

Does Media Play an Important Roles in Regional Election? A Pers Law Perspective

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the influence of press law regulations on political reporting in online media and to conduct a comparative study of press law regulations in countries that have experienced the development of online media in the political context. The research employs content analysis of political news in online media during the 2024 regional election campaign period to understand the extent of online media's influence in shaping public opinion and election outcomes. This research is expected to provide a clear vision of the role of online media in the political process and contribute new understanding to the legal regulations of the press needed to maintain the continuity of democracy.

1. Introduction

The civil right to participate in elections is regulated internationally and nationally. Citizens' participation in elections is a manifestation of human rights, as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Mariyam, 2022). Periodic and honest elections are essential to safeguarding the rights of the people (Sulistiono & Boediningsih, 2023). In Paris in 1989, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe declared that free and fair elections were the primary standard for European society. (S Arliman, 2019)

The implementation of regional head elections in various countries involves several stages, starting with preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The most crucial stage is during the implementation phase, particularly during the campaign period and the voting and vote-counting process. During campaigns, all stakeholders tend to prioritize their own interests. The contestation between candidates, expressed through political slogans, must be communicated in a manner consistent with democratic principles. The primary goal is to ensure that the public receives adequate information to express their opinions through elections, thereby enabling them to challenge the status quo.

Mass media, including newspapers, television, and online platforms, serve as critical channels for candidates to communicate their messages to

their supporters. Without the mass media, candidates' ideas and opinions would not be conveyed quickly and accurately to the public. Conversely, without free media to deliver public concerns to decision-makers, the people's aspirations would not be communicated effectively. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to express opinions without interference. The press is legally protected to seek, receive, process, store, and disseminate ideas and information without limitations. The media's influence on society stems from its role as a mediator or connector. Media provides material for the public to shape perceptions of other groups, organizations, or specific events.(Rahmayuni, 2023) Additionally, the media aims to shape public opinion and deliver information while playing a specific role in society.(Haninuna et al., 2023) The media also actively seeks to gain influence by providing quality information or authoritative perspectives.(Rabiqy, 2018) Media has a powerful impact on shaping individuals' cognition.(Fitriansyah, 2018) Mass media or the press disseminates information and knowledge that ultimately shapes perceptions.(Triyaningsih, 2020) Research has shown that perceptions influence a person's attitude and behavior.

In elections, voters have the right to access comprehensive and accurate information about candidates and their endorsing parties, such

as political parties. Candidates and their supporters should freely deliver their messages through the media without manipulation, ensuring that their messages are received by the public as intended.(Mustaffa et al., 2021) In Indonesia, the media serves as the most effective means of disseminating information to the public.(Rahadi, 2017) Political messages can be communicated to the public effectively, overcoming barriers of distance and time.

Data from the General Election Commission (KPU) of the Republic of Indonesia indicates that the simultaneous regional elections (Pilkada) on 27 November 2024 proceeded as expected by the Commission.(Aulia & Milka, 2024) From the initial stages at the central KPU level to cities and regencies across Indonesia, KPU collaborated with regional mass media to ensure the success of this democratic event. Without the media's role, election-related information about the regional elections would not have reached the public effectively. Online media plays a vital role in delivering election-related information to the public.(Ahmad & Murad, 2020) Digital media serves as a platform for ensuring the success of elections and providing accurate and accountable information to the public.(et al., 2024)

Online media plays an essential role in delivering election-related information to the public. Digital media is used to support the success of elections while ensuring that information provided to the public is

accurate and accountable. New media, such as online platforms and social media, also increase public political participation in elections by disseminating autonomous information without being interpreted or filtered by third parties.” (Aulia & Milka, 2024)

Data from the Golkar Party reveals that the party owned a media outlet called *Suara Karya*, which was used to convey the party’s messages to its supporters from 1987 to 1997. In East Java, the provincial government launched a newspaper called *Karya Darma*, distributed to all districts and cities in East Java from 1993 to 1998.

Both media outlets were utilized to strengthen the Golkar Party's image in the public's eyes and to increase the party’s popularity. In addition, these media platforms served as tools to disseminate information about the party's programs and accomplishments. With these outlets, the Golkar Party successfully expanded the reach of its messages and garnered broader public support. Through an aggressive media marketing strategy, Golkar managed to create a positive image among the people of East Java. The *Karya Darma* newspaper proved to be an effective instrument in winning the hearts and minds of voters. The growing public support demonstrated that these media platforms effectively achieved their primary goal: strengthening Golkar’s position in society.

Research gap and novelty of this paper is based on previous research, First, Peran Media Sosial Dalam Peningkatan Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Kelurahan Pulo Gebang Pada Pilkada DKI Jakarta Tahun 2017, written by Muhammad Kennedy Cahya, published in Jurnal Polinter: Kajian Politik dan Hubungan Internasional, 2020, that focused on DKI Jakarta regional election. Second, paper entitled Peran Media Dalam Komunikasi Politik Jelang Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah Tahun 2017 Di Kabupaten Aceh Barat, written by Aminah in SOURCE: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi, 2018, focused on Aceh Barat Regency. So, based on previous research, the influence of social media on regional election is specific in some region/city. However, this paper figures out the power of social media during local election (Pilkada) in 2024.

According to the background above, this paper will discuss about; how does press regulation regulate political news in the media and how could the media influence public opinion and election results in regional elections (Pilkada) 2024.

The research methods to address these two questions involve conducting a descriptive analysis (Negara, 2023) of press regulations governing political reporting in traditional print and online media. Researchers also performed a comparative study (Al-Fatih & Siboy, 2021) of press regulations in several countries that have experienced the

development of online media within a political context. This study includes a content analysis of political reporting in traditional print and online media during the 2024 regional election campaign. This approach examines the extent to which traditional print and online media influence public opinion and election outcomes (Al-Fatih, 2023).

2. Result And Discussion

Press Regulation Regarding Political News in the Media

Regulations related to press reporting during elections include prohibitions against spreading hoaxes or defamatory news that could influence public opinion,(Yuridis et al., 2024) restrictions on political advertisements that violate journalistic ethics, and requirements for media outlets to provide accurate and balanced election coverage.(Dr. Darajat Wibawa, 2020) Law No. 1 of 2024 (UU 1/2024) explicitly prohibits the dissemination of hoaxes that can potentially cause public unrest. This provision is outlined in Article 28, paragraph (3), stating: "*No person shall intentionally disseminate electronic information and/or electronic documents containing false information that causes public unrest.*"

To ensure deterrence, Article 45A, paragraph (3), of UU 1/2024 imposes criminal penalties for violators: "*Any person who violates the provisions of Article 28, paragraph (3), shall be subject to imprisonment for a maximum of six years and/or a fine of up to IDR 1 million.*" The dissemination of false information (*hoaxes*) is

a critical issue in the digital era. Hoaxes can spread rapidly through various social media platforms, leading to misinformation, social unrest, and even security disruptions. Legal regulations aim to protect public order, as false information can cause chaos and instability within society. Additionally, these laws ensure legal certainty by providing a clear legal framework for law enforcement to act against violations. A further goal is to enhance digital literacy, encouraging the public to exercise caution in receiving and sharing unverified information.

Article 28, paragraph (3) of Law No. 1 of 2024 (UU 1/2024) consists of four key elements: 1) Legal Subject: The article applies to "every person," covering both individuals and legal entities; 2) Intentionality: The dissemination of information must be carried out intentionally, and this intent must be proven in legal proceedings; 3) Form of Information: The information can take the form of electronic data or electronic documents, including text, images, videos, or other digital formats; 4) Resulting Impact: the disseminated information must demonstrably cause public unrest.

The application of sanctions under Article 45A, paragraph (3) of Law No. 1 of 2024 (Law 1/2024) includes imprisonment and fines. Imprisonment refers to a maximum prison sentence of six years reflecting the seriousness of this violation, while fines are within the maximum amount of IDR 1 million. The latter takes a more symbolic legal approach, as the social impact of spreading

false news far outweighs the monetary penalty. The prohibition of false information dissemination in Law 1/2024 is a crucial step toward maintaining social stability and public order. However, the implementation of this regulation must be carried out cautiously to avoid infringing upon freedom of expression. Preventive measures, such as digital literacy and public education, are essential for effectively reducing the spread of false information.

These regulations uphold integrity and fairness in the democratic process while ensuring voters have equal and accurate access to political information. As highlighted, "*The media also plays a critical role in ensuring the electoral process runs smoothly and that its outcomes are widely accepted by the public, particularly by providing objective information.*" (Aspinall, 2014) Law No. 40 of 1999 concerning the Press regulates the prohibition of inaccurate reporting under Article 12, paragraph (1), which states that the press must uphold truth and justice in delivering information. (Sibagariang et al., 2023)

This regulation is vital to prevent the media from becoming a tool for disseminating false information that could unfairly influence election outcomes. During elections, media reporting is expected to contribute positively to building a democratic and civilized society. For example, in upcoming elections, mass media must ensure the information provided to the public is accurate and fair (Fianto et al., 2023) by verifying facts before publishing political news to prevent the spread of misleading information. The

press must deliver accurate and unbiased information, enabling citizens to make well-informed decisions when choosing their leaders.(Dorida & Dharmawan, 2018) The role of print and electronic media cannot be underestimated in shaping public opinion and influencing election outcomes.(Turhamun, 2022) Media plays a crucial role in the democratic and political process across Indonesia, including the 2024 regional elections and prior elections.(Fahruji & Fahrudin, 2023)

A concrete example from the 2019 elections highlights the spread of false information through social media, which led to chaos and a loss of trust in the voting process. It is crucial for mass media to act responsibly in disseminating information during elections to maintain public trust in democracy and the integrity of the electoral process. The hope is that future elections will proceed smoothly and fairly, without disruptions caused by misleading news that unsettles the public. News reports should consist of factual and verified information. Mass media must verify content before publication to avoid creating chaos or eroding public trust. Media integrity and trust in the democratic process must be upheld to ensure that upcoming elections are conducted fairly and without incident. The accuracy of reporting is essential for maintaining stability and security in a democratic nation.(Rohmah, 2023)

In the United States, the professionalism of media reporting is regulated by the Freedom of the Press Act,(Astuti, 2014) which serves as the legal

foundation for press freedom. This law protects freedom of expression and recognizes the media's critical role in disseminating accurate and verified information. Regarding media and elections, the Freedom of the Press Act also mandates balanced and objective coverage during election campaigns, prohibiting discriminatory or manipulative practices in political reporting. Additionally, it provides guidelines ensuring the right to response and objection in media reporting, consistent with Indonesia's Law No. 40 of 1999 concerning the Press.(Schettini & Terra, 2020)

Does Media Play an Important Roles During Regional Election 2024 in Indonesia?

The media has the power to influence public opinion and election outcomes. For example, when media outlets report biased or tendentious information about a political candidate, they can shape public opinion and affect election results. Media coverage that disproportionately supports one candidate while ignoring the achievements or shortcomings of others can significantly impact voters' decisions. It is essential for the public to critically evaluate the information presented by the media and conduct additional research to gain diverse perspectives. Objective media coverage and the dissemination of balanced opinions can lead to a more informed public and ensure elections are more democratic and fairer. The media's role in

democracy is crucial, making it imperative to maintain diversity and objectivity in reporting to prevent negative influences on the democratic process.(Arisandy, 2023)

The media's influence can generally shape public perceptions of political candidates and the electoral process. Therefore, media outlets must provide accurate and balanced information, enabling the public to make informed, fact-based decisions. By doing so, democracy can function effectively, and the decisions made by society can better represent broader interests. The media has the ability to present a variety of perspectives and opinions, providing the public with a comprehensive understanding.(Lestari & Rachmawati, 2023) By offering diverse information and viewpoints, the media helps people develop critical thinking skills and consider all aspects before making political decisions. Additionally, the media plays a crucial role in preventing polarization and conflict that could harm the democratic process. It is essential for the media to uphold diversity and objectivity in reporting to sustain a healthy and robust democracy (Ross, 2008).

Previous research indicates that the media plays a significant role in influencing voters during regional elections. Various forms of media, from television to social media, can shape public perceptions of candidates running in elections. Therefore, it is crucial for the media to deliver objective and balanced information, enabling citizens to make informed and responsible

political decisions. In doing so, the media can act as an effective watchdog of democracy, fostering a healthy and democratic political environment.

This research was conducted by a team of academics comprising experts in media and politics. They analyzed various types of media used in regional elections, including the content provided and the delivery methods. The findings revealed that media outlets offering objective and balanced information tend to positively influence public perceptions, leading to wiser and more responsible political decisions. The role of the media in regional elections is vital to maintaining a healthy and transparent democracy. For instance, in a regional election in one area, local media provided balanced and impartial coverage of both candidates by interviewing them fairly. This responsible media approach helped the public understand each candidate's vision and work programs, enabling voters to make more informed and thoughtful political choices.

3. Conclusion

The media plays a crucial role in regional elections (Pilkada). By providing objective and balanced coverage, local media can assist the public in making more informed political decisions. Support and appreciation for the media's role in the regional election process are essential for fostering a wiser and more responsible political environment.

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