead to a net increase in energy demand as the rebound effect might exist. Hence, researching on the nonlinear relationship between energy consumption and the IE is of crucial significance to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality and mitigate global warming, especially for China which is still in the process of industrialization and urbanization. Thirdly, the influence mechanism of the IE on energy consumption is poorly discussed. Thus, it will be of significant benefit for policy makers to deeply understand the influencing mechanism.

decrease energy demand through increasing energy efficiency range et al implied that the digitalization enhanced energy efficiency which made energy consumption become lower nevertheless, the development of IT and economic growth brought by the digitalization would cause more incremental energy consumption Salahuddin discussed that the digital technology can decrease energy consumption in the short term, while the rebound effect caused by the digitalization will boost energy demand in the long term

Considering about the complicated relationship between the GDP and energy consumption, this paper deeply researched on the nonlinear correlation between the GDP and energy intensity of provincial regions in China And the influencing mechanism is investigated from economic scale and structure, society structure, technological innovation, and opening degree

3. Methods

The model of this research was established according to the PSTR model proposed by Song et al The superiority of this model is that it can better handle the problem of jumping change before and after the door limit in Hansen’s panel threshold model A continuous transformation function has been introduced into the model which can make model parameters gradually change with the vary of transformation variables, hence, it is more consistent with actual economy Besides smooth transformation, the PSTR model can efficiently capture the heterogeneity between different parts and is suitable for multi-section data research The PSTR model is established as

$$Energy_{i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Dig_{i,t} + \sum_{j=1}^r \beta_{2j} Dig_{i,t} \times G_j(q_{i,t}, \gamma, c) + \beta_z Z_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t}$$

here $Energy_{i,t}$ is the explained variable representing the energy consumption intensity of provincial region in period t β_0 is the constant term of the function $Dig_{i,t}$ is the GDP development level of provincial region in period t , which is deemed as the core explanatory variable in our research β_1 is the correlation coefficient of the GDP development level on energy intensity, which is deemed as the core parameter β_2 is the coefficient of the non-linear part $Z_{i,t}$ indicates a series of control variables β_z is the coefficient of control variables $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ is the random disturbance term G_j is the conversion variable $(q_{i,t}, \gamma, c)$ is the transformation function, which is a continuous, bounded function of a transformation variable And the value of the conversion function is normalized in the interval of $[0, 1]$ $\gamma > 0$ represents the slope coefficient, which determines the speed at which model conversion occurs The larger the value of γ , the greater the slope of the transformation function, demonstrating the larger the conversion speed $c = (c_1, \dots, c_m)$ is an m -dimensional positional parameter vector, also known as a threshold value, which represents the location where model transformation occurs The transformation function is generally expressed in the form of a logistic function as

$$G_j(q_{i,t}, \gamma, c) = \left\{ 1 + \exp \left[-\gamma \prod_{z=1}^m (q_{i,t} - c_z) \right] \right\}^{-1}, \gamma > 0, c_1 \leq \dots \leq c_m$$

Because G_j is a continuous function, when continuously changes within the $[c_{j-1}, c_j]$ interval, the regression coefficient will complete a continuous and stable transformation within the interval $[\beta_{j-1}, \beta_j]$ Moreover, in the PSTR model, values of two critical parameters should be determined r represents the number of positional parameters, and Song et al believes that a value of r or for is sufficient to be representative m represents the amount of conversion functions

Before establishing the PSTR model, a linearity test needs to be conducted The PSTR model can only be established under the context that the data sequences are non-linear The linearity test can determine the value of β in the transformation function The null assumption of linearity test is supposed as $\beta = \beta_0$ or $\beta = \beta_0 + \beta_1$ nevertheless, under such assumption, unrecognized parameters will be generated in the PSTR model Hence, Song et al solve this problem by proposing the null assumption as $\beta = \beta_0 + \beta_1$ Similarly, to avoid the identification issue, Taylor series expansion was employed for $(q_{i,t}, \gamma, c)$ when $q_{i,t} = c_j$, which is expressed as:

$$y_{i,t} = \mu_i + \beta'_0 x_{i,t} + \beta'_1 x_{i,t} q_{i,t} + \dots + \beta'_m x_{i,t} q_{i,t}^m + \mu'_{i,t}$$

Under estimation, $\beta'_0, \beta'_1, \beta'_m$ are generated by β and they are constant $\mu'_{i,t} = \mu_i + \beta'_1 q_{i,t}$ is the remainder of Taylor expansion Thus, the null assumption of the linearity examination is the same as $\beta'_1 = \beta'_1$ If the null assumption is accepted, the PSTR model is inappropriate to be established otherwise, if the null assumption is rejected, the data sequences are nonlinear and the PSTR model is reasonable to be built

The condition of no remaining non-linearity test of the PSTR model aims at examining whether the residual term μ still includes obvious nonlinear components The concept of this examination is the same as the linearity examination The null assumption is written as: $\beta^* = \beta^*$ If this assumption is accepted, the PSTR model has fully captured the non-linear correlation among data sequences otherwise, the model is unreasonable

The specific operation process of the PSTR model is illustrated as follows

Step 1 Stability test

To prevent the occurrence of false regression, this paper first uses the panel unit root test methods to test the data stationarity of each variable

Step 2 Linearity test

Before using the PSTR model for estimation, it is necessary to first conduct a linearity test to test whether the development of the GDP has a non-linear impact on energy consumption intensity under the influences of different transformation variables Three statistics, F , χ^2 , and RT , are used to conduct the examination Only if the test results reject the original hypothesis $\beta = \beta_0$, a PSTR model can be constructed

Step 3 Remaining non-linearity test

The purpose of the remaining non-linearity test is to determine the optimal number of r in the transformation function of the PSTR model If the original assumption $\beta = \beta_0$ is accepted, it is considered appropriate to set only one transformation function for the model If the original assumption is rejected, it means that the model needs to set multiple conversion functions

Step 4 The number of positional parameters determination

After determining the number of transformation functions, it is necessary to further determine the number of positional parameter m for each PSTR model’s transformation function It is essential to perform PSTR estimation under $m = m_1$ and $m = m_2$, respectively, and determine the optimal number of location parameter based on AIC and information criteria

4. Data

The explained variable is energy consumption intensity, which is represented by the ratio of energy consumption to real GDP. The core explanatory variable is the development level of the E. Through reviewing existing literature and related reports, we found that there is no uniform standard for the measurement of the E. Through referring to some literature, – researching on the comprehensive evaluation of the E development level, the indicators used to represent the development level of the E in our research are listed in Table . The indicators are selected from four perspectives including digital infrastructure, integrated development, social benefits, and electronic-commerce, containing indicators. The national values of the E development level are calculated by entropy method which is shown in Supporting Information A.

or conversion variables, real GDP, urbanization rate, the proportion of secondary industry in GDP, research & development R&D funds for industrial enterprises above designated size, and foreign direct investment are selected as the conversion variables for the established models – or real GDP, economic scale and activities are often deemed as one of the significant factors in increasing energy consumption. He et al. He, indicated that a positive relationship exists between economic growth and electricity consumption. Thus, real GDP of provincial regions from 2000 to 2020 are calculated taking GDP in the year of 2000 as basic period values, which is taken as the conversion variable in model . Since urbanization level and energy consumption have a causal correlation and high urbanization level can be the significant driver of energy consumption increasing. Hongyi et al., urbanization rate represented by the ratio of urban population in total population is selected to be the conversion variable in model . As the industrial development and energy consumption are inseparable and it has been proved that the adjustment of economic structure can promote the energy consumption increasing. Shi et al., the proportion of secondary industry in GDP is employed to be the conversion variable in model . Technological innovation is generally regarded as the main factor to restrain the growth of energy consumption. Tang et al., hence, R&D funds for industrial enterprises above designated size is selected to be the conversion variable representing scientific and technological progress in model . Under the context of economic globalization, opening degree of domestic market is gradually deemed as a critical factor to promote energy consumption, hence, is chosen as the conversion variable in model .

All the data of energy intensity, the E development level, and conversion variables of provincial level regions in China from 2000 to 2020 are collected from the State Statistical Bureau, China Energy Statistical Yearbook, China Statistical Yearbook, and Statistical Yearbook of

Table 1
Indicators used to represent the development level of the E

Perspectives	Indicators
Digital infrastructure	Telephone penetration ratio Number of internet broadband access users Long distance optical cable line length Number of websites per enterprises owned
Integrated development	Software business income E press business income Total post and telecommunications business income from information technology services E press quantity
Social benefits	Average age of urban employees in information transmission, computer services and software industries Employment of urban units in information transmission, software and information technology services
Electronic-commerce	Electronic-commerce sales amount Electronic-commerce purchase amount Proportion of enterprises with electronic-commerce transactions

provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities. The descriptive statistics of each variable are listed in Table .

5. Results and discussion

To prevent the occurrence of false regression, the panel unit root test methods, such as Levin, Im and Hsiao test, Levin et al., and Im, Pesaran and Shin PS test, are employed in our research to test the data stationarity of each variable. The test results listed in Table show that energy intensity, the development level of the E, real GDP, urbanization rate, the proportion of secondary industry in GDP, R&D funds for industrial enterprises above designated size, and in our research are stable at a significance level of 1%. Therefore, the PSTR model can be established based on these variables.

After ensuring all variables are stable, it is necessary to conduct a linear test. Original hypothesis: $\beta = 0$ to examine whether the development level of the E has a non-linear impact on energy intensity. Under the influence of different transformation variables. According to the linear test results illustrated in Table , the P-values of the three statistics, F , χ^2 , and RT of the three models are all less than 1%, which means that the original hypothesis is significantly rejected at the significance level, indicating that the development level of the E has a significant nonlinear impact on energy consumption intensity, and the modeling of PSTR in our investigation is reasonable.

After proving that the development level of the E has a non-linear impact on energy intensity under the influence of the selected transformation variables, the optimal number of \ln in the transformation function should be determined by the remaining non-linearity test. According to the remaining non-linearity test results illustrated in Table , the P-values of the three statistics, F , χ^2 , and RT of the three models are all larger than 1%, which demonstrates the original assumption: $\beta = 0$ should be accepted at significance level. Thus, it is reasonable to set only one conversion function in the PSTR model.

After determining the optimal number of \ln in the transformation function, we need to testify the number of positional parameter for each PSTR model's transformation function. The PSTR estimation is conducted under $\beta = 0$ and $\beta = 1$, respectively, and optimal number of location parameter is determined based on AIC and information criteria. According to the test results of AIC and depicted in Table , it is demonstrated that $\beta = 0$.

After determining the number of transformation functions and the number of positional parameters, the PSTR models can be constructed. The least squares method is used to estimate the parameters to obtain the regression coefficients of the explanatory variables under different mechanisms. The regression results are shown in Table . It can be seen that the regression coefficients of models – are significant at the level.

Table 2
The descriptive statistics of each variable

Variable	Symbol	Units	Mean value	Standard deviation	Minimum value	Maximum value
Energy intensity	E	Ton standard coal	10.52	0.12	10.00	11.00
The development level of the E	E	-	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Real GDP	P	Trillion yuan	10.00	0.00	0.00	10.00
Urbanization rate	R	-	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00
The proportion of secondary industry in GDP	STR	-	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00
R&D funds for industrial enterprises above designated size	R&	100 million yuan	10.00	0.00	0.00	10.00
Foreign direct investment	R&	100 million yuan	10.00	0.00	0.00	10.00

Table 3
Panel data unit root test results

Variables	ADF	PS	Conclusion
E	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary
E	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary
P	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary
R	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary
STR	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary
R&	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary
R&	-1.25 (a)	0.05 (a)	Stationary

Notes: the values in brackets indicate the probability values. If the probability values are less than the specified level of significance, it means the null hypothesis ought to be rejected.
a: denotes 1% level of significance
b: denotes 5% level of significance

Table 4
Linearity test results

Model	Conversion variable	Original hypothesis	RT
odel	P	$\beta = 0$	a
odel	R	$\beta = 0$	a
odel	STR	$\beta = 0$	a
odel	R&	$\beta = 0$	b
odel		$\beta = 0$	b

Notes: the values in brackets indicate the probability values.
a: denotes 1% level of significance
b: denotes 5% level of significance

Table 5
The remaining non-linearity test results

Model	Conversion variable	Original hypothesis	RT
odel	P	$\beta = 0$	a
odel	R	$\beta = 0$	a
odel	STR	$\beta = 0$	a
odel	R&	$\beta = 0$	b
odel		$\beta = 0$	b

Notes: the values in brackets indicate the probability values

Table 6
Results of A and for positional parameters determination

Model	Conversion variable	Option	A	Optimal value of
odel	P	m =	-	m =
		m =	-	m =
	R	m =	-	m =
		m =	-	m =
	STR	m =	-	m =
		m =	-	m =
odel	R&	m =	-	m =
		m =	-	m =
odel		m =	-	m =
		m =	-	m =

Analysis of the impact of real GDP on the relationship between the development of E and energy intensity

odel discusses the change of the income coefficient of the development of the E on energy intensity as the real GDP changes. As can be seen from Table 6, there is a single threshold value of $\beta = 0$ for model A. And the coefficient of the linear part of the development level of the E is $\beta = 0.12 > 0$, while the coefficient of the non-linear part is $\beta = -0.001 < 0$. Therefore, the theoretical range of the income coefficient of the development of the E on energy intensity is $0 < \beta < 0.12$, and an inverted U-shaped relationship exists between the development level of E and energy intensity under the influence of real GDP.

The change curve of the conversion function and impact coefficient is shown in Figure 1 with the continuous change of real GDP, the conversion function smoothly transforms in the interval $0 < \beta < 0.12$.

Moreover, the impact coefficient of the development of the E on energy intensity is smoothly converting between high and low regimes, and in practice its value range is $0 < \beta < 0.12$, which is close to the theoretical value when the real GDP is less than 10 trillion yuan, the development of the E has a significant positive impact on energy intensity, with a maximum impact coefficient of 0.12 when the real GDP is greater than 10 trillion yuan, the positive impact of the development of the E on energy intensity gradually decreases to 0, which is already the theoretical minimum. However, it can be seen from the Supporting Information Figure 1 that by the end of 2022, the real GDP of Shanxi, Jilin, Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, and Guangdong have not crossed the threshold value with the mode transformation of economic growth, the optimization of the industrial and energy structure, and the enhancement of the driving force for economic development, the real GDP of these provinces will increase annually, and will cross the threshold value, hence, the impact coefficient of the development of the E on energy intensity will constantly approach the inflection point of the inverted U-shaped curve, and enter a downward stage.

Table 7
Regression results of PSTR model

Conversion variable	odel		odel	odel	odel	odel
	Real	P				
Explanatory variable: the development level of the E	β	Estimated value	-	-	-	-
	β	Estimated value	-	-	-	-
Influence coefficient	$\beta + \beta$	t statistic				
Positional parameter	c					
Slope coefficient	γ					
Sum of squares of residuals	RSS					

Notes: * denotes level of significance

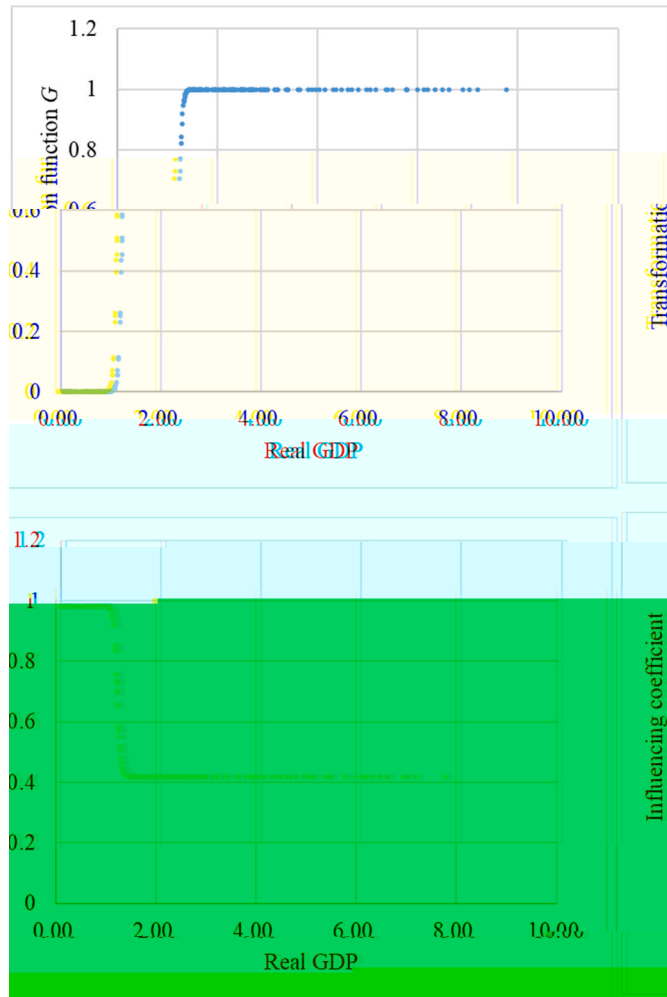


Fig. 1. Smooth transformation diagram of transformation function and influence coefficient of odel

Analysis of the impact of urbanization rate on the relationship between the development of E and energy intensity

odel analyzes the change of smooth transition of the impact coefficient for the development of E on energy intensity with the urbanization rate changes from Tables and it can be seen that there is a single threshold value of = for odel. The linear coefficient of the development level of the E is $\beta = . >$, while the coefficient of the non-linear part is $\beta = - . <$, so the theoretical range of the coefficient of influence for the development of the E on energy intensity is , , and there exists an inverted shape

curve between the development level of E and energy intensity under the influence of urbanization rate

Fig shows the change curve of the conversion function and the influence coefficient. The minimum value of the conversion function is = , and the maximum value is = . A smooth transition is achieved between the minimum and maximum values with the continuous improvement of the urbanization rate, the impact coefficient of the development of the E on energy intensity smoothly transforms between high and low regimes, with a value ranging in the interval , in practice when the urbanization rate is lower than , the development of the E has a significant positive impact on energy intensity, with the maximum impact coefficient of

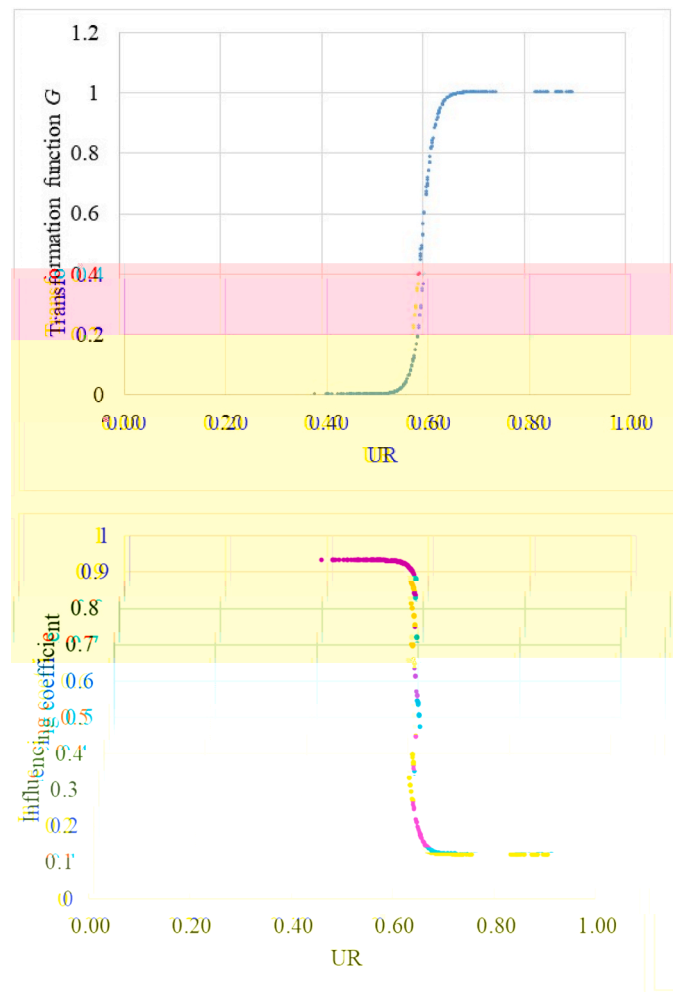


Fig. 2. Smooth transformation diagram of transformation function and influence coefficient of odel

Nevertheless, when the rebalancing rate is higher than β , the positive impact of the development of the E on energy intensity gradually weakened, and the impact coefficient eventually decreased to β , other than the theoretical minimum value of β . The primary reason is that the rebalancing rate in most provincial regions in China is still within the low regime in β . From the Supporting Information Figure S1, it can be seen that by the end of 2020, the rebalancing rate level of Anhui, Henan, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Shaanxi, Hunan, Gansu, and Yunnan has not yet crossed the threshold level. Therefore, these provinces should accelerate the rebalancing process and make the rebalancing rate higher than the threshold earlier. Therefore, the value of the conversion function will increase to the theoretical value of β , and the value of the impact coefficient will continue to decrease from β to the theoretical value of β .

Analysis of the impact of economic structure on the relationship between the development of E and energy intensity

Model analyzes the smooth transition of the impact coefficient of the development of the E on energy intensity as the proportion of the secondary industry in GDP changes. As can be seen from Table 1, there is a single threshold value of $\beta = 0.15$ for Model 1, and the linear coefficient of the development level of the E is $\beta = 0.15 > \beta$, while the non-linear coefficient is $\beta = -0.15 < \beta$, so the theoretical range of the coefficient for the influence of the E development on energy intensity is β . And an inverted U-shaped curve exists between the development level of E and energy intensity under the influence of the change of the proportion of the secondary industry in GDP.

Figure 1 depicts the change tendency of the conversion function and the influence coefficient. The minimum value of the conversion function is β , and the maximum value is β , between which a smooth transition can be achieved. As the proportion of the secondary

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promoting energy utilization efficiency

Analysis of the impact of β on the relationship between the development of E and energy intensity

Model depicts the smooth transition of the impact coefficient of the E development on energy intensity as β changes from Table 1, we can discover that a single threshold value of $\beta = 0.1$ exists for Model 1, and the linear coefficient of the E development level is $\beta = 0.1 > 0$, while the coefficient of the non-linear part is $\beta = -0.1 < 0$. Therefore, the theoretical range of the impact coefficient of the E development level on energy intensity is $0 < \beta < 0.1$. And there exists an inverted U-shaped curve between the development level of E and energy intensity under the influence of

Fig. 1 demonstrates the change curve of the conversion function and the influence coefficient. The minimum value of the conversion function is $\beta = 0.1$, and the maximum value is $\beta = 0.1$.

intensity will cross the peak and begin to fall. This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that when the E develops to a certain level, the energy-saving effect will be brought by technological progress, resources optimal allocation and other reasons. Hence, the position effect of the E on energy intensity becomes uncertain.

A close relationship exists between the economy and energy consumption, which has been proved by many researchers. In the established PSTR model, there will be an endogenous rise if a total causal relationship between the E and energy intensity. Hence, to reduce the endogenous rise, it is necessary to re-estimate the PSTR model with the E lagging by one period. Since the threshold will influence, while the threshold cannot influence the results, selecting the threshold as the explanatory variable can somewhat mitigate the potential endogenous rise. Results listed in the existence of threshold causation. The re-estimation results of models are listed in Table. And the results show that even after considering the endogenous issue, the coefficients are significant. The findings prove the reliability of the established PSTR model results.

6. Conclusions and policy implications

Under the context of realizing the goal of carbon peak and carbon neutrality, with the rapid development of the E, it is necessary to investigate the influence of the E on energy intensity. This research firstly evaluated the E development level of provincial regions in China from 2000 to 2020. And then the non-linear impact of the E development on energy intensity is studied based on the PSTR model via selecting real GDP, reborn rate, the proportion of secondary industry in GDP, R&D, and innovation as the transformation variables. The boundaries of changes in the impact of the E development on energy intensity are analyzed from the perspective of threshold effect.

Based on the empirical analysis of models established on the basis of five transformation variables, it can be discovered that there exist inverted U-shaped relationships between the development level of E and energy intensity. Under the influence of real GDP, reborn rate, the proportion of secondary industry in GDP, R&D, and innovation or R&D, except for Jilin, Heilongjiang, Shanghai, Jiangxi, Hainan, Anhui, Jiangsu, Guangdong, and Inner Mongolia, other provincial regions R&D levels have already crossed the threshold and the influence coefficient is close to the theoretical minimum value, hence, scientific and technological innovation has significantly improved energy utilization efficiency. For the real GDP, except for Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Inner Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia, other provincial regions real GDP has crossed the threshold value. For the reborn rate, Anhui, Henan, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia's levels are lower than the threshold level or the proportions of secondary industry in GDP, only that of Beijing, Shanghai, and Hainan is higher than the threshold level. And the influence coefficients of the development of the E on energy intensity has great space to decline in models and established via selecting the reborn rate and the proportion of the secondary

industry in GDP as transformation variables, as they are higher than the theoretical minimum values. Therefore, only by continuously optimizing the industrial structure and accelerating the process of green reborn can the impact coefficient of the E development on energy intensity continue to decline, and can it help achieve the carbon peak and carbon neutrality goals. Therefore, the policy implications for promoting the decrease of energy intensity are as follows:

Firstly, technological progress has played a positive role in improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. In order to achieve the carbon peak and carbon neutral goals and the economic growth goal, it is necessary to further increase R&D investment in the future, especially in Jilin, Heilongjiang, Shanghai, Jiangxi, Hainan, Anhui, Guangdong, Inner Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia. The provincial regions need to continuously optimize their investment structure, focusing on supporting low-carbon energy technology research and development and digital technologies.

Secondly, as can be seen from the empirical results, the key to reducing the impact of the E development on energy intensity lies in two aspects. First, continuously promote the green upgrading of the industrial structure. In addition to Beijing and Shanghai, other provincial regions should control the growth of industries with high added value, high energy consumption, and high emissions in the secondary industry, vigorously develop resource saving and environmentally friendly characteristic industries, and expand emerging industries and modern service industries. The second is to effectively promote the process of green reborn, especially in Anhui, Henan, Jiangxi, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and Inner Mongolia. While promoting the development of reborn, should attach importance to the green and low-carbon development of reborn areas.

Thirdly, while expanding opening up degree, should improve the level of international division of labor, actively develop modern service trade with high pollution and high added value, in order to promote relocating the high carbon loc in economic growth.

Fourthly, while developing the digital economy, it is better to further apply the digitalization technologies in the energy field. With the rapid development of the E, the energy consumption increase brought by the infrastructure construction of the E may also require attention. The innovation effect of digital technologies should be fully stimulated and the development of emerging internet technologies should be encouraged. The application of digital technologies, such as 5G, AI, big data, cloud computing, and others, should be strengthened. Hence, the digital technologies can be widely employed in energy systems via the development of "Internet Plus" smart energy and energy internet so as to improve energy allocation efficiency and realize energy conservation and emissions reduction.

This investigation explores the relationship between the E development level and energy intensity under different transformation variables based on the PSTR model, however, there is still some room to be improved in the future. Firstly, future research should establish a more reasonable evaluation index system to comprehensively evaluate the E development level. Secondly, as data collection improves, the relationship between the E development level and energy intensity at city

Table 8
Regression results of the re-estimated PSTR model with the E lagging by one period

Conversion variable	odel		odel		odel		odel		odel	
	Real	P	R	STR	R&					
Explanatory variable: the development level of the E	β	Estimated value	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	β	t statistic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Influence coefficient	$\beta + \beta$	Estimated value	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	β	t statistic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Positional parameter	c									
Slope coefficient	γ									
Sum of squares of residuals	RSS									

Notes: β : denotes level of significance

level should be investigated. Thirdly, administrative regulation is an important factor that cannot be ignored when studying Chinese energy and environment issues. However, considering that the administrative regulations are difficult to be quantified, we have not taken it as a transformation variable in this research. In the following research, we will conduct in-depth study on the influence of the administrative regulations on energy consumption issues.

Credit author statement

Haoran Zhao: concept allocation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – original draft Preparation, and writing-Review & Editing. Seno: data curation, formal analysis, writing – original draft Preparation, and writing-Review & Editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.energy.2023.128867>.

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