



Country Report

Journalists in Indonesia

Nurhaya Muchtar, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*
Masduki, *Universitas Islam Yogyakarta*

8 November, 2016

Background of Journalists

Journalists in Indonesia are typically male, in their mid-thirties, and hold university degrees in communication or journalism. Of the 663 interviewed journalists, 142 were women, or about 21.5 percent of the overall sample. On average, Indonesian journalists were 34.43 years old ($s=7.04$).

Journalists in Indonesia obtained a high level of education (87.0%). Of the 87.0 percent, those who have a bachelor's degree are 81.4 percent and 5.6 percent held a degree from a graduate program.

Of those respondents who hold a university degree, a slight majority (63.1%) have not specialized in communication or journalism, while 16.8 percent have specialized in journalism, 10.9 percent studied in another communication field, and 9.2 percent specialized in both journalism and another communication field.

Among the journalists, about 4.8 percent went to university or to an equivalent program but did not complete the program while 8.2 percent completed high school.

Journalists in the Newsroom

Many interviewed journalists held full-time job positions (69.2%); however, 8.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part time employment, and 17.2 percent worked as freelance journalists. Of those with full or part-time employment 68.2 percent said that they held permanent position and 31.8 percent worked with only a temporary contract.

Indonesian journalists are fairly experienced. On average, they had worked for 8.48 years ($s=5.45$) and about half of them had more than seven years of professional experiences. Most journalists worked on various topics and subjects (66.6%). The remaining journalists work on specific desk such as politics, health, economy, and so on (33.4%).

Most journalists in Indonesia worked for one newsroom (84.1%) and about 15.9 percent worked for 2 newsrooms. A third of the journalists were employed elsewhere in addition to the newsroom that that they work for (37.4%).

A slight majority of the interviewed journalists were members of a professional association (69.5%)

The interviewed journalists spread across different types of media. About 44 percent worked for print media (44.0% daily newspaper, 2.6 % weekly newspaper and 3.8% magazine) and 30.9 percent worked for broadcast media (radio and television). The rest of them work for online media. Another 20.5 percent of the journalists worked for private or public service television, and 10.4 percent for private or public radio. Few journalists in the sample reported that they worked for news agencies (2.4%), for online newsrooms of traditional media (1.7%), and for stand-alone online news sites (14.7%).

Journalistic Roles

With regards to professional roles, Indonesian journalists found it most important to report things as they are, educate their audience, promote tolerance and cultural diversity, let people express their opinions and advocate for social change. Interviewed journalists also found it very important to provide the kind of news that attracts large audiences and support national development; the latter role seems to be similar among journalists based on the low standard deviation. Indonesian journalists reported that the role of supporting national development is still very important.

In addition, Indonesian journalists found it important to provide analysis of current affairs, provide news that helps people to make political decisions, be a detached observer, motivate people to participate in political activity and monitor and scrutinize political leaders. Nevertheless, only 10.5 percent found that it is acceptable to be an adversary to the government or to set a political agenda.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Report things as they are	660	94.1	4.51	.68
Educate the audience	657	94.1	4.36	.65
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	617	91.9	4.30	.65
Let people express their views	661	85.6	4.12	.66
Advocate for social change	653	81.0	4.03	.78
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	660	76.2	3.96	.73
Support national development	643	75.1	3.96	.82
Provide analysis of current affairs	655	72.8	3.93	.88
Provide information people need to make political decisions	657	70.9	3.81	.80
Be a detached observer	628	64.0	3.70	1.05
Motivate people to participate in political activity	655	60.3	3.59	.96
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	650	56.0	3.60	.91
Provide entertainment and relaxation	660	54.2	3.59	.82
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	654	52.3	3.48	.91
Influence public opinion	650	49.5	3.30	1.13
Monitor and scrutinize business	650	44.3	3.40	.89
Convey a positive image of political leadership	652	36.3	3.15	1.06
Support government policy	657	30.4	3.26	.75
Set the political agenda	633	28.3	2.84	1.11
Be an adversary of the government	647	10.5	2.67	.94
Tell stories about the world	-	-	-	-

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant

Professional Ethics

Indonesian journalists show a strong commitment to professional standard of journalism ethics. Most journalist respondents agreed that journalists should always adhere to the code of professional ethics (98.9%).

Additionally, many journalists disagree to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it (78.1%) or to the idea that what is ethical depends on specific situation (60.6%). Moreover, they also disagree that to the idea that what it ethical is a matter of personal judgment (77.4%).

Journalists' opinions reflect their viewpoints concerning controversial reporting techniques. Many journalists believe that using hidden microphones or cameras (74.1%) as well as paying people for confidential information (60.1%) and getting

employed in an organization in order to get inside information (56.4%) is justifiable on occasion.

A high number of journalists also found that using government or business documents without authorization (49.8%), claiming to be somebody else (30.0%), and exerting pressure from unwilling information in order to get information (24.7%) is justifiable on occasions.

Despite the previous long history of ‘envelope journalism’, in which journalists received money from sources, in this survey, many journalists in Indonesia (84.0%) did not approve the action of accepting money from sources.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying “strongly” and “somewhat agree”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	661	98.9	4.77	.46
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	658	39.4	2.67	1.34
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	653	28.9	2.47	1.27
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	654	22.6	2.24	1.24

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying “always justified”	Percentage saying “justified on occasion”
Using hidden microphones or cameras	656	9.8	74.1
Paying people for confidential information	647	4.2	60.1
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	633	4.4	56.4
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	647	2.5	49.8
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	659	.9	24.7
Claiming to be somebody else	659	.6	30.0
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	659	.3	23.2
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	655	.3	10.4
Publishing stories with unverified content	655	.3	6.6
Accepting money from sources	644	.2	15.8

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

Journalists in Indonesia reported that they had limited professional autonomy. Only 38.2 percent said that they had a great deal of freedom in selecting news stories. About 44.0 percent of respondents also reported that they had a complete freedom in deciding what aspects to emphasize in news stories. In addition, 57.2 percent reported that they had participated in editorial coordination.

Professional autonomy is directly related to internal and external influences. The majority of journalists reported that journalism ethics and media laws are two of the most important elements that have influenced their work. The idea seems to be agreeable among the journalists based on the low standard deviation. Indonesian journalists also found that information access, the availability of newsgathering

resources; and audience research and data have influenced news production and journalists' professional autonomy.

Table 4: Perceived Influences

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very influential"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	641	82.1	4.08	.93
Media laws & regulation	653	72.6	3.83	.87
Information access	653	66.0	3.73	.77
Availability of news-gathering resources	633	64.0	3.68	.93
Audience research and data	632	60.3	3.61	.93
Editorial policy	613	59.2	3.60	.97
Your personal values and beliefs	616	57.0	3.59	1.03
Time limits	641	49.9	3.42	.86
Censorship	653	49.5	3.34	1.04
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	624	46.0	3.35	.96
Owners of the news organization	612	44.4	3.24	1.13
Managers of the news organization	621	42.8	3.23	1.06
Feedback from the audience	654	41.3	3.28	.96
Religious considerations	598	39.3	3.02	1.27
Competing news organizations	656	37.3	3.10	1.09
Your peers on the staff	609	27.1	2.93	1.04
Profit expectations	569	25.1	2.68	1.17
Advertising considerations	601	23.6	2.67	1.14
Colleagues in other media	657	21.0	2.76	1.03
Friends, acquaintances and family	661	20.7	2.74	1.03
Relationships with news sources	637	19.3	2.51	1.09
Government officials	656	17.2	2.43	1.11
Public relations	649	14.3	2.31	1.09
Military, police and state security	653	14.1	2.34	1.08
Politicians	655	12.8	2.28	1.06
Pressure groups	654	11.6	2.28	1.04
Business people	633	9.0	2.18	1.02

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

Journalism in Transition

Journalists in Indonesia have experienced changes due to different factors. Technology turned out to be the most important influence that has changed journalism in Indonesia. This includes the use of search engines and the requirement for journalists to have technical skills.

Along the same line, social media has become the strongest element that influences changes in journalism. In addition, the increasing number of media outlets and competition among media outlets has influenced journalism as well. Although the number of journalism schools has increased, journalists reported that having a university degree with any major is more important than specifically majoring in journalism or related field.

The questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
The use of search engines	485	94.6	.6
Technical skills	482	83.0	7.7
The relevance of journalism for society	475	80.6	4.4
Having a university degree	476	80.0	3.6
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	481	77.8	7.3
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	482	77.0	6.4
Average working hours of journalists	481	74.2	2.3
The credibility of journalism	483	73.3	8.5
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	475	69.9	4.8
Time available for researching stories	480	39.4	29.2

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in [country]. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter	477	94.5	.6
Competition	475	91.2	.6
Audience involvement in news production	476	89.5	1.9
User-generated contents, such as blogs	459	89.5	1.3
Audience feedback	482	88.4	1.5
Journalism education	480	80.8	5.8
Advertising considerations	464	78.4	3.0
Audience research	448	75.7	4.2
Profit making pressures	459	75.6	2.8
Ethical standards	477	66.9	9.9
Western ways of practicing journalism	444	64.9	4.7
Pressure toward sensational news	468	63.9	9.4
Public relations	467	55.7	6.0

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in [country]. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Journalistic Trust

When it comes to trust in public institutions, Indonesian journalists indicated that they have reasonable faith in three institutions: their religious leaders, their own media institutions, and their unions. Moreover, Indonesian journalists seem to have more trust in the military rather than in their government or parliament.

Table 7: Journalistic trust in institutions

	N	Percentage saying "complete" and "a great deal of trust"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Religious leaders	650	32.8	3.20	.80
The news media	653	24.8	3.12	.70
Trade unions	646	12.4	2.80	.73
The military	651	8.9	2.62	.77
The government [Republic of Indonesia]	646	7.1	2.71	.70
The judiciary/the courts	652	5.1	2.49	.70
The police	654	4.1	2.35	.74
The parliament (MPR/DPR)	654	3.2	2.30	.73
Political parties	655	2.6	2.06	.73
Politicians in general	640	1.6	2.15	.66

Question: Please tell me on a scale of 5 to 1 how much you personally trust each of the following institutions. 5 means you have complete trust, 4 means you have a great deal of trust, 3 means you have some trust, 2 means you have little trust, and 1 means you have no trust at all.

Methodological Information

<i>Size of the population:</i>	41,818 working journalists (estimated)
<i>Sampling method:</i>	Convenience sampling for newsrooms and purposively chosen sampling based on quota for journalists within newsrooms
<i>Sample size:</i>	663 working journalists
<i>Interview methods:</i>	Face-to-face and mail/e-mail
<i>Response rate:</i>	95%
<i>Period of field research:</i>	12/2014-02/2015