

18.Indonesia: Diversities and media discrimination

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The mass media maps in Indonesia are changing. Changes occur in the regulations, the number of media companies, as well as the convergence of the media. In the “new order” era (1966–1998), only 180 SIUPs (Publishing Business Licenses) were issued to print media. Ahead of the elections 1999, the number of media publications rose to 1,600, but after the election the number decreased. In late 2016, online media increased to 43,400. While the increasing of online media was in a great number, there only about 500 online media were being registered by the Indonesia Press Council. The increasing numbers of online media are not balanced by the quality of news coverage, since many issues were still marginalized, whether they appeared in online or print media.

Mass media, in this chapter represented by the press, is considered as the fourth pillar in the state system in Indonesia. Although it is often communicated that the press must be neutral, objective, and impartial, the press is oftentimes inevitably aligned, particularly partisan to the interests of the particular audience it represents. Habermas (1984) says that communication of democracy is emancipatory. In this chapter, the emancipatory role and its obstacles are analysed by looking at the media and a diversity of minorities in Indonesia. Communicative action, i.e. open discussion, creating confidence without pressure from any party, without coercion and violence, will create a conducive public sphere, the embryo of a democracy that contains the value of autonomy and freedom. On the other hand, some Indonesian mass media still dis-

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criminate on issues and interests such as gender, religion/belief, ethnic and sexual minorities.

Discrimination is usually noticeable either as a set of emotions of negative reference or as “negative behaviour before a group, based on a negative prejudice or attitude” grounded “in stereotypes or beliefs about the negative attributes which mark that group”. The discriminatory actions and attitudes are usually linked to segregation, stigmatisation and social exclusion. Immigrants, women and, horizontally, the immigrant women, are those who suffer the most, with these practices and attitudes (Cunha et al., 2007).

Castells (2010) explained that empirical studies show the media are not independent variables in inducing behaviour. Their messages, explicit or subliminal, are worked out, processed by individuals placed in specific social contexts, thus modifying what was the intended effect of the message. But the media, and particularly audio-visual media in our culture, are indeed the basic material of communication processes. We live in a media environment, and most of our symbolic stimuli come from the media.

When discrimination occurs in society, media have possibility to amplify it or take a stand defending the groups facing discrimination.

The media, in the role of the fourth pillar/fourth estate, shoulders a heavy responsibility. Although in practice the work of a journalist cannot simply act independent from media policies, since the content of a news medium is ultimately not solely in the hands of an individual journalist. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996) there are five levels affecting media content: (1) the individual worker’s tier: the social, economic, and educational background of the journalist; (2) medium-level media concerns: the interests of audiences, including news value, objectivity, and story structure; (3) media organizational setting: gatekeeping, news perspective, and external sources such as interviews, informants/sources and others; (4) extra-media tariffs, media owners, advertisers, etc., and (5) ideological factors such as feminism, religion, certain groups, etc.

Thus, when we look at media content, it will be a product of various dimensions, not only the individual level of journalists, but also the level of editorial staff, media ownership policy, advertisers, and also the level of ideology harboured by particular media.

Media alignment as a necessity

The media is supposed to be present for the benefit of the wider community, as a venue for the voices of the people who may not be heard by government and parliament. Media alignment to the people is a necessity. Media trends have changed very quickly lately, and online media have become “the golden path”. In Indonesia, almost all print media have their online versions.

Castells (2009) argued that whatever our economic system is, we should learn to live with the internet. In a modern setting, media institutions should focus on the various opportunities, but also the dangers involved. The cultural effects of communication technologies are often unpredictable, since they are also related to social forces. This condition seems an integral part of the present and future life situations.

Various participants in society have recognized the benefits of strengthening online media. Online media in Indonesia unfortunately do not shy away from publishing discriminatory news/stories concerning gender, religion/belief, or ethnic and sexual minorities. This concern is voiced by the Director of The Alliance of Independent Journalists in Indonesia (AJI), Suwarjono, in a discussion that was supported by TIFA foundation (A non-profit organization promoting open society in Indonesia) in the early 2016: “The media does not involve and support the community such as the minorities’ ethnic, race, religion, or LGBT issues that are currently lacking clarity. We hope the media can improve their understanding of the function and role of the media” (Amri & Manan, 2016). So inevitably, in the end, the basic knowledge, mental readiness and toughness of the journalists as the spearhead in the field, are key to producing a good and true news.

Factuality or facticity can be interpreted as reporting a situation and condition as it is, neither embellished nor reduced, nor polluted by any particular interpretation or opinion. But in practice the news often contains interpretations and opinions by journalists. When these opinions and interpretations enter into news coverage, bias occurs. According to the ideals of news journalism, bias is something we must always strive to avoid.

A country of diversity

According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, the country's population (approximately 267 million) is divided into 1,331 ethnic groups, and has a linguistic diversity of more than 700 languages. Six religions are recognized by the Indonesian Government; their adherents are distributed as follows: Muslim 87.2 per cent, Christians (other than Catholics) 7 per cent, Roman Catholic 2.9 per cent, Hindu 1.7 per cent, Buddhist and Confucian 0.9 per cent, and unspecified (other beliefs) 0.4 per cent (Kementrian Agama RI, 1965).

The adherents of "other" beliefs are not much reported or covered by the media. Such minorities experience discrimination, both in the media and in the real world. Examples of this are Ahmadiyah, Syiah (Shia), as well as Christian sects who differ from mainstream Christians.

The SETARA Institute in 2017 reported on "Conditions of Freedom/Belief in Indonesia 2106" and emphasized that freedom of religion/belief had not been fully guaranteed by the state (Setara, 2017). To the contrary, the practices of intolerance, discrimination and violence continue to occur. The report also highlighted that during 2016, 270 violations of freedom of religion/belief were perpetrated. Persons associated with organs of the state were involved in half of these incidents. Included in the state acts are provocative public statements capable of inciting people to violence. Such provocative public statements by state actors inciting violence, were covered by the mass media, and by this means, the media became involved in discrimination against minorities holding uncommon religious beliefs.

One incident involved 1,500 members of the Cikeusik Muslim Movement, which in February 2011 killed three Ahmadis (detiknews, 2011; Firdaus, 2011; *Tempo*, 2011; *Voa-islam*, 2011). Some Indonesian media used the word "clash" to explain the incident. These media also used the word "misguided" and "must be converted" (*Voa-islam*, 2011) to justify assaults and discrimination against Ahmadis. Another case were the attacks on Shi'a residents in Sampang in December 2011 and August 2012 which killed two people, while six people were injured (Shofwan, 2014). Dozens of houses were burned and hundreds of Shiite residents fled. The word "clash" was again used by the largest newspapers and magazines in Indonesia; including *Kompas*, *Tempo*, *Gatra*, *Okezone*, and *RCTI*. Not infrequently they also use the word

“heretical”, “Islamized”, “blasphemy religion” and call the perpetrators somewhat euphemistically as “non-Shi’a” (Shofwan, 2014).

Ethnic minorities

The ethnic minority issue is quite difficult to simplify, because some ethnic issues are related to religion. Schulze (2004) explained that the Ambon fight (1999–2003) said to be between Christians and Muslims, left many dead), as well as Poso (1998–2007) also between groups adhering to the two religions, and Sambas (West-Kalimantan, 1999) where conflicts started erupting during Indonesia’s transition from authoritarianism to democracy (starting in 1998). These conflicts were linked to the struggle for political power and control over resources in the context of decentralization. All three conflicts shared similar causes resulting from the *transmigrasi* – the partially forced migration of other ethnic groups (both during Dutch colonialism and later) to new locations less densely populated; and the disrespect of local customs by migrants coupled with social, economic, and political competition between locals and migrants (Koko, 2018; Suchyo, 2018). In all three ethnic minority-issue cases, violence by indigenous actors specifically targeted migrants in order to defend indigenous local resources, particularly land, from encroachment by migrants and the Indonesian state.

Thus, writes Schulze (2004), there is little to suggest that the Sambas conflict was somehow inherently more ethnic than the other two. Indeed, the ethnic narratives advanced by the non-Muslims in all three conflicts were broadly similar in their emphasis on the indigenous experience of physical, social, cultural, and political displacement by migrants from other ethnic backgrounds. Yet, participant and observer narratives on the Ambon and Poso conflicts were largely framed in religious terms while those on the Sambas conflict cast the violence as ethnic.

According to Schulze (2004), we could see that the conflicts regarding ethnicity are related with the political condition in Indonesia. Whenever it comes to ethnicity issues, Indonesian media often just report about conflicts and problems, and do not include historical context or try to add expert suggestions on problem solving.

A special case is the Chinese ethnic community, in Indonesian called *Tiongha*. The Indonesian Media have a long history of discrimination

against them (Heychael, 2017). Purdey (2003) said opinions among ethnic Chinese about how to express their identity and culture after May 1998 (the fall of Suharto's New Order Era) were less polarized than actions occurring on the political scene. There was, as noted, after the fall of Suharto, a general sentiment that Chinese cultural activities should be allowed to re-emerge, on the surface at least, in the form of dance, *barongsai* and so on, at official events.

The *Tempo* magazine, August 31, 2015 edition, published a main report regarding the arrival of thousands of workers from China along with various development projects in Indonesia. The magazine used the headline "Welcome Chinese Workers", and many parties point to this as a form of *Tempo* racism towards ethnic Chinese groups as in Indonesia, the ethnic is accused of taking over economic power (Uto-mo, 2015). The headline shows how the media had a cynical approach towards the arrival of Chinese workers in Indonesia. In addition, the previous governor of Jakarta (of Chinese descent) faced many-faceted discrimination (see Ade Armando's chapter in this volume).

The issue of pluralism in Indonesia is challenged. In the mass media, there are still many journalists who do not understand the dangers of breakup and disunity posed to the nation in the name of ethnicity. Indonesia has long had the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity, adapted in 1950) but very little of this ethic is reflected through the mass media.

Sensitive gender coverage

A closer look at online media in Indonesia reveals that they tend to disregard gender sensitivity and describe women mainly related to domestic issues, or also "*ibuism*" – "motherly", i.e. that women are important if they are mothers, have kids, and do not work outside of their home. The strong statement, "Ibuisim Negara – State Motherism" refers to a national program during the New Era which constructs women's role as a domestic unpaid worker. This program largely controlled women's participation in society (Janti, 2018; Putri, 2017; Suryakusuma, 2015). This is still visible since, in media interviews with women politicians, or women workers in general, journalists tend to ask them about their successes in the domestic area. This condition is indirectly part of the success of the "new order", which introduced the ideology of "*ibuism*"

including women as “*konco wingking*” – a friend behind a husband.

However, since that period, the issue of “*ibuism*” has largely shifted to issues of women’s bodies, female sexuality, and women’s clothing associated with morals and religion. Nowadays, women tend to be judged or questioned about their moral and religious values if their appearances differ from what is considered feminine stereotypes.

When women are raped, the media tends to disclose the identity of the victim, humiliating her by revealing details of the event, and thereby causing the victim and her family to be traumatized by such heavy-handed coverage. This makes women’s experience with rape as being “double victims”, both of direct violence, and the psychological violence perpetrated by the media (Himawan & Handayani, 2018; Sucahyo, 2018).

Whatever the news content, it ought to frame women’s issues as though women were as human as men. Thus, when journalists give women exposure in the news, it should be seen as logical and natural. This does not happen as long as women are degraded in news issues, regarded solely as objects and not as full human beings. The values of humanity, when women’s issues are covered, still seem to be ignored.

News and gender bias

According to Denis McQuail and colleagues (2005), bias is a tendency to abandon the path of objective truth consistently by misappropriating information. In news, bias is defined as a systematic tendency that is more aligned to one side or position than the other. The four types of biases are (1) partisanship, including editorial approval or authorization on behalf of a particular person; in this instance, the content of the media is openly and intentionally partisan; (2) propaganda on the other hand is *intentionally* partisan, but the goal remains veiled; it is not easy to identify this bias if such propaganda enters the news; (3) unwitting bias is open and unintentional, such as the selection of a topic that is considered to have news value; and (4) ideology, which includes a veiled and unintentional bias “embedded in the text”.

In Indonesia, we witness first and foremost the two last biases. The practice of gender bias is seen in various forms across media texts, not least in headlines and leads. Examples of texts with clear gender bias, can be seen below, by word choices: “joined in to harass the victim”;

“got a chance to harass the victim”, “said Tyas, who has a plump, sexy body with a 36 B bra” (Setiawan, 2011), “Virgin with 3 children?” (Pos Kota, 2012).

Explicitly, clearly and overtly, the above sentences demonstrate a complete insensitivity towards women. Not only do these excerpts demean women, but some also portray victims of violence as participants in amusing incidents. This media phenomenon may be seen as the result of business interests, which aims to attract the attention of audiences, through sensational reporting and thereby increase circulation. Socially, they seem to have internalized patriarchal culture. Thus, media outlets oftentimes construct women as second class citizens, lower than men, as weak, in need of protection, and as a gender whose members have to adhere to beauty ideals if they are to have positive value, or be regarded as part of popular pornography and thus exist simply as sexual objects. A gender biased perspective causes the media to produce and reproduce patterns of gender relations that are unfair and unequal. The media often describes women as weak, and they are reported as “crying helplessly” (Eki, 2009).

May Lan in the book “Pers, Negara dan Perempuan” (2002), mentions how in the Indonesian media during the New Order era, women were described as subordinate to men. There are several things that show this.

The first subordination is the exploitation of women through criminal news involving women both as victims and perpetrators. In cases where women are victims of rape, for example, they will be affixed with various “beautiful” frills, “minimal clothes”, “night out”, and other tendentious characteristics. The second is women are explained as marginal people who do not have authority over themselves. The third is found in reports on celebration of women on particular occasions, such as Mother’s Day, Kartini’s day, etc.¹ The fourth is that the portion of news about women is still very minimal and does not touch on aspects of women’s empowerment. Women’s emancipatory discourse does not come forward.

Sexual minorities issue

In cases of LGBT people, negative opinion in the mass media may culminate in an increasing outbreak of violent incidents and an escalation

of stigmatization and discrimination. To quote from the official website *Arus Pelangi* (NGO with concern for sexual minorities), the following official statements were represented in media without contacting any LGBT representatives/sources (January 2016):

The Minister of Higher Education and Technology Research, M. Nasir, affirmed that groups of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) should not enter university campuses. According to him, these groups could damage the role of a campus as a moral guard. The universities should be able to maintain the correct moral values and values of the nation. (Aminah, 2017; Batubara, 2016; Laeis, 2017)

It is also expressed by the Chairman of MPR RI (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR); Republic Indonesia (RI) – Indonesia’s House of Representatives), Zulkifli Hasan: “Yes indeed this is a new phenomenon. Yes. This did not fit with our culture, it should be banned because it does not fit with the culture of Indonesia” (Fatmawati, 2018). Member of the parliament from the fraction X PPP², Reni Marlinawati: “this practice in addition to violating religious norms also conflicts with positive law. We firmly reject and are vehemently opposed to this practice” (Indrawan, 2016).

The Minister of Education and Culture, Anies Baswedan, said that such deviant behaviour, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT), among adolescents should be a concern for parents and teachers. The teachers must be aware of the importance of the values held in education, such as religious values, Pancasila³, and culture. Parents and teachers should be aware of the values that should be taught, grown and developed from an early age. In fact, most experts mention this as a duty even before the child is born (Indrawan, 2016).

In 2015, The Alliance of Independent Journalist Indonesia (AJI) shared their report about the news coverage of LGBT in Indonesia. It shows how often the media covered news of LGBT by basing their reports on sexual orientation, promoting sensational elements and bombastic titles. The media also obscured the distinction between sexual and gender identity. Moreover, the media tend to cover such news from sources abroad, such that the public perception is that LGBT is a “foreign” issue, while in real life, LGBT is an integral and equal part of Indonesian society.

According to AJI, the media coverage tends to report negatively on LGBT issues, especially when news of a crime involves an LGBT person. The main source of news in such cases would be a law enforcer, while LGBT-persons, as (alleged) perpetrators of the crime, are not offered any space. News with a negative tone also appears in online news. Allegedly, this happens due to lack of understanding among journalists/writers about gender diversity. For example, news about a celebrity who may be *bisexual* is considered strange from the point of view of many people's lives. Identity as a bisexual tends to be labeled as greedy and unlawful and might even be considered a social aberration (Ichsan, 2017; Kurniawan, 2017; Tribunnews, 2017). This statement strengthens the negative stigma of society against LGBT groups.

Media coverage should be siding, whatever the source ...

Online media development now exceeds print media in Indonesia. It is now almost certain that young readers of the Y generation (born 1980–1995) and Z generation (born 1996–2005) (Jorg, 2017) mainly consume news online (Nurhajati et al., 2015). More dramatically, then, social media and search engines have become the source of news. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Path, and other social media platforms become indicators as to whether or not an event can enter the news category (Nola Media Grup, 2018).

The significant development in the era of digital media is the rise of amateur information producers who actively distribute news, insights and opinions (Owen, 2017). Digitalization has impacted journalism in many ways. One of these ways is that it has even been easier for the public to speak out, since spreading content is free and large audiences can be reached through social media platforms (Fonseca, 2017). Everyone flocks to the newsmakers in various ways. Citizen journalists provide invaluable information that can democratize media, as well as nations (Revis, 2011). The speed of news via social media, though, seems to be the main concern of its producers, and accuracy tends to be neglected.

Social media credibility is increasingly difficult to maintain, even if it is strongly believed to be the “earliest and fastest” newsbearer of this century. Although paradoxical conditions occur, journalists and

media workers in general also rely on social media to generate news. Trends discussed in social media, will very quickly be processed by journalists to become news. This condition is reasonable if the actual and factual conditions reported are true. It becomes a joke when the issue in social media is just “trash” (worthless information) that is picked up by journalists to generate news.

Web news and social media can be regarded as a color enhancer that is attractive in the world of communication, and has its own specialties that do not exist in conventional media. Audiences can also be an information tool, they can interact with each other, and they can communicate directly with media persons who possess considerable information. This constitutes a condition that is not much different from Habermas’s basic idea of the public sphere itself, which allows for the exchange of communication between one party with others as egalitarian and emancipatory. This is reinforced by the thought of Castells (2001) that new communications technologies will ensure new forms of horizontal civil participation, which do not depend on traditional mass communication or large political organizations. Finally, each individual can actively participate in the democratic development of true public opinion spheres.

On the other hand, a sad condition may occur in the shape of recycling messages. Due to limited field staff, the online media will “cannibalise” news from an initiator. Regular news coverage is no longer the rule. Just imagine how this may develop concerning news on gender, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities.

So should social media be banned from being used as news references? Of course not. But journalists need to be more sensitive and careful in sorting out reliable and adequate news sources through social media, by re-checking the original source, and assessing this source’s credibility. Furthermore, media managers and owners’ credibility must be checked for the benefit of the wider community. As media economist Robert Picard states, journalism is “designed to separate fact from fiction and rumour, to provide information fairly, and to produce accuracy and credibility” (Fonseca, 2017).

Castells (2009) has warned us about the unpredictable cultural effects of communication technologies. Media need to protect society rather than pure business values, stick to separating fact from fiction

and fact from rumour, providing information fairly, and to producing accuracy and credibility.

Recommended: training diversity

Media discrimination on the basis of gender, religion/belief, ethnicity and sexual minority status in Indonesia is documented. Compulsory training of diversity and tolerance would be a positive addition to basic journalism training.

Various parties who are concerned with respect towards diversity and anti-discrimination, need to be continuously reminded of double standards. Since Indonesia has a wide variety of ethnic groups, religions, etc., it is very important that Indonesian journalism promotes a solid understanding that journalism is designed to separate fact from fiction and rumour, to provide information fairly, and to produce accuracy and credibility. Moreover, the public has to be educated in media literacy, the need of accuracy and credibility in news, especially in dealing with negative news about minorities.

Notes

1. In Indonesia two days celebration women: Mother's day on 22 December (actually as part of commemoration on Indonesian Women's Movement), and Kartini's day on 21 April as Kartini's (an Indonesian heroine) birthday.
2. Fraction number 10 in Indonesian Parliament from Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP). PPP is a political party based on Islamist Ideology.
3. Pancasila, pronounced Panchaseela, is the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state. Pancasila consists of two Sanskrit words, "panca" meaning five, and "sila" meaning principle. It comprises five inseparable and interrelated principles. They are: Belief in the one and only God, just and civilized humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives, and social justice for all people of Indonesia (<http://www.indonezia.ro/republic.htm>).

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