

Journalism ethics in local newspaper

Etika jurnalistik di koran lokal

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Abstract

Professional and quality journalists are subject to an ethical code and their understanding and competence of said ethics code. Ethics are the minimum values or moral traditions that are used to separate truths from mistakes and good from the bad. Journalism ethics are the rules adhered to by journalists. News coverage has objectives. In order to reach said objectives, journalists should adhere to the professional ethics that they comprehend in the news coverage. Such a comprehension cannot be separated from the different interests involved in the news production process. This research aimed to identify the journalists' understanding of the values of independence, objectivity, their relationship with their sources and gifts from sources. This research used the phenomenology method. Data collection was done via interviews with 13 Radar Malang journalists. The data analysis employed was Turner's Theory of Structuration. The research findings presented that first, independence and objectivity are ethical values that are impossible for journalists to maintain. This is since news writing involves interpretation and choices because writing the news is the result of the journalists' interpretation of their economic interests and journalist idealism. The news is written with a particular tendency in mind. Objectivity is only regarded in the scope of the balance of news. Second, there is a dynamic relationship between journalists and the sources of the news. Journalists are always in a dilemma when writing news that relates to the interests of the news sources. Journalists may receive any gifts from the sources so long as they do not relate to the news. In general, journalists should refuse remittance. However, any other kinds of gifts are still tolerable.

Keywords: journalism ethics; structuration theory; practice of journalism; Radar Malang

Abstrak

Jurnalis profesional dan berkualitas tunduk pada kode etik dan pemahaman serta kompetensi kode etik tersebut. Etika adalah nilai minimum atau tradisi moral yang digunakan untuk memisahkan kebenaran dari kesalahan dan kebaikan dari yang buruk. Etika jurnalisisme adalah aturan yang dipatuhi oleh jurnalis. Cakupan berita memiliki tujuan. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, wartawan harus mematuhi etika profesional yang mereka pahami dalam liputan berita. Pemahaman seperti itu tidak dapat dipisahkan dari berbagai kepentingan yang terlibat dalam proses produksi berita. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pemaknaan wartawan atas nilai independensi, objektif, hubungan dengan sumber berita, dan pemberian dari sumber berita. Metode yang digunakan adalah fenomenologi. Data diambil di Radar Malang dengan melakukan wawancara mendalam pada 13 wartawan. Model Teori Strukturasi Turner digunakan sebagai teknik analisis data. Pertama, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kebebasan dan keobyektifan merupakan nilai etika yang mustahil untuk dipertahankan oleh jurnalis. Hal ini dikarenakan, berita merupakan hasil interpretasi jurnalis dalam tekanan kepentingan ekonomi dan tuntutan idealisme jurnalis. Kedua, hubungan antara jurnalis dan sumber berita bersifat dinamis. Jurnalis merasakan dilema ketika menulis berita yang berhubungan dengan kepentingan sumber berita. Dalam kondisi tertentu, jurnalis bersedia menerima pemberian narasumber, selama tidak mempengaruhi isi berita. Pada umumnya, jurnalis menolak secara halus pemberian sumber berita. Pada batas tertentu, pemberian dari sumber berita masih dapat ditolerir.

Kata kunci: etika jurnalisisme; teori strukturasi; praktik jurnalisisme; Radar Malang

Introduction

The ethics of journalism can be defined as precisely-applied ethics that study micro issues related to the conduct of journalists and also the macro issues in relation to the conduct of the media organization as a whole. As members of the organization, journalists have rights, obligations and norms as humans. Journalists adhere to the general principles of ethics, which include saying the truths and eliminating harms. Journalists have the social power to frame political agendas and to influence people's opinions (Ward 2009). Ethics are necessary for all media works. They encourage

journalists to look at their basic moral and political principles, their responsibilities and rights and the relationship with their employers and audience as the principal objectives of their work. Self-criticism and interrogation approaches are necessary for journalists. A critical matter in journalism ethics is the scope of said ethics since, in Western countries, ethics codes are written by many journalism organizations in a country (Harris 2006).

Journalists have to perform their daily responsibilities under journalism ethics. Since the ethics are "rules" the media ethics could be adhered to with a degree of freedom still in their actions (Merril 1999). In their implementation, ethics limit and empower the journalists. The limitations mean that the ethics guide the journalists about the right and wrong things to do while empowering means enabling the journalists' freedom to act. The development of the press as a news industry (including in Indonesia) with a profit orientation has conducted studies with a focus on the relationship between press independence and the pressure of economic and political interests (Khan 2003, Herman 2002, Nelson 2007, Hearn 2009, Ojebode 2013, Ramírez 2014). In connection with the media, such research focuses more on the economic and political frames of the media.

Even though several investigations have pointed out pressure (influence) from economic-political interests, other studies have showed different results. A research model with a particular approach to the economics and politics of the media still has some weaknesses. Research that connects economic and political pressures with the newsroom regards the problem incoherently. Several weaknesses need to be taken into account. First, the political economy approach is macroscopic so it does not pay much attention to the detailed explanations from individuals since it focuses more on the influence of social levels as a whole in the media content (Alger 1998). Second, the political economy approach is too simple to represent complicated communications (Quail 2010, Stanley, Barran & Belmont 2000). Third, it is difficult and problematic to find the limits between economic and political interests in journalism (Waisbord 2013). Fourth, similar research is Western-oriented and therefore neglects local values (Yin 2008, Sjøvaag 2013, Voltmer & Wasserman 2014).

Witscheg and Nygren have stated that journalism is the result of a negotiation involving professionalism and organizational objectives (Witschge & Nygren 2009). In reality, journalists always work under the pressure of professionalism concerning demands and organizational objectives. Gerbner pictures journalists as mass communicators in situations that have a lot of pressure (McQuail 1991, Witschge & Nygren 2009). Such explanations indicate that journalists are always involved in many interests when performing their function as the fourth estate of democracy. Since a newsroom is a meeting room for many interests, professional journalists are necessary.

Such professionalism is vital for understanding the professional ethics regarding behavior and actions. As a profession, a journalist is subject to professional ethics codes. Journalists should refer to the professional ethics codes when performing their daily tasks. The ethics codes enable journalists to find a "win-win solution" for many interests in the newsroom. Journalists often find ethical dilemmas and conflicts between the standards of accuracy, truth and objectivity and the appropriate values in public such as news about a rape that might create a conflict between the truth and the individual privacy (Seeger et al. 2009).

Professionalism requires journalists to follow the ethics codes of the profession that they understand. In other words, the ability to understand the ethics codes of professional conduct becomes essential for a journalist. In general, ethics include the standard behaviors of people under various values and traditions (Seeger et al. 2009). However, the formulated standards of ethics sometimes cannot be adopted universally. During its implementation, ethics cannot be separated from the context of the organizational communication that is clearly formulated in the details. The journalists' applications of the ethics depend on the dilemmas in their professional context that they face in their daily activities (Seeger et al. 2009). If the applicable ethics are not universal, then it can be influenced by the organizational values that can be conditional. Therefore, journalism practices are the result of journalism ethics understanding. The journalists' understanding of their professional ethics defines the ways that they look for, cover and write the news. In other words, the issues in a newsroom are

about their professional ethical understanding and the way that journalists understand said ethics. Professional journalism is characterized with high standard requirements.

Such studies indicate the complexity of journalism ethics. Several studies showed the contributing factors in the understanding of ethics. The first factor involves conscience, management leadership, and peer pressure (Hulnick 2000). The second factor is the size of the news company and how this affects its relation with the society and government. A small news company tends to maintain a harmonious relationship with society while a large news company is the opposite (Reader 2006). The next factor is the colonial history of a nation that influences its media ethics (Rao & Wasserman 2007). Fourth, the ethics in journalism and the media only include some references to freedom of the press. The ethics codes reflect the conflicts between the freedom of the press (and media owner) and the freedom of journalists (Himmelboim & Limor 2008). After that, there is the religious influence on universal journalism ethics understanding (Steele 2011). Sixth, there are the strategies used to solve the conflicts of interests that are faced by private and government press (Manara 2011). Lastly, the norms of journalism are contextual and formed by the hierarchy of influence that includes global standards and local values such as culture, political climate and religion. However, the results of the research also showed that there are different personal values versus professional values between the areas where the journalism culture is still developing and the areas with more developed journalism (Pintak 2014).

Such findings support the opinion that an ethical understanding is not universal. As stated by Giddens, universality never exists in social science since the causal conditions involved in the generalization of human social behaviors are unstable as can be seen from the knowledge of the actors about their acts (Giddens 1984). Furthermore, Giddens stated that agents are individuals with knowledge and competence and that they use such knowledge and competence in their acts (Giddens 1984). Giddens (1984:5-6) stated that individuals are actors who always have to rationalize and reflect their acts based on their competence (Giddens 1984). In other words, actors are creative individuals that have critical behaviors (Jones 2009). They are not a cultural layer. They are experienced actors who are knowledgeable about their professional world.

Journalists as agents are assumed to have sufficient knowledge of their world. Besides, journalists possess a high degree of autonomy in conducting their profession and they are not prone to pressure from the media owners (Williams 2003). According to such a perspective, this research aimed to identify journalists' understanding of journalism ethics in the related practices. This research focused on the journalists' understanding of the values of independence, objectivity, their relationship with the news sources and gifts from news sources.

The journalist is a unique profession. Unlike other professions such as a doctor, lawyer, teacher or a government nurse who can interfere with their standards of competence, journalists cannot do the same thing. Government recognition is not necessary to confirm their status of professionalism. Even government recognition could be regarded as a form of intervention (Farell 2008). The researchers cannot find any literature about the journalists' competence that seriously discusses the ideal press. Journalists who hold a key role in reporting events seem to be regarded as having a sufficient competence automatically. However, as the fourth pillar of democracy, journalists hold a very strategic position. A sufficient competence is necessary for journalists because competence can influence their reasoning, acting and generalized skills in various situations (Ruky 2006). Journalists should have a code of ethics to follow when performing their professional tasks (Donsbach 2010).

Such professional knowledge is important in order to understand professional ethics in terms of behaviors and actions. Journalism is subject to professional ethics codes. Journalists should refer to their professional ethics codes when conducting their daily tasks. The ethics codes will assist journalists in finding a "win-win solution" for the different interests in the newsroom. Journalists always experience ethical dilemmas and conflicts between the standards of accuracy, truth, objectivity and the values that are applicable publicly such as writing news about a rape that might initiate a conflict between the truth and an individual's privacy (Seeger et al. 2009). In order to professionally perform their responsibilities, journalists are expected to comply with the professional ethics that

they understand. In other words, the journalists' abilities in terms of understanding and defining the professional ethics code become crucial. Such a focus cannot be found in previous studies, especially in relation to the newsroom in terms of the political economy of the media.

Professional journalists are in a complicated position. Tunstall (Rayner et al. 2004) stated that professionalism is an ability to choose, to be balanced, not to be one-sided in news writing and to imply that their autonomy is free from any political or commercial pressure. Professional and quality journalists are subject to an ethical code and their understanding and competence related to said ethical codes. Ethics are the minimum values or moral traditions used to separate truth from mistakes and good from bad. Journalism ethics are the rules adhered to by journalists.

Such facts are in line with the Structuration Theory of Giddens. In his theory, Giddens defines the structure as a set of rules and resources that are routinely organized outside of time and space that can be found in coordination and its institution in the form of memories, and characterized by the absence of a subject (Giddens 1984). The structure is different from prohibition but it has to prohibit and enable characteristics (Giddens 1984). The rulers are constitutive and regulative since they aim to provide a framework of understanding and norms. Operationally, structures result in new rules and resources that can be divided into three (Basrowi & Soenyono 2004). First, all rules function as a means to interpret statements and the performance of an actor, and the things made by him. Such semantic rules function to communicate meanings. Second, all rule types are used by the actors as the norms to evaluate behavior. Such moral rules function to evaluate and assess behavior. Third, all facilities, material and non-material resources that are likely to be utilized by an actor in an interaction begin from speaking skill mastery up to the implementation of lethal means.

According to Giddens (1984), a professional journalist is not a passive adherent to the structure. They are an active agent who engages in interpretation in his acts. Even though journalists refer to similar rules, different agents might give a different meaning to the rules depending on the situations. Professional journalists understand and define journalism ethics using their competence. The values and ethics of media workers are developed from experience, through education and through their interactions with various social groups (Reuss 1999). Giddens stated that an agent always reflexively monitors and rationalizes their daily performance in a manner that involves not only their individual behavior but other individuals' behavior. Rationalization is the development of routines that provide a sense of security to the actors while enabling them to handle their social lives efficiently. The actors will have the motivation to act and such a motivation includes an intention and desire that result in an act. Therefore although rationalization and reflection are contributing factors to acting, motivation is considered to result in the potential of the act (Giddens 2009).

The actors continuously monitor their activities while expecting others to do the same thing. The actors monitor all aspects, both social and physical, in the context of their performance. They also rationalize their actions. The rationalization of the action refers to a continuous theoretical understanding of the basis of their activities. Individuals are knowledgeable agents who have a wide range of knowledge of their working world (Thompson 2003). Journalists have a check and balance system through self-regulation. Such self-regulation is found in many ethic codes or journalism practices. This means that journalists should accept the fact that they are part of their professional guidelines. Several codes believed by journalists include truth, honesty, accuracy, information, error correction, non-discrimination due to race/ethnic/religion, respect for privacy and fair ways to collect information.

However, the norms of accuracy, honesty and truth are not equal for everyone. In this context, journalists hold a central role; they either give up to the external power of an investor and authority or they work for their ideology and personal interests by neglecting the public's interests. The actors rationalize their world in order to obtain a sense of security. Actions should be regarded as continuous interventions from autonomous agents. Thus agent and structure cannot be separated from each other since they affect each other in people's practices or activities since they are a duality (Loyal 2003). Social actors do not abruptly perform human activities but the continuous repetitions performed in a way that humans use in order to be the actors. In and through their activities, agents create a condition that enables the course of such activities.

Most actions have objectives. This means that they are performed under the continuous monitoring of the actors in a manner assesses their activities and people's reactions to their activities. An essential part of the unintended monitoring of an action is the ability of the agent to explain the reasons behind their action to either himself or other people (Thompson 2003). Professional journalists who are competent should consider their coverage. News coverage has objectives. In order to reach these objectives, journalists should adhere to the professional ethics that they comprehend in their news coverage. This comprehension cannot be separated from the different interests involved in the news production process.

Research Method

This research used a phenomenological method. Such a method was selected with the consideration that Phenomenology Merleau-Ponty and Structuration theory have a similar view of individuals, the awareness of their actions and the way to find the truth in action. The rationales of Phenomenology and Structuration Theory are combined in Weber's *Verstehen* concept. One of the typical contributions of phenomenology shows that 1) the social life is continuously operating by involving the "activity of making theories", and 2) even the most long-lasting customs or long-established norms require reflexive attention that is given continuously and in detail. Routines are important elements in an individual's social life (Giddens 1993:XVI). Phenomenology sees the world as an individual-creation. The world is a collection of individual knowledge that has been typified and shared with others and this is referred to by Schutz as a live world. Such a live world is the basis of daily social interactions (Craib 1984). Daily routines could be connected to the term of 'daily world' adopted by Husserl (Giddens 1993).

This research was conducted in Radar Malang News Company. The researchers had some considerations when selecting the location of the research. First, the researcher had intensively followed the development of Radar Malang since 2013, especially when it was under the supervision of Kurniawan Muhammad as the Director. Since 2013, there have been different nuances that can be detected, at least based on the subjective perspective of the researchers. Second, Radar Malang is the most prominent mass media companies in Malang city. The research subjects consisted of Radar Malang journalists. Interviews were conducted with 13 journalists. The research data was taken through interviews. The interviews took place after the deadline that is applicable in Radar Malang, around 8 pm. The data analysis was conducted by using Turner's Structuration model (Turner 1986).

Results and Discussion

It is known that journalists do not work alone. They are involved and exist in the complexity of the interests in the newsroom. Economic, political, idealistic and public interests are combined. This subsection discusses how journalists define their journalism ethics in their daily coverage of the news.

Radar Malang journalists and the practice of news coverage

In Structuration theory, Giddens stated that an agent is a skillful and knowledgeable individual. Such a statement criticizes the actors' personalities in the Phenomenological approach and the individual's characters in the Social Facts Paradigm. In phenomenology, the actors are regarded as free and creative individuals. The actors are regarded as free even when they play in a theater without a scenario. Meanwhile, the Social Facts paradigm regards individuals as helpless people whose actions are controlled by institutional values. It can be said that an individual is in a powerless position under the pressure of a structure (Giddens 1984). It differs from the definition of an agent in the Structuration Theory in that an agent is someone who is not only skillful and knowledgeable but also powerful. However, this power has limitations. The power does not aim to win but to be used together with that of other agents. This context suggests that journalists are professional agents. This needs to be confirmed since journalism as a profession has not been accepted publicly. The program of a competency test for journalists established by the Press Council in 2010 has not obtained any proper response. The number of journalists in Indonesia is indicated to have reached 40,000 (Wicaksono & Haryanto 2015), but there are only 6460 journalists who have joined the certification test (Pers 2017).

Such an assumption is undoubtedly reasonable because the press holds an essential role. It is reasonable to consider journalists as professional agents. In relation to such a consideration, Godkin stated that a debate on the professionalism of journalists had been started for a long time. According to Godkin, Lippman and Dewey, it has been discussed since the beginning of the 19th century. This debate is endless. Citing Lippman and Dewey's opinion, Godkin stated that skillful people such as journalists are necessary in a complex and democratic society nowadays. Dewey had a different opinion; that democratic and rational society does not need highly competent journalists since they are already able to participate in public activities (Godkin 2008).

Based on this explanation, the journalists' competence can be seen from their academic background, their motivation to be journalists and the habits of Radar Malang journalists. There are a limited number of studies or books that have discussed the profile of Indonesian journalists. A book written by Anwar (Anwar 1977) and a study conducted by Purnomo et al (Purnomo et al. 2006) are examples. Some similarities can be found in both the book and research. First, someone usually becomes a journalist because they feel trapped. The term "trapped" shows that he does not have any intention to be a journalist. Second, the academic background of journalists is mostly not in the field of either Communication Science or Publicity. However, different to Purnomo, Anwar depicts journalists as fighters whose goals are not their economic interests.

In general, people think that Communication Science graduates are ideal people for journalism, which is seemingly relevant. Ideally, one's profession is in line with their academic background. However, it could differ in the social sciences. The same case is also found in the profiles of Radar Malang journalists. Not all of the journalists hold a degree in Communication Science. Even though they did not major in Communication Science, they already have sufficient writing skills when they applied to be journalists. The journalists gained their writing ability and understanding of journalism from the students' press activities when they studied in university. They were already exposed to journalism since they were still university students. Although they became journalists under compulsion, they already possess the necessary skills.

All of the journalists in Radar Malang have obtained sufficient training. They all obtain similar materials but the duration of their training varies. Some of them obtained two weeks of training and some of them obtained up to 3-months of training. At the beginning of the training period, the journalists will get a lesson about news and journalism. The indoor training provides learning theories in the classroom while the outdoor training provides materials outside of the classroom. The indoor training covers the materials of introduction to the board of employers, the introduction of news and the way to find it, interviews and news writing. The indoor classes are conducted over a one-week period.

The journalists shall go into the field after they finish their indoor classes. At such a stage, they are in tandem with senior journalists and they are not required to write any significant news. They will only write something light then be edited and the news will not be covered in the newspaper. The focus of the training is to introduce the field of work of a journalist. At the end of such a stage, the journalists are assigned to cover or write similar news with the senior journalists. The results are compared and corrected. The average outdoor period is two weeks. The next step is they start to be assigned independently. They will cover news in the city in the first three days and then they are moved to Radar Kanjuruhan. Lastly, they are moved to Radar Baru. During the independent training period, journalists do not have any permanent posts yet (plotting). They should cover many kinds of events.

This data is supported by the findings of a study conducted by Rachmiatie (Rachmiatie 2001) and Purnomo (Purnomo et al. 2006). Rachmiatie found that someone's psychological condition and interest influences their ability to be a journalist even if he does not possess an appropriate academic background. Furthermore, it turns out that an inappropriate academic background does not have significant influence on the working condition of journalists. One of Rachmiatie's findings stated that the journalistic curriculum does not fully support the practices of journalism in the field.

On the other hand, Purnomo concluded there to be two main motivations in someone who is a journalist; based on his interest or under compulsion. Those who have an early interest in journalism choose an appropriate field of study to become journalists such as Communication Science. Others

who do not have a relevant academic background participate in activities that can support their profession as journalists, such as by being actively involved in a student press association. Journalists face the challenge of covering many kinds of events in various themes on a daily basis. This is not easy with various academic backgrounds as stated before. In order to develop the skills when facing the challenge, a journalist is driven to improve his competency independently. Being independent means performing a set of activities based on their initiative that are expected to be able to help them when performing their daily tasks as a journalist.

Self-competence development is a criterion of becoming a professional. According to Ahva, the understanding of the meaning of professionalism comes in three layers, namely basic competence that refers to the basic competence that should be possessed by someone, a sociological understanding about the ideal work of a professional and the formation and exchange of someone's ideology to be a professional (Ahva 2012). In relation to the different choice of language, Goldstein (Godkin 2008) has a similar opinion. Goldstein mentioned four attributes that should be attached to a professional, namely a sufficient qualification of knowledge that is in line with the field of work, monopoly, the recognition of the work and guidelines of work, having autonomy and having minimum standards when performing their work. Radar Malang journalists should always develop their competence. They perform many activities as an effort to develop their competence both formally and non-formally. A formal method is by obtaining a formal education while a non-formal way could be in many forms. The journalists mostly choose non-formal ways to develop their self-competence such as by using and improving their writing skills.

Radar Malang journalists and their understanding of journalism ethics

Research about ethics codes started to spark attention in the beginning of the 1980s. Initially, ethics codes are released by the management to manage conflicts of interests when journalists deal with the political world, organizational membership and their economic interests. There are three kinds of conflict of interest that can be detected, namely a) professional exploitation for personal interest, b) financial, collegial, social or family orientations, either in the past or present moment, which could interfere with their professional loyalty, and c) the implementation of several tasks that involve many interests (Wilkins & Brennen 2004). Ethics in management is crucial since it will ease the pressure related to journalists performing their daily news coverage.

Nevertheless, ethics should not be as detailed as those applied by the New York Times (Times 2004) and Reuter (Basics et al. 2008). This is since ethics are all about the choices made in the field. Journalists should possess the freedom as required by Giddens of an agent. An agent should be dominant. Kepplinger & Knirsch (2001) pointed out that the real condition in the field will determine whether or not a journalist chooses between the ethics systems. Journalists are fully entitled to make such a choice. The right to make a choice is fully attached to the professional ethics of journalism.

Such facts become interesting since, according to Giddens, someone cannot automatically define rules only by knowing them. Nonetheless, the acknowledgment becomes essential for agents to guide them when choosing their actions (Giddens 1984). The details of ethics should not remove the field autonomy that is owned by journalists. Structuration theory presents the key point that an agent should have power. This could be regarded as having autonomy in their acts. In order to respect another journalist's autonomy, a journalist should respect another journalist's opinion and control himself even if it is apparent that the other's journalist's opinion prevents him from performing his actions. The concept of autonomy can be seen from two different perspectives in a democratic country that respects the freedom of the press. First, an individual as a member of the society is expected to be wise and to possess accurate information. Second, the individual could obtain information from a strong and independent press (Kenamer 2005).

In fact, a code of ethics is not available in Radar Malang. Therefore it is certain that Radar Malang journalists have various understandings of journalism ethics. Such various understandings closely relate to the way that they are developed. This stage is the essence of the significance scheme or

knowledge scheme that is suggested by Giddens. One part of Structuration Theory is Significance Structure. Significance structure is an interpretation scheme in an agent's mind in the context of communication (Giddens 1984). In the context of this research, the interpretation of journalism ethics is a result of the agent's interpretation in a mutual relationship with the structural principles in Radar Malang. In other words, the interpretation scheme in journalism practices in Radar Malang is dynamic.

Independent and objective

Journalists often have to decide to comply with ethics in a concise period time, such as in the middle of deadlines, in the quality of their writing, as a part of the competition between journalists and the market interest. 'Independent' and 'objective' are examples of debatable ethics. Radar Malang journalists define independence and objectivity in different ways. According to Ahmad Yani, it is impossible to define independence as neutral since independence involves interpretations. Most importantly, the news should include all of the necessary facts. Pure independence does not exist since we cannot be neutral. This is because it relates to news interpretation. Independence can be implemented when presenting facts in the delivery of news. For example, the parties involved in the polemical news are given an equal opportunity to deliver their versions without any pressure (Yani n.d).

Such a statement made by Ahmad Yani confirms that pure independence is impossible. In agreement with that, Richards (2004) states in his article that journalists are the key agents in the implementation of ethics but, on the other hand, they are also employees employed by a company who have to concern themselves with the company interests. Richards concluded that, eventually, business ethics need to conform to journalism ethics as a consequence of journalists who have two different conditions in their lives. On one hand, they are journalists who have a sense of idealism and on the other hand, they are employees who have to contribute to their company (Richards 2004).

Such findings confirm that the main problem of ethics is the relativity of the decision made by someone that involves others (Tepe 1999). At this stage, it is crucial to see ethics from the journalists' perspective. So far, studies on journalism ethics neglect the role of the journalists. They focus more on the implementation of ethics or they have certain limitations by employing a content analytical approach. By using such an approach, the conclusion will be whether or not ethics have been violated. Even according to Walker, the existing research on journalism ethics simplifies the problems and tends to be biased. The research findings are in the form of evaluation results while Beasley and Walker (2014) stated that dilemmas in journalism ethics are always neglected. During news reports, journalists have at least three roles: as the bearers of the source of truth, as employees in production who have to conform to the market mechanism and, as Tandoc and Vos pointed out, as news marketers in the modern era (Tandoc & Vos 2016). This is while being citizens. The research findings concluded that ethics need to be understood in the context of a complex news production. As stated by Harcup, journalism ethics should be understood in the context of journalism practices and production (Harcup 2002).

Relation with the sources of news and gifts from the sources of news

The relationship between the news sources and the journalists is symbiotic mutualism. The relationship between journalists and the news sources have ups and downs and are dynamic. A good relationship becomes essential as suggested by a study performed by Cheng & Lee (2014). Cheng & Lee (2014) investigated the relationship between the news sources and Taiwanese correspondence journalists assigned in China. The investigation results showed that a relationship with the state officials significantly determines the information that can be obtained. By building a relationship with the officials, the Taiwanese correspondents were often able to obtain exclusive information that other media platforms could not obtain. This is also applicable to Radar Malang. The relationship between the Radar Malang journalists and the news sources opens the door for exclusive news that other journalists do not have.

As stated by Neny Fitrin, as a senior journalist, she seeks to build good relationships. One of them is with the Board of Malang Regency Government. This good relationship made it possible for Neny to obtain updated news on what is being discussed in the Regional House of People's Representatives

of the Regency. However, such a good relationship is not excluded from conflict. There are good and bad times in the relationships. Consciously or not, there are conflicts of interest between journalists and their news sources. On the other hand, a journalist needs exclusive news that could be a headline while on the other hand, the news source needs a news report that benefits him or his institution. Unfortunately, almost all breaking news is bad news. In old journalistic literature, there is a saying: “bad news is good news.”

Broersma, Herder and Schohaus stated that the relationship between journalists and news sources are entwined when producing news. The relationship between journalists and news sources is always dynamic as it shares power between the journalists and the news sources. This is symbiotic mutualism. Such an interdependence affects the values of journalism such as independence, objectivity, the verification of facts and attribution (Broersma et al. 2013). Tensions are sometimes found between the journalists and news sources. As stated by Farik Fajarwati below, there are many kinds of relationship. Some of them are good while some are bad. Bad relationships could end up being good relationships and vice versa. In relation to news reports, those who are not satisfied with the news coverage automatically claim that the journalist has neglected their interests. In another case, there was a news source that did not have a good relationship with the journalists who ended up thanking the journalists for the news coverage about him (Fajarwati n.d).

Other Radar Malang journalists have had similar experiences to Farik Fajarwati. These dynamics within the relationships with news sources is unpreventable. Problems occur when journalists try to make the news coverage about bad things in relation to the news sources or the institutions of the news sources. This creates a dilemmatic situation for journalists. Journalists will lose good news in vain if they do not produce the required news coverage. However, they are likely to experience a little tension if they do produce this news coverage.

Based on Ahmad Yani’s experience, such a situation should be settled through a compromise. Compromising means that the news should still be covered but using a softer language. The research performed by Mackay (2012) strengthened the finding that journalists are always under pressure to influence their decision during the implementation of journalism ethics (MacKay 2012). Journalists frequently experience the tensions like those experienced by Ahmad Yani. Referring to Buchanan’s opinions, media bias is inevitable in news coverage (Cohen 2005). Instead of losing the news, he still made the news coverage by showing that there was a little bias.

Based on my experience when I was in Jakarta, I was very close to the head of the General Elections Commission, Mr. Taufiq from Gerindra. He was accused of corruption. I wrote the news about him while I was still visiting him as a friend. He understood what my duty was. He only asked me not to be too hard. Maybe it influenced my selection of words since I was close to the news source. However, I needed to present the facts. I wrote that he was under police investigation when he was under the police investigation. When he was declared a suspect, I wrote the same. When he was convicted, I wrote that he was convicted (Yani n.d).

The choice made by Ahmad Yani is a form of compromising with the situation. Journalists should consider their good relationships with the news sources. In certain limitations, Radar Malang journalists need to be careful when they cover up corruption cases, especially the ones that involve business relation. A study done by Elahi (2013) found that journalism ethics tend not to take corruption cases seriously. An acceptance of corruption might relate to the culture and neglect ethical issues. Professional behaviors should introduce an ethic code and maintain professional ethics in education (Elahi 2013). The research was conducted in Bangladesh. Elahi tried to identify the Bangladesh journalists’ behaviors, perceptions and practices in connection with ethical dilemmas, especially ones that involve conflicts of interest.

One unpreventable thing resulting from a good relationship with a news source is gifts from the news source itself. It is publicly known, especially when concerning governmental institutions, which clients would give tips to the journalists that they invite. They may also give something every year to the journalists who stay for a while in their institutions. According to the results of the research

conducted by Rofiuddin (2011), he found that governmental institutions, such as those of the regional government and the regional house of people's representatives (Rofiuddin 2011), frequently give an amount of money as a gift for journalists. It is not only governmental institutions that dominate such gifts. Lesser parties are also afraid to incur a loss in connection with the news coverage of an event.

Radar Malang's journalists also experience this. Radar Malang's management explicitly prevent their journalists from receiving any gifts from the news sources in relation to their duty of news coverage. Nonetheless, based on Ahmad Yani's understanding, such a rule does not have to be implemented strictly. Journalists should see the motive behind each gift regardless of value. Journalists may accept the gifts if they do not have any connection with the news, especially gifts from familiar news sources. Nevertheless, a gift can be in the form of facilities such as a car to meet the recreational needs of the employee. These may still be accepted. To Ahmad Yani, a relationship between two friends could create a dilemma. Receiving a gift means a violation of the company rules but rejecting a gift that could hurt someone's feelings. Ahmad Yani realizes that journalists can receive gifts from the news sources.

Principally, the risks related to receiving gifts are borne by the journalists. Ahmad Yani pointed out that the gift-giving phenomenon is common in the world of journalism. The existing research presents that journalists tend to receive gifts from news sources so long as the gifts are not connected with the news content. This is supported by the studies performed by Lo & Wei (2008), Lodamo & Skjerdal (2010), Williams (2014), Pramesti (2014) and Albab (2015). Lo and Wei put forward receiving gifts in the journalism context is already common in most countries. The perspective is mostly influenced by the risks of the work borne by the journalists. The lower the risk, the higher the possibility of receiving gifts (Lo & Wei 2008).

Lodamo and Skjerdal (2010) found similar results. The research performed in Ethiopia showed that it is common for a news source to give a gift to journalists. The parties involved call it journalism fellowship. Such a gift is known as a "brown envelope" since the gift is commonly given to journalists in the form of money inside a brown envelope. Low payment, unclear codes of conduct in news companies and insufficient training for journalists are several causes of such practices (Lodamo & Skjerdal 2010). A similar finding is also found in Nigeria. Bad regulations in the mass media have worsened the condition of bribery (Williams 2014).

Interesting findings were presented in a study performed by Albab (2015). The research aimed to identify the implications when all bribes from the government were removed. The research was situated in the provincial government of Central Java. The government issued a policy of removing all financial bribes that had been received by journalists. In general, journalists still act based on their ethical codes. However, the close relationship between the journalists and the news sources has created friction in the journalism community. There are first ring journalists, second ring journalists, and the like. Other findings have shown that journalism organizations cannot ensure strict compliance among their members concerning journalism ethics (Albab 2015).

When further observed, the permissive behavior and understanding of gifts, either in the form of money or goods, occurs in countries with a developing democracy or in newly independent countries. Indonesia, China, Taiwan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria are still trying to articulate their independence in order to be democratic. Freedom is typical of Western countries. As presented by Shan and Wang, the idea of journalism ethics comes from Western cultures. The ideas need to be extracted and interpreted more deeply before being applied in Eastern countries (Shan & Wang 2009). As stated by Wasserman and Rao, global journalism ethics should be localized by considering the local cultures' complexity and contexts (Wasserman & Rao 2008).

In relation to the permissive understanding of gift-giving in the form of goods or money in relation to the news coverage, this is apparently affected by the working periods and positions of the journalists. Journalists with less than five years of working period tend not to compromise when it comes to gift-giving. They strongly refuse any money giving.

Conclusion

Structuration theory gives the Radar Malang journalists freedom when developing their understanding of the ethics involved. This is in line with the autonomous requirement for journalists in relation to the implementation of their ethics. Ethics are about the choices made in the field during the news coverage. Therefore, the autonomy and freedom of journalists in implementing their news coverage are the absolute requirements. Without freedom, journalism ethics cannot exist. Based on the findings and preceding discussion, it could be concluded that independence, objectivity, the relationship with the news sources and receiving gifts from news sources are defined differently. Such an understanding and interpretation depends on the journalists' working periods and knowledge. Such an understanding is not static; it is dynamic in accordance with the situation and condition in the field.

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