

Ethics of Indonesian Journalists in the Era of Media Freedom

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Abstract: The Indonesian press has indeed been separated from government intervention. Nevertheless, press freedom is still relevant to discuss. Because as a concept, freedom of Although the press has escaped the authoritarian government pressure. This does not mean that press freedom is over. Apparently, the freedom of the press is not as easy as discussed. the complexity of news production makes journalists have different understanding in interpreting the freedom of the press. This is reflected in the daily practices of journalists. On the other hand, ethics as a guide acts for professional journalists, the spectrum is vast. The extent of the spectrum allows for different interpretations and practices in daily news coverage activities. the press is a liquid concept that is easy to talk about, but very complex at the level of implementation. Speaking of press freedom, this will always be related to the professionalism of journalists. Because journalists who will translate freedom of the press in everyday practice. Professional status requires an adequate understanding of the journalist's code of ethics. This code of ethics is the guidance of journalists in carrying out its coverage duties.

Keywords: *press freedom, ethics, media ethics*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the New Order regime, regarded as an authoritarian regime, marked a fundamental change in the life of the Indonesian press. There are two significant changes, namely the aspect of freedom and the growth of the press as an industry. For the past 15 years, the Indonesian press has enjoyed the freedom from government pressure (Sudibyo, 2014). This condition confirmed the findings of Dhakidae (1991) which explains that weakening state pressure on the press will strengthen the freedom of the press. In addition, the press Indonesia grew into a fast-growing industry. Until 2014, there were 428 press companies and 43 journalist organizations in Indonesia. Although the embryo of the industrial press began to appear at the end of the New Order Government, the press industrialization of the time was only enjoyed by close entrepreneurs and supported the New Order Government (Dedy 2000: 127-164). The 1998 reform became a turning point in the development of media business (Nugroho, 2012).

Kristiawan (2013: 188) notes there are two dimensions that determine the life of the press, namely the economic and political dimensions. In the political dimension, media liberalization resulted in many media companies that led to media conglomeration. Advertising spending and networking media tendencies are getting stronger. On the political side, freedom of the press, protection of journalists, unions, the fate of community media tends to weaken. The growth of the press as an industry (as well as in Indonesia), is profit-oriented, resulting studies focusing on finding a relationship between press freedom from the pressures of economic and political interests are highly relevant. In the context of the pressures of the political economy of the media, the presence of professional journalists becomes a necessity. As professionals, journalists use the ability to interpret ethics of journalists in their daily routine. This professional supply, it is important to understand professional ethics in relation to behavior or action. As a profession, professional codes of ethics bind journalists. A professional ethical code that regulates how a journalist performs daily tasks. With the code of ethics, journalists try to find a "middle way" from the various interests of the editorial space. Journalists often experience ethical dilemmas and conflicts between standardized standards of accuracy, truth, objectivity, with prevailing values in the wider community, for example, news coverage of rape may lead to conflicts between truth and individual privacy (Seeger, 2009: 294). This paper will outline briefly on press freedom and journalism ethics in the context of economic and political forces pressure.

Departing from the above though, this paper would discuss briefly the position of journalist ethics in the era of press freedom today. Therefore, post-Order Rerformasi ethical violations by journalists tend to rise. Journalists are still a lot of violations of the professional code of ethics. Of the 193 direct complaints received by the Press Council between January December 2012, 86% a or 167 complaints ended with an assessment of violations of the Journalistic Code of Ethics (KEJ). Violations of codes of ethics are dominated by unbalanced

news, news that does not contain test information or confirmation, and news that contains judgmental opinions (Alliance of Independent Journalists, 2013)

II. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

The press is a social institution with a significant function which is often defined as a social control institution. The function of the press can be realized maximally if press freedom is guaranteed. The press guaranteed freedom as a prerequisite for being able to function fully is responsible for all published information not to the state. The responsibility of the press, is direct to the public, because the main purpose of Journalism (the press) is to serve the community (Kovach and Rosentiel, 2000: 17). Kiouis (in Wahab and Rahim, 2013) states that in modern times, press freedom and the credibility of the media are closely related to public confidence in the media. The content of publishing content determines public trust. Media failure in maintaining credibility will affect the media's ability to perform its normative functions. The main task of journalists is to provide information to the public. Other purposes beyond that, for example, money, position, association, potentially causing conflict (Merril, 1999: 256). Perceptions of press freedom are not single. There is a positive rate there is also a negative mention. Positive, because with the freedom of the press means the independence of the press is assured. The condition is correlated to the attempt to realize the ideal function of the press as a "guard dog" and hence the press as the fourth pillar of democracy manifested (Naomi 1996: xii). Negatively, as freedom of the press creates, many media grow. The tendency of many media accompanies these developments to ignore professional attitudes. For example, write coverage that is speculative and does not need the code of ethics (Luwarso in Astraatmadja, 2000: 90).

Kovach and Rosentiel (2001: 6) describes the nine elements of Journalism that can be a reference in journalism activities include: (1) the first obligation of journalism is on the truth; (2) first loyalty journalists to citizens; (3) the essence of journalism is the discipline in verification; (4) practitioners should keep independent of the news source; (5) journalism should apply as a power monitor; (6) Journalism should provide public forums for civic and citizen support; (7) journalism must strive to make the important things interesting and relevant ; (8) journalism should keep comprehensive and proportional news; (9) practitioners should be allowed to follow their conscience. Shoemaker and Reese cited by Sudibyo (2001: 7-10) mentioned 5 factors that affect the work of journalists, namely (1) individual factors such as educational background, religion, gender, political interscence and so on; (2) media routines that include media reporting mechanisms and procedures; (3) organizational level that is component of media institution having role and interest in news production; (4) extramedia level that is external factor of media such as resource, country, advertisement, market and so on; and (5) ideology level in the form of perspective and framework of thinking and attitude in facing phenomenon. Shoemaker and Reese (in Becker and Vlad, 2009: 60) define news routines as patterns, routines, and repetitions of daily activities of media workers in doing their work.

According to Molotch and Lester (in Becker and Vlad, 2009: 60) news routines are essential to understanding the process of producing news. Williams (2009: 60) concludes that based on the Tuchman, Molotch and Lester studies of news routines, there are 3 things that can be concluded: (a) news routines can explain the daily behavior of journalists in making news, (b) news routines can explain the role of power in determining the news. The study of the relationship between journalists and news sources questions the power, influence, and bias of news (Berkowitz, 2009: 102), and (c) news routines can explain how journalists construct reality, and how journalists tend to view reality. However, McQuail (in Furtonato, 2008: 72) opposes the opinion that media routines are the most important factor affecting the media content decision process rather than individual and ideological factors. This is where the challenge for journalists to hold the principles and ethics of the news so that it can carry out its main function to convey information to the public so that people get the right information and consideration in making political decisions.

Tunstall (in Becker and Vlad, 2009: 60) distinguishes between news organizations and media organizations. News organizations include an editorial that focuses on news routines, while media organizations refer to economic interests. Professional journalists have many strategies to get out of the pressures of the organization, such as the attraction of interest between the newsroom and advertising space (Borden and Bower, 2009: 355-356). To maintain the trust of clients and the public, Professional Journalists consciously use ethical standards that can maintain idealism and moral prosecution. In its basic form, ethics is a minimal value, a moral tradition used to decide whether a course of action or choice is right or wrong, good, or bad.

III. ETHICS OF JOURNALISTS

Ethics comes from the Greek meaning character, while the moral comes from the Latin language which means the ordinance (Thirox, 2009: 1). Ethics refers to two things: the disciplines that study their values and justification, and the subject matter of the discipline itself is the real values of life and the laws of behavior (Solomon 1987: 1). There are three meanings related to the use of ethics (Bartens, 2004: 6). Firstly, ethics is interpreted as moral values and norms that hold the hand of a person or a group in regulating his behavior; the

second is a collection of principles or morals, ethics, the three ethics are interpreted as the science of good and bad. There are moral and ethical differences if moral refers to the good value of bad as a human, then the ethics refer to the ethical values inherent in some human roles, such as teachers, lecturers, journalists, and others (Suseno 1987: 18-19). Moral decisions are made not only based on one's actions but also considering the motives, the allegations of action are taken and based on the general nature of the action (Taylor 1975: 1). Ethics will not mean much if to some extent, without the freedom to choose one purpose acting in certain ways and not in another way (Solomon 1987: 88).

According to Suseno (1987: 15-16), there are four reasons why people need ethics, that is (a) society is becoming more pluralistic so that every day someone will meet many different people. This condition causes the unity of the normative order to be absent, (b) the society is now in the age of the wave of modernization affecting all the joints of life, (c) the society undergoes a rapidly changing moral and cultural change, so that ethics which can be guided, and (d) as a means of interaction for religionist with the outside world. In everyday language, the terms ethics and morals are used alternately. Ethics and morals are spoken when it comes to people's actions. The nature of ethics is critical, therefore ethical according to Darji Darmodiharjo and Shidarta (in Mufid, 2009), ethics of duty; (1) to question the prevailing norms that are considered applicable. To investigate whether the basis of a norm and whether it justifies the adherence required by the norm to applicable norms; (2) ethics asks questions about its legitimacy, meaning that the norms that can not defend themselves from critical questions will naturally lose their rights; (3) ethics also question the right of every institution such as parents, school, state, and religion to give orders or restrictions that must be obeyed; (4) ethics provides provision for human beings to adopt a rational attitude towards all norms; (5) ethics becomes a rational and responsible tool of thought for an expert and for anyone who does not want to be buffeted by the norms.

Media ethics has attention to the question of right and wrong, good, and bad, better, or worse for the actions of people working in the media. When talking about media ethics, it is discussing the ethics recognized by media workers and how they do it (Merril, 1999: 1). Media ethics studies how one should act in a variety of situations. For example, a media worker writes news, news wrote not only enjoyed by others. However, the news is also a means of expression of media workers for their idealism, a means to meet the interests of the reader or audience. The process of deciding to write a story, choosing what event to cover, all implicates the ethics and moral standards of media workers. Therefore, media workers recognize the so-called code of ethics. Code of Ethics is defined as the pattern of rules, procedures, signs, ethical guidelines in conducting an activity or work. Code of Conduct is a pattern of rules or ordinances as a code of conduct. The purpose of the code of conduct so that professionals provide the best service to the users or their customers. The existence of a code of conduct will protect the unprofessional actions

Ethics is very important for all media workers. This encourages journalists to examine their basic moral and political principles; responsibilities and rights; their relationship with their employers and their audiences; as their ultimate work goal. Auto critics and interrogation approaches are always required. In the case of Britain, many factors make ethical challenges less difficult (Keeble, 2001: 1). Keeble (2001: 1-3) identifies several issues that cause media ethics to be emphasized, especially in the context of the UK, namely (a) the growth of the media industry makes it impossible to apply the ethical principles agreed upon by each media; advances in communication technology gave birth to many roles that must be done by journalists. Media integration owned by one company causes reporters to serve some media, (c) consequence of technology advances, the competence of journalist more emphasis to an aspect of skill in doing work. The ability of journalists to reflect, analyze events and understand ethics decreases, (d) very high media competition causes media managers to focus on advertising. The media make every effort to improve the circulation for profit, (e) ethics is the implication of freedom, but many things that cause journalists difficulties implementing ethical standards, caused by conflicts of interest, the editorial room routine, government bureaucracy, and division of labor within the organization, (f) journalists often fail to separate professional tasks with political views, and cultural background, and (g) the global trend of centralized media ownership is a sufficient reason to review media ethics in different countries..

Ward (2009: 295) identifies five stages of the development of Journalistic ethics, namely (a) the 17th century when ethical discourse was used in Journalism; (b) public ethics when yellow newspapers emerged and the idea of the fourth power emerged in the Enlightenment, at the time of the emergence of Liberal Press Theory, (d) in the transitional period from Liberal Press Theory to Social Responsibility Theory and when the emergence of professional journalism ethics that questioned journalistic objectivity, and (e) the emergence of convergence media when a journalist worked on several media at once. Curd, May, and Elliot (in Ward, 2009: 295) explain that journalistic ethics can be defined as an applied ethics that investigates micro issues about what journalists should do in specific situations, and macro issues about what the news organization should do, and how the role in society. Journalists as members of news organizations have rights and obligations. As human beings, journalists are also tied to ethical principles in general, because as professional journalists have the power to frame a political agenda that will influence public opinion.

Ward (2009: 296-297) notes that there are several main areas of ethics issues of Journalism, namely (a) accuracy and verification; how verification is done and in what context, how editing and selection of us is done and what is important, (b) independence; how journalists remain independent and stick to the ethics associated with employees, editors, advertisers, news sources, police, the public. When a journalist is too close and has the potential to create a conflict of interest, (c) fraud and contrived reports or counterfeits; should journalists rely on their ability to recall news writing or use communications technologies such as hidden recording devices, (d) use of illustrative drawings; how reporters use images that do not seem sensational, (e) Source and confidentiality; should journalists always ask permission to the resource person, and (f) when the media converge; whether the ethics of print and electronic journalists also apply in online journalism.

In the context of Indonesia, the Press Council for the 2000-2003 term (Sumadiri, 2005: 242-245) makes at the same time establishes two codes of ethics, namely the Practice Code of the Press Media and the Press Code of Business Conduct. The code of practice of the press media includes (a) accuracy, (b) privacy, (c) pornography, (d) discrimination, (e) criminal acts, (f) unauthorized means, (g) confidential sources, and (i) the right of reply and denial. Meanwhile, the Code of Business Ethics of the Press regulates the following matters, namely (a) the press company must be grown on the basis of sound economic principles and management system; (b) the press company does not broadcast things that harm the efforts of the intellectual life of the nation, (c) press companies should be open to the claims of the community, (d) press companies on joint initiatives to maintain a conducive climate, in the sense of progress of press freedom as a foundation and guarantee for the growth and development of the press industry; public opinion and monopolize ownership of the mass media industry; (f) the press company cooperates with one another for the life of a mutually advantageous press industry and avoids fraudulent competition; (g) the press company must respect the Indonesian Advertising Procedures and Procedures and must provide accurate data about its media profile, (i) The press company carries out its relationships with its partners honestly, and (j) the press company respects the press organizations and other institutions that play a role in the development of the press and keeps the principles of press freedom

An objective report is believed to be an important component of media ethics. Objectives are generally defined as a person's perspective separating facts and values. Facts are openly express statements that can be validated, apart from the influence of the individual's preferences. Values are the individual's consciousness or unconsciousness of a tendency about what should happen, and the likelihood of the subjective individual judging something without legitimacy. An objective report by a professional journalist is part of media ethics. The concept of objectivity focuses on how news is created and reported, how journalists choose facts, make facts, frame facts with a public agenda. Is it all done with or without regard to ethical values (Cohen and Almagor, 2001: 71).

Media ethics helps journalists and other media people in performing their daily tasks. At the level of practice, there are many codes of ethics to consider. Media ethics can be exercised on condition of freedom of choice in acts (Merril, 1999: 5). Many media workers have no freedom because they are positioned as employees who must follow the rules of the organization. The values and types of ethics adopted by media people are built on experience, education, and interaction with various social groups (Reuss, 1999: 41).

Merril (1999: 3-5) states that ethics can manifest itself in two major emphases, namely the first emphasis is called social or communitarian ethics, the latter called personal or individual ethics. Journalists have an interest in both ethics and are willing to execute as well as possible. It is just a matter of emphasis-social ethics refers to group ethics, personal or individual ethics allowing personal decisions to exercise ethics. In general, these two emphases are not separate, although at a glance one and the other mutually exclude one another.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although the press has escaped the authoritarian government pressure. This does not mean that press freedom is over. Apparently, the freedom of the press is not as easy as discussed. the complexity of news production makes journalists have different understanding in interpreting the freedom of the press. This is reflected in the daily practices of journalists. On the other hand, ethics as a guide acts for professional journalists, the spectrum is vast. The extent of the spectrum allows for different interpretations and practices in daily news coverage activities.

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