

Ethics in the Television Programme

Oji Kurniadi

Faculty of Communication Science
Universitas Islam Bandung
Bandung, Indonesia
oji.kurniadi@gmail.com

Abstract—Based on the Minister of Information Decree No. 190A/Kep/1987 in October 1987, the government officially allows the operation of private television. This makes it easier for the public to obtain various information, and no longer dependent on TVRI programs that have previously dominated broadcast rights. Each television station has its own characteristics and uniqueness, one of which calls itself television news. The emergence of Metro TV, TV One and then Kompas TV, they are more focused on news programs. The number of news programs certainly creates various phenomena, such as frequent repetition of news, the emergence and discussion of the same topic for days, news that is still dominated by big cities and so on. If we look further, it turns out that there are many violations in these news programs, ranging from ethical violations to violations of the broadcasting standards that have been regulated. Violations that often occur in news shows generally include: 1) mentioning the identity of minors, 2) displaying images that are sadistic in a vulgar manner, 3) presenting physical and sexual violence clearly, 4) Reconstruction in a coherent manner for a crime that can cause trauma and fear for the community, 5) mention of identity clearly on someone who is yet to be indicted, 6) bribery problem with journalists. This research is focused on how Metro TV, which is bound by various rules and regulations and obligated to apply the rules in its news programs, because in practice it is faced with a dilemma, because on the other hand, it is faced with necessity or the need to preach conflict, violence, tragedy as fast and complete as possible to provide a real picture toward the public. Some important findings from this study are (1) News of violence still dominates television coverage because it is a real condition that exists in Indonesian society today, (2) Metro TV is committed to reduce the frequency these shows and will provide more solutions and explanations on the case, (3) The number of ethical violations in the news on Metro TV shows that internal supervision has not been carried out optimally.

Keywords—television news; ethical violations; violence

I. INTRODUCTION

Television has become the most influencing and most preferable media in human life, not only in Indonesia, but also in all around the world. Nielsen Indonesia Survey on the third quarter of 2011, which conducted in 9 Indonesian Major cities, with respondents of above 10 years old, shows that Indonesians of all level of incomes very fond to watch TV (95%). Most of them spend 4,5 hours every day on average to watch their preferable programs such as talk shows, television magazine, infotainment or documentary with percentage of 26%, much higher than last year's percentage that only reached 15%.

Media Indonesia even publish that “8 out of 10 grown up adults in Indonesian big cities watch television everyday [1].

Meanwhile, McAndrew stated that the power of television is located in its speed and ability to send either picture or sound to the society. However, unlike decent metropolitan newspapers, its weakness is the lack of news volume sent to the viewers [2]. Physically, the emergence of television as well as any other media, is able to influence the society, as mentioned by Chafee, the presence of mass media, physically, have bring influence in economic effect, social effect, event scheduling, certain feelings channelization/ disappearance either for certain individual or media [3].

The history of Indonesia's television industry was commenced on late 1962 by the emergence of government-managed television channel, TVRI. Since 1989, by the issuance of based on Minister of Information's decree No. 190/Kep/1987 on October 1987 about private television station subscription license, the development of Indonesian television has become much more interesting by the appearance of new commercial (private) television channels. It was recorded that there were 11 national TV in Indonesia, which are government-owned TVRI, RCTI (1989), SCTV (1990), TPI (1991) that further changed to MNC TV on the 21st of October 2010, AN-Teve (1993), Indosiar (1995), Metro TV (2000), TV7 (2001) that was changed to Trans 7, Trans TV (2002), Global TV (2002), Lativi (2002) that changed to TV One on the 14th of February 2008, and numbers of locally operated television in Indonesia.

Private television is burdened and run its entertainment and journalism functions, exist to sell fictional and factual information, which is different as public television (TVRI) that is more focused and functioned as a support for a direct instructional educational process. Similar as that, is the opinion of Summer in Siregar which is “institutionally, television channel can be categorized by its main character, which is the function that it carries [4]. Along the year of 2006, Indonesian television is filled by hundreds of journalism programs that are relatively adversative with actual issues regarding public interest such as floods, earthquake, tsunamis, famines, with private issues such as sex scandals, corruption and any other behavioral deviation in groups of politicians and celebrities [5].

Television news is a very important program for the industry and media study research. Public interest is a big issue in television news. Television news broadcast various information about daily problems, and problems from outside

of our life. News has become more important as most television channels see it as their identity, and further become their main program. Commercial television in the 1990s developed according to market's demand by broadcasting similar programs. The era that is called as "commodified Journalism", occurs with the appearance of short, instant, light news loaded news, intended to entertain such as infotainment and the equivalent [5].

Based on Nielsen Audience Measurement's survey in ten major cities in Indonesia during January-March 2010, news broadcast portion in 11 national television have reached 21% of total television broadcasting duration that reaches 23.760 hours of 4996 hours. Surely a dominant percentage if compared with entertainment (19%), film (16%), information (14%) or serials (12%) (Media Partner, 2012). The large percentage is happened due to the contribution of news programs broadcasted by Metro TV and TV One, as their main programs. Metro TV with its tagline "knowledge to elevate" (20 May 2010) aims to evolve into a unique tv station that offers news programs as its priority and offers quality in entertainment and lifestyle programs.

Television news writing is managed by journalism norms and principles in its searching process, information processing until its broadcasting process, but its format is adjusted with the nature of the television itself. Information broadcasting in television is not only conducted to fill audio and visual broadcasting hours, but also paying attention on how the information is broadcasted, the speed of the broadcast process and to avoid news redundancy. There are several interesting phenomena in news programs, such as news repeat between television channels, broadcast injustice that occurs because usually only information from major cities, especially Jakarta and its surrounding cities, that is broadcasted, and ignorance on several broadcasting ethics in its news presentation.

II. THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN HUMAN LIFE

Television is the most influencing media in human life if compared with any other medias. As much as 99% Americans own their own television. Television broadcast is filled with entertainment, news and advertising. People tends to spend at least 7 hours a day to watch television [6].

Mass media has several factors that background its orientation to broadcast news. Media study by McNair mentions three approach to explain media, which are [7]:

- **Economy politic approach:** Mentions that the content of a media is determined by external economic and political powers. Factors such as media, capital, and income are considered powerful to determine the content of a media. These factors that dictate which event that are allowd and unallowed to be broadcasted, and which direction would a media take when they are conducting their broadcast.
- **Organization approach:** Sees media organizer as an active part in news shaping and production process. This approach sees news as a result of editorial mechanism, working practice, professionalism, and

norm in the organization as a dynamic factors that influence broadcast.

- **Cultural approach:** Is a mixture of economy politic and organizational approach. News production process is seen as a complex mechanism that involves internal factors of a media. The complex mechanism is pictured as an argumentation in news room. Basically, media owns a mechanism to determine organizational pattern and rules, but it cannot be separated from external political power [7].

The tendention or difference of each media to produce information to the society, can be acknowledged through layers that covers media institution. Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen D. Rees in their book "Mediating the Message" create an "ideological influences on media content in the hierarchical model".

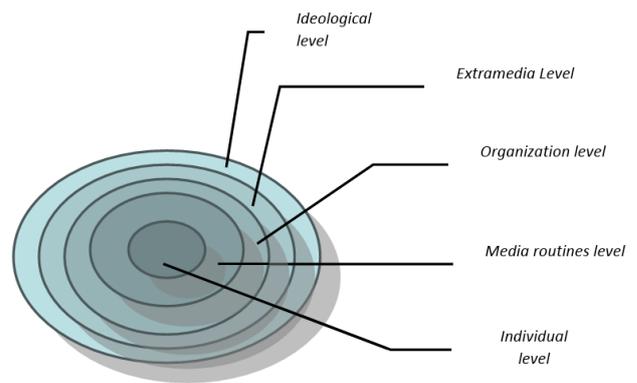


Fig. 1. Ideological influences on media content in the hierarchical model [8].

- **Media worker individual influence:** for example the characteristic of communication worker, personal and professional background. The factors that covers it are educational background, profesional development, and the skills to deliver news accurately.
- **Media routine influence:** Product of mass media is influenced by media routine, such as selections conducted by communicator, including deadline and any other time frame, space limitation, upside-down pyramid structure in news writing and reporter's faith on official sources to produce news. Media routine is more connected with the "gate keeping process" in the media.
- **Organizational influence:** One of media's most important aim is to seek material benefit. The goals of media will influence its content. This influence emerges from the company rules and the owner of the media itself.
- **Influence from outside of media organization:** This influence includes lobby from stakeholders regarding the content of a pseudoevent media of public relations and government that form rules of press. This factors includes three main factors, which are: the source of a news that has certain interest through public relation and pressure group campaigns. Second, "revenue

resources” or media income such as advertising, customers, or the society. Third, other institutions outside of the media such as businessmen, government, economy, and technology.

- Ideological influence: Ideology is the most influencing factor of all. Ideology in this context is translated as a symbolic mechanism that provides a cohesive power that bring unity in the society [8].

Regarding ethics, journalists has one rule known as the journalist code of ethic. Code of ethic is a parameter that rules mass media activities in broadcasting process.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive method limited to sample unit. This method is chosen because its ability to explain various problems identified in this research in depth, and also to collect various problems. This research chose Metro TV as the main sample. This research requires two types of data, which are primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through interview with the sample, while secondary data was collected through literature study.

IV. THE MEDIA WORK OF METRO TV

Ethic is a standard behavior and moral consideration, or simply a reflection of what is right or wrong, good or bad, must and must not. There are three philosophy regarding ethic according to Val E. Limburg in his book “Electronic Media Ethic”, which are:

- Aesthetic: A Study of Beauty.
- Epistemology: The Study of Knowledge and How We Learn.
- Ethic: The Study of Right or Good Conduct as It Affect the Individual (Character) and Society). Ethic is a sensor that guides someone to choose the best between the worst, the right between the wrong, and the practical between the abstract [5].

Regarding ethics, there are several concepts that evolves into journalism standard behavior. These universally acknowledged concepts are accuracy, objectivity, just and equal, false information prohibition, truth, source integrity, and interest conflict avoidance. Even so, there are always argumentation due to several ethical problems, which are unsolved by these concepts such as violence. On one part, journalists have to factually produce a news, but on the other hand, they also notice many violations of humanity values.

News broadcast is an act that conducted with awareness to deliver information. News broadcast must follow certain ethics as mentioned in Journalism Code of Ethic. Media Ethic is the same as values that are applied in the society, which aim to avoid disadvantage for certain part.

The numbers of Indonesian television station have created program variations including news broadcast. If we look further, actually there are several violations starting from ethical violation to broadcasting standard violation.

The most common violation in news broadcast, consist of: 1) mentioning under age identity, 2) sadistic and vulgar picture broadcast, 3) clear physical or sexual violence broadcast, 4) detailed criminal reconstruction that would bring trauma for the society, 5) mentioning identity of a person, which is still under investigation (still as a suspect and not sentenced person), 6) bribe against journalists.

Idi Subandy mentioned in our interview that in several cases, media often violate ethics and undermining viewer’s logic, and discrediting low classes. Moreover, he mentioned that luxurious materials advertising that are broadcasted in the middle of poverty suffered by most of its viewers, comedy that makes fun of low-class society, corruption that involves high class society and fund manipulation, have neglecting good journalism principle, and creates media that more about sensation than solution. Our television is more urban-oriented and Jakarta-centric.

Violence, crime and sensation in television news, are forbidden by all rules or ethical codes. However, television adopts an important assumption that these broadcasts can still be justified if it is explained to the society that crime don’t pay, it will not go unpunished, and acceptable social moralities will prevail [2]. Metro TV as one of television channels that put news as its main pillar, is bound by various rules in Broadcasting Law No. 32 Year 2002, Journalism Code of Ethic, Indonesian Broadcasting Commission Rule No. 02/P/KPI/12/2009 about Broadcasting Behavior Manual, and Indonesian Broadcasting Commission Rule No. 03/P/KPI/12/2009 about Broadcasting Program Standard. Besides that, Metro TV also have its own rule as mentioned in Style Book Metro TV and News Policy and Standard Manual.

Like any other national media, Metro TV is also faced with dilemma. In one hand there is a need to broadcast conflict, violence, and tragedy, as fast as and as detailed as possible to bring real image to the society. This choice includes risks to be accused as conflict intensifier. On the other hand, media is faced with demands from many parts of the society to also create a peaceful and become a conflict diminished. To fulfil this hope, media needs to select, even cover facts that are considered sensitive to certain groups.

The main solution for this situation is to bring “peaceful journalism”. Peaceful journalism is a critic on “war journalism”, which is developed by wester medias. Peaceful journalism is not only intended to cover both sides, but also from all sides. This principle is obligatory to maintain broadcasted information accuracy and to understand the real problem. Metro TV in its policy mentions that editorial needs to view the problems from a complete, just, and equal perspective (with a proportional portion).

Peaceful journalism is a journalism practice that leans on critical questions about benefits of violent actions in a conflict and the wisdom that can be produced from the conflict itself to develop broadcasts that benefits the society. Peaceful journalism sees war or arm conflict as a problem, as an irony that should be happening. In this context, peaceful journalism basically is a calling to all sides to think about the lesson of a conflict. To underline physical and psychological, cultural, and economical losses, suffered by the victim of the conflict or war.

According to Idi Subandy on our interview, peaceful journalism is different with “play safe journalism”, because peaceful journalism writes news with a frame to avoid conflict and to seek solutions to overcome conflict and not to warm up problem. Peaceful journalism is more about empathy towards victims of conflict and not about continuous broadcast on the conflict itself. Peaceful journalism is also more pretentious to bring reconciliation for both sides that involved in the conflict. Peaceful journalism brings equal proportion in all version of the conflict. Peaceful journalism is also trying to reveal injustice on both sides, even if it’s needed, the evil-doers of both sides.

An ethical violation conducted by Metro TV is the case of porn video scene broadcast in in a porn video raid on an internet café in Trenggalek, East Java, on 14th of June 2010 at 05.00 PM in Headline News Metro TV program. Even though Metro TV have already passed internal sanction (final warning, demotion, and periodic salary raise adjourn, and discharge the person from editorial), author consider that Metro TV is not trying to admit their mistake by blaming IT as the person in charge of the mistake. IT is not everything, because technology means nothing with human. Metro TV should admit that their internal supervision was not optimum.

Meanwhile the sanction given by IBC, produced criticism from two former Press Council members, Abdullah Alamudi through *Opini Column* in Koran Tempo (21/7) titled as “IBC Presumably Violating Press Law”, meanwhile Leo Batubara wrote an article in *Seputar Indonesia* (22/7) titled “IBC Starts to Threaten Freedom of Press”. They call Indonesian Broadcasting Commission act as new age censor. This case was also becoming acute when 50 press figures produce “Press Freedom Manifesto” on 17th of July 2010, but the manifesto is further objected by Independent Journalists Alliance (IJA) Jakarta, that sees the sanction as proper and appropriate with Indonesian Broadcasting Commission’s right and failed to see it as a threat against press freedom in Indonesia. The leader of IJA Jakarta Wahyu Dhyatmika, argue that IBC’s act does not have a potential to bind the future of Indonesian press freedom, and to think so, is meaningless.

Another case if the broadcasting of “Breaking News” Metro TV on 14th of April 2010, which shows conflict between the society and *Pamong Praja* force around *Mbah Priok’s* cemetery. Breaking news that was broadcasted hourly shows development of the conflict and keep on showing violent pictures. This broadcast was protested by Local Indonesia Broadcasting Commission (LIBC) of Nusa Tenggara Barat

because of its vulgarity and violence exploitation. It is afraid that the broadcast would bring trauma and restlessness for the society. A research conducted by Lesna Puspita (student at Mercuru Buana University) shows that besides the vulgarity and violence exploitation, the image taken in the broadcast made as if *Pamong Praja* force is the one that needs to be confronted or fought because of their brutality.

As reaction of those violation, through our interview, Suryopratomo, Metro TV Broadcasting Director, mentioned that there is no perfection in media work. Because of its necessity, media often do mistakes. The problem is we don’t know if the mistake is deliberate or not? And further we apply punishing and reward, in the case of Trenggalek, we ground the person in charge as producer. The person is now working on our website, and has no connection with headline news. Meanwhile, regarding bribe, Metro have a direct policy to fire anyone that involved.

V. CONCLUSION

News of violence still dominates television coverage because it is a real condition that exists in Indonesian society today. Due to the condition, Metro TV is committed to reduce the frequency these shows and will provide more solutions and explanations on the case. However, based on this research’s findings, the number of ethical violations in the news on Metro TV shows that internal supervision has not been carried out optimally.

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