

The Role of Mass Media In Indonesian General Elections

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Abstract

General elections are a fundamental democratic process in building and maintaining balanced and stable political activity. The mass media has a strategic role in monitoring and supervising each stage of the election and building public trust in the election process. The mass media constructs reality on events that have been received and used as the origin of information to form public opinion following the media narrative. This journal uses a descriptive qualitative approach with primary and secondary data analysis. This research method adopts the Miles and Huberman Theoretical Framework for collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. This qualitative method is thorough and detailed, aiming to reveal the uniqueness of individuals, groups, communities, and/or organizations in everyday life with scientific accountability. Then, the data will be analyzed by applying a construction of reality, according to Berger and Luckmann. This journal found that mass media significantly affects public trust in the election process and builds honesty and transparency in the election process. Therefore, it is essential to improve the quality of election organization and the function of election supervision, as well as increase the independence of the mass media in order to forward correct and honest information to the public.

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Introduction

Democracy exists in Indonesia. General elections are one form of democracy. According to Law Number 7 of 2017, a general election, also known as a general election, is an electoral process to elect a president, vice president, and members of the People's Council, as well as members of the Regional People's Representative Council, which is conducted directly. general, free, secret, honest, and fair in the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia 1945. Political events like elections always attract media attention (Putra Disantara et al., 2023). This is due to two interconnected components. First, politics is currently in the era of mediation, specifically mass media. Therefore, it is almost impossible for political life to be separated from the mass media. Therefore, it is almost impossible for political life to be separated from the mass media.

Even politicians always try to attract the attention of journalists so that the media can cover their political activities. Second, although the political events covered are usually routine activities, such as party meetings or meetings of political figures with their supporters, the behavior and statements of political actors always have news value. Therefore, political coverage is adorned by various media every day. Mass media have two roles in political communication: they can deliver political messages from parties and outside parties and deliver political messages created by journalists to the public. Political actors use mass media to convey their political messages to the public, while journalists use

mass media to produce political messages because political events have news value. According to Budianto et al. (2019)

Mass media is a communication channel that reaches a broad audience and can influence public opinion. In addition, the mass media gives status to public issues, organizations, and social movements by selecting various issues and then distributing them to various layers of the public. Mass media also tends to construct the reality of an event it receives to become a news source and give readers a perspective. (Sari, IP, 2018.). Almost all television broadcast coverage of the election during the general election campaign. However, in the 2014 elections, the media competed with each other for political gain. Television is considered biased because it represents the political leanings of corporate owners. The daily lives of media users now involve the use of internet-based media. Mainstream mass media such as television, radio, and newspapers have become part of internet-based media. However, this research wants to see how television, radio, and newspapers function as traditional mass media as political information providers for teenagers, especially university students.

People depend on mass media for information because they need it. People want to use mass media to fulfill their information needs for various reasons. For example, during a presidential election campaign, members of the public want to know the profiles of political candidates and their work programs. According to Andrianti (2015). The media serves as an excellent place for people to seek information. In addition, political candidates can use the media to convey their messages and encourage public sympathy. The media, journalists, media companies, and the public all have interdependent and interacting relationships. The modernization of society also affects the level of media dependency.

Literature Review

Media and Politics

Mass media is a communication medium that reaches a broad audience and can influence public opinion. The media also gives status to social movements, public issues, and organizations by selecting various issues and disseminating them to various layers of society. One or two representatives from various lobby groups are chosen to speak and highlight one of many issues. In the critical view, the mass media is influenced by ideology, ideology, and economics in constructing reality and issues. This means that in carrying out their functions, mass media cannot only report on realities or issues, including political realities and issues. They emphasize that reality is not just a collection of facts but the result of a particular ideology or perspective.

Nowadays, the mass media is a crucial factor that influences all activities of human life, in the public or private sphere. Likewise, in democratic life, the media has succeeded in changing and transforming how humans communicate, politicize, and even state. This is due to the development of an increasingly modern society, supported by increasingly sophisticated advances in information technology. Plattner describes the world of life in this era as being in the midst of a communication revolution in which the development of media technology has succeeded in transforming various aspects of human life. This era is called the information era, where technological sophistication becomes a driving force that affects communication patterns and transforms people's lives. Mass media has a power supported by the cooperation of three factors: ubiquity, or "all present," cumulative messages, and

journalist connections. Ubiquity, or "ubiquity," means that mass media is available everywhere and is difficult for audiences to avoid so that mass media can dominate the information environment. The cumulative factor, or "message cumulation," occurs because mass media messages can amplify their impact. According to Neumann, the bonding of journalists, or the "uniformity of journalists" from different media types, further increases the media's attachment and influence on audiences (Arifin, 2014).

The media use their power to shape public opinion, which can influence state policy (Syahputra, 2012). The media has much power because they can shape public opinion with their discourses. Irwan Abdullah states that those in power now own information rather than technology. The media has enough power to control the state (Syahputra, 2012). As news media, they have the right to convey the reality of society.

Nonetheless, media freedom is not entirely free. It appears that the "political" process carried out by the parties behind the media leads to using the media as a tool to shape people's opinions. The media utilizes its social role to disseminate information to the public and change people's perspectives.

Methodology

This research applied a descriptive qualitative approach. Miles and Huberman's theory analyzed primary and secondary data descriptively and qualitatively. This means that data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously. Qualitative methods seek to reveal the various uniqueness contained in individuals, groups, communities, and/or organizations in everyday life thoroughly, in detail, and in-depth, and can be scientifically accounted for, according to Miles and Huberman (1994).

Qualitative research is also defined as data collection in a natural setting to interpret phenomena. Qualitative research uses researchers as the primary tool; samples of data sources are taken purposively and snowballed; the collection technique used is triangulation (combined), and data analysis is carried out inductively qualitatively. Qualitative research results emphasize the importance of generalization. Ethnography is qualitative research in which researchers study groups in a natural environment through observation and interviews (Dr. Ramdhan, 2021). According to Berger and Luckmann, reality construction analysis is used to conduct data analysis by considering the facts in society. This is the externalization stage. Second, the media repeats the reality by giving particular emphasis, distinguishing news that can harm their chosen candidate, and providing more discourse to convince readers that their candidate is the best. After that, the new discourse becomes the reality of society. The objectivation stage is then referred to as the next stage. Third, for the media to continue producing the same discussion every time, this new reality must be disseminated to the public. This is beneficial to make people believe in the news they read daily.

Entman offered four ideas for analyzing media content: Define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and make treatment recommendations. This concept explains how a person chooses issues and places emphasis or prominence on some aspects of reality. Data from news texts, books, and journals relevant to this research were then analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Mass media has a broad reach and a significant influence on society. The mass media, as a vast information platform, allows people to access various sources of information and increases political awareness, thus opening up the information horizon for the wider community. As a result, the mass media is responsible for providing accurate, objective, and

balanced information about elections. The information presented should come from reliable sources and be verified to avoid misinformation. The influence of mass media, like a wave capable of moving public opinion and choice, can affect society's social and cultural dynamics and shape political opinions and decisions (Musfialdy, 2015). The responsibility of the mass media in elections is not only limited to the presentation of news but also involves a role as the gatekeeper of truth and information justice to provide accurate information to the public. On the shoulders of the mass media lies the mandate to become a compass of direction for the community in choosing leaders and representatives of the people so that people can make wise decisions in the interests of the people (Habibie, 2018).

The information presented by the mass media must accurately reflect reality, free from bias and political interests, so that the public can get a clear and objective picture of issues related to elections. Information balance is the primary key to building public trust and minimizing misinformation that can poison the course of elections so that people can make wise decisions in the interests of the people. (Sulistiyo & Suwartiningsih 2016)

The mass media must provide in-depth coverage of candidates' profiles, visions and missions, and their work programs without taking sides so that the public can understand more clearly and objectively about the quality and abilities of candidates who will lead the country. Candidate debates and public discussion forums organized by the mass media should be a forum for healthy and constructive political education, allowing the public to compare candidates' visions and work programs and make wise decisions based on the people's interests (Intyaswati, 2021).

Misinformation spread by the mass media can have fatal consequences, plunging people into the wrong choices and jeopardizing democracy because false information can influence political decisions and affect the country's stability. (Ratnamulyani 2018) Mass media that are irresponsible in presenting election information can be categorized as a betrayal of public trust because public trust in the mass media as a source of accurate and honest information can be damaged if the mass media do not fulfill their responsibilities in providing correct information.

The mass media can also act as an agent of political education by raising public awareness about the importance of participation in elections. This can be achieved through various learning courses, such as news reports, articles, and public discussions. The mass media can also help voters understand their rights and obligations as voters so that they can exercise their right to vote wisely (Hamidi, 2011).

As the nation's teacher with a strategic role, the mass media has a significant role in educating the public about their rights and responsibilities in elections so that people can understand and fulfill their responsibilities as active citizens in the democratic process. (Supit, Lopian, & Tulung, 2022)

As an agent of political education, the mass media can reach a broad audience and build a culture of active participation in the democratic party by providing accurate and honest information about the electoral process and influencing people's opinions and attitudes to elect leaders following the interests of the people (Fermana, 2021). Mass media can improve people's political literacy by presenting interesting infographics and educational videos packaged in simple language so that people can understand the democratic process and build better political awareness. Interactive quizzes and online election simulations can be a fun and effective educational tool to attract young people's interest in politics, allowing them to understand the election process and build awareness of democracy (Muhazir, 2021). By adequately understanding their rights and obligations, people will be more motivated to exercise their voting rights responsibly so that the democratic process can run more

effectively and transparently. Massive political education through the mass media can help improve the quality of democracy and produce more qualified leaders because the mass media can influence opinion and make it more transparent. Mass media can help improve the quality of democracy and produce more qualified leaders because it can influence public opinions and attitudes and provide accurate and fair information about democratic mechanisms. Active community participation in elections is crucial in realizing change and progress in the nation because, through active community participation, the nation can elect leaders who are in the people's interests and build a better democratic system. A politically educated society will be able to elect leaders who positively impact the country's future, as political education helps people understand the democratic process and build better political awareness.

In addition, the mass media can monitor and supervise the elections to ensure transparency and accountability. The mass media can report violations that occur during elections to the authorities. As the public's keen eye, the mass media has a strategic role in monitoring any potential loopholes for fraud and violations in elections so that the public can get the correct and honest information about the democratic process. As an independent watchdog, the mass media should report and expose all forms of violations that occur in order to uphold electoral justice and ensure that the democratic process runs transparently and fairly.

The mass media has an important role in monitoring the campaign process, logistics distribution, voting, and vote counting to ensure no fraud or violation so that honesty and transparency in the election process can be maintained. Investigative reports and in-depth journalism from the mass media can help expose money politics, intimidation, and vote manipulation that can undermine the integrity of elections, and ensure that political decisions are based on accurate and honest information. Mass media oversight can build public trust in the electoral process and prevent fraud that can undermine democracy because the mass media has a strategic role in monitoring and overseeing every stage of the election so that the public can get the right and honest information about the democratic process. With transparency and accountability, elections produce legitimate and credible leaders and minimize conflicts and disputes because transparency and accountability allow the public to understand the electoral process more clearly.

Mass media can also serve as a discussion forum for the public to exchange opinions on election-related issues. This can be done through various platforms, such as comment columns, social media, and talk show programs. Finally, the mass media can help publicize election regulations and procedures. This is important to ensure people experience clarity when exercising their voting rights (Suwardyanba & Mandira, 2024). The role of mass media does not only have a positive impact on elections but also has challenges, such as the dissemination of information, and some of the challenges are hoaxes and hate speech. Foremost in public discussions in the mass media. This misleading and hateful content can trigger hostility, unrest, and even violence in society.

Political polarization, where society is divided into opposing camps, also exacerbates the situation. This can hamper constructive discussions and prevent consensus building. Lack of media literacy among the public is also an essential factor. People who need to become more familiar with accurate and verified information are more easily fooled by hoaxes and hate speech (Nurhayati, 2023). Nevertheless, these challenges can be overcome with various solutions, namely increasing public education about the importance of accurate and verified news, which is a crucial step for the mass media. This effort can be done through various means, such as organizing media education programs for the wider community, both online

and offline. They are disseminating educational content on detecting hoaxes and verifying information through various mass media platforms, such as websites, social media, and television broadcasts. Collaborate with educational institutions to include media literacy materials in school and university curricula. Create a dedicated website or application that provides information on trusted news and how to avoid hoaxes (Santosa, 2017).

Social media platforms also need to tighten regulations to prevent the spread of hoaxes and hate speech. Some ways to do this include developing algorithms that can detect and remove hoax content more effectively—verifying the identity of users to prevent fake accounts from spreading hoaxes. Work with fact-checking organizations to verify information circulating on their platforms. Educate users about the dangers of hoaxes and hate speech. People also need to improve their media literacy in order to filter the information they consume. This can be done by: Getting used to seeking information from trusted sources, such as reputable mass media, official government websites, and academic journals, and learning to detect hoaxes, such as by checking facts, looking at source credibility, and considering bias. Before sharing information on social media, always double-check its veracity. Participate in communities that promote media literacy and accurate news. With concerted efforts from the mass media, social media platforms, and the public, the spread of hoax information and hate speech can be curbed. People can access accurate and reliable information and actively participate in healthy and constructive public discussions.

Conclusion

Elections are a fundamental democratic process in building and maintaining balanced and stable political activity. In the election process, the mass media has a strategic role in monitoring and supervising each stage of the election and building public trust in the election process. The mass media can build public trust by monitoring the campaign process, logistics distribution, voting, and vote counting, as well as reporting and exposing all forms of violations that occur in order to uphold electoral justice. With transparency and accountability maintained, elections produce legitimate and credible leaders and minimize conflicts and disputes.

Therefore, it is crucial to improve the quality of the organization of elections, improve the function of election supervision, and increase the independence of the mass media in order to forward accurate and honest information to the public. In conclusion, the role of the mass media in elections is significant in building public trust and ensuring honesty and transparency in the electoral process.

Therefore, it is crucial to increase the role of mass media in elections to build public trust and ensure honesty and transparency in the electoral process. The mass media has an essential role in successfully organizing elections in Indonesia. By carrying out its role responsibly and professionally, the mass media can help improve the quality of democracy in Indonesia. By carrying out its role professionally and with integrity, the mass media can become significant in realizing quality and dignified elections, leading the nation to a brighter future. With commitment and synergy from various parties, the mass media can be a powerful force to increase public participation in elections and build a more democratic and prosperous nation. With its integrity and professionalism, the mass media can be the last bastion in maintaining transparency and accountability of elections, ensuring the realization of a healthy and dignified democracy. Moreover, by maximizing the potential of the mass media as a public discussion forum, it is hoped that elections can run democratically, participatory, and with integrity.

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