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Television Journalist: The Challenge of Mass Communication Post the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract— This study aims to determine the extent of the challenges of mass communication science played by television journalists who are members of the North Sumatra Indonesian Television Journalists Association (IJTI) who are an important part of the mass media. Television journalist is a profession in journalism that also provides various information but was also affected during the Covid19 pandemic. They are an inseparable part of the television industry in filling the news production process on television. This study used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach by interviewing many television journalists in Medan. Findings in the field show that the majority of television journalists in Medan are worried and afraid to cover coverage in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is due to the spread of the Covid 19 virus in North Sumatra, especially in Medan, which has taken many lives. Television journalists limit themselves to their coverage in the field. This makes them uncomfortable if the coronavirus is transmitted to them and their families which at any time can threaten the life and death of journalists and journalists' families. Television journalists in Medan said that they would dare to cover the field if there was no more Covid-19 pandemic. The reluctance of television journalists in Medan to cover this field is more or less feared to threaten the future of mass communication in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the reluctance of television journalists as a media gathering to cover, it will become a form of channel blockage between the information provided by television stations and television viewers (public). This is because the role and future of mass communication are still very much dependent on the role of journalists, such as television journalists in providing a diversity of content or content on television broadcasts.

Keywords—Television journalist, Mass Communication, Post Covid-19

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication technology which is characterized by digitization, convergence, the internet, produces technology and applications that fill all forms of communication ranging from interpersonal communication, interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication. Communication technology has made it possible for everyone to send messages through various forms of communication. Communication technology has changed production patterns, content, distribution patterns, and audience reading patterns. Mass media producers are obliged to anticipate the presence of the internet and new media because both have created online media and digital

newspapers (e-papers). If mass media producers do not participate in media convergence, it can be ascertained that their media business will close because they are unable to compete [1].

The dynamics of production in each country are very much affected by the crisis, so industrial policies are considered as part of the response to solve dramatic economic and social problems caused by extraordinary levels of unemployment, deprivation, and poverty. According to Ferrannini et al, [2] a turning point in the relationship between industrial policy, sustainability and development has been reached, highlighting the need to rethink theoretical foundations as well as governance and implementation processes for a new role in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. Freedom of information has given birth to freedom of the press and broadcasting as well as the freedom to obtain public information. In line with that, the mass media increasingly needs capital (capital) so that information is dominated and controlled by the owners of capital. Massification in the mass communication process is a feature of industrial society [3].

The individuation in the communication process between individuals is a feature of the information society. In a capital-intensive industrial society, there is deideologization and dehumanization as well as a weakening of social justice with the development of capitalism, secularism, and pragmatism. On the other hand, in a "brain- dense" information society there will be ideologies, humanism, and social justice. This is because individuals have a lot of time to do activities [4]. Mass media and press freedom in mass communication have a very important role in presenting events, profiles of individuals, organizations, or interests to become dominant and prominent in society. By arguing that freedom of expression is a right, a television journalist articulates his profession based on this philosophy. Television journalists argue that press freedom is a reflection of freedom of expression. Although this argument seems correct it cannot be implemented without exceptions and for certain purposes. With this freedom of the press, the mass media can be misused by the managers and owners to become an instrument for the abuse of certain forces. Therefore, every television journalist must carry out his professional obligations based on the code of ethics and professionalism [5].

Since World War II, there has been the idea that one individual or company can bend the whole world according

to their wishes by using mass communication. This later became a widespread concern. From this perspective, the hallmark of mass communication is that the media have grown too big and strong for society to control. Through digital convergence, it will form the backbone of most mass media. The internet is designed to be decentralized, meaning that control is distributed among all users who have a relatively equal opportunity to contribute to the distribution of media content. The increase in internet bandwidth further enhances the ability of users to become content producers and produce sufficiently sophisticated content at low costs. Also, many of the newer technologies are more portable and, therefore, more convenient to use compared to the old mass media [6]. The communication system in Indonesia, including the mass media system

II. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research methods are research methods based on the philosophy of constructivism, used to examine natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are performed by triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and the results of qualitative research. emphasizes the meaning more than generalization [7].

Meanwhile, phenomenological studies describe the meaning of some individuals to their life experiences. The phenomenologists focus only on describing the phenomena that are experienced by the participants (informants) themselves. Furthermore, Creswell said that the basic aim of a phenomenological study is to reduce the individual's experience of a phenomenon into a description that has universal essence. Creswell said there are at least two approaches to phenomenology that have been highlighted: the phenomenology of the text of life (hermeneutics) and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology. Phenomenology is not only a description but there is also an interpretive process within the researcher to interpret a life experience [8]. For this purpose, researchers interviewed at least nine television journalists in-depth to find out how their role was in carrying out journalistic tasks after the Covid-19 pandemic.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The triumph of the television media industry as a mass communication medium is slowly being eroded by the influx of internet-based online media. This cutting-edge information technology has succeeded in combining the massive characteristics of conventional telecommunications technology with interactive computer technology. The convergence phenomenon is the joining of traditional telecommunication media with the internet at once. This convergence causes radical changes in the handling, provision, distribution, and processing of all forms of information, whether visual, audio, data and so on [9]. In general, television media plays an important role in individual life, where the purpose of television media is to provide information, education, and entertainment that we need in human life today. Television media also helps create reality for many people and can influence and move people and even society.

Television programs have been packaged very attractively to get the attention of as many audiences as possible. Of course, in addition to attracting public attention, it is also attractive to advertisers. Thus, the continuity of television programs is increasingly developing and varied. In mass communication, television media has its meaning. Every form of news or information conveyed through television media will be packaged in such a way by the television owner through the television media crew so that it can grab the attention of viewers and the public. [10] Mass communication has a strategic role in responding to the various problems it raises. Mass communication can be a form of early education that directly targets the wider community effectively and efficiently. The results of Latif Syaifudin stated that mass communication had a central role in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, that the problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic which has become a global problem have the potential to trigger a new social order or reconstruction. Thus, it is necessary to have close communication between stakeholders and the community in responding to this problem [11].

TABLE I. NUMBER OF TELEVISION JOURNALISTS MEMBERS OF IJTI NORTH SUMATRA 2021

	SCTV/ Indosiar	MetroTV	tvOne	MNC Group	TransMe dia	Net.TV	TVRI
Korda Siantar-Simalungun	5	4	4	4	2	1	2
Korda Asahan-Batubara-Tanjung Balai	5	3	2	2	1	1	1
Korda Sibolga-Tapanuli Tengah	7	4	4	3	2	2	2
Korda Labuhan Batu-Labuhan Batu Utara-Labuhan Batu Selatan	6	3	3	2	2	2	3
Korda Deli Serdang-Serdang Bedagai-Tebtingtinggi	3	4	4	3	3	2	1
Korda Toba Samosir-Tapanuli Utara-Humbang Hasundutan	6	4	5	4	3	3	2
Korda Kota Medan	2	6	7	5	2	1	5

^a. IJTI North Sumatra 2021

Many television journalists consisting of organic (permanent employees), contributors, and stringers are members of the seven Regional Coordinators or Korda of the Indonesian Television Journalists Association or IJTI North Sumatra in Medan who became informants in this study who have their meaning regarding the journalist profession they are involved in dealing the Covid19 pandemic and the post-Covid19 pandemic. When viewed from the meaning and status, there are differences between television journalists who are organic employees, contributors, and stringers. Some of these organic television journalists are permanent but some are contracted. They have a fixed salary and benefits that the company provides.

Television media companies always rely on them when major coverage occurs, such as natural disasters, accidents that cause casualties, or coverage of conflicts. Meanwhile, contributors are television journalists whose existence is recognized by the company. The contributors are usually those who are contracted with a work agreement, but some are not contracted at all. Legality is not clear. However, in their daily work practices, they do not get fixed salaries or other facilities from television companies. The contributors are paid based on the news broadcast on television. So even though the contributors have carried out coverage, editing, and sending news images to television stations, if the television does not broadcast the results of the contributor's

coverage, the company does not feel obliged to pay for the results of the contributor's coverage.

Meanwhile, stringer, according to D. H. Santoso & Lestari (2017) is a media worker whose journalistic works are often used by television stations. These stringers are in the local and national television industry. In practice, stringers are often tasked with helping contributors' coverage. And it is the contributor who usually pays the results of the stringer's coverage broadcast by the television media. The television media industry, in the past, the era of the birth and presence of TVRI as the first television station always recruited bonded media workers. This means that the media workers' rights take precedence. However, in the last time, media workers are no longer bound by contracts, they are even separated from the system of working agreements with media companies. The Stringer is a freelance who is tasked with finding and digging television media news without being tied to media companies [12].

Television journalists interpret the profession of television journalists as a profession that has meaning based on their job calls as information agents to the public. They realized that without them, the television media industry would be nothing. These television journalists also realize that they are the spearhead in filling news production on the glass screens owned by large investors. Many television journalists interviewed said that in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic they did not focus too much on coverage in the field, especially coverage of the Covid-19 outbreak in Medan City. According to them, coverage in the field will be directly close to resource persons or the public, they do not know whether they are exposed to the coronavirus or not. If what is covered by television journalists is not exposed to Covid-19, the journalistic tasks carried out by television journalists are not too big of a problem. On the other hand, if what is covered in the field are resource persons or the public who are known to be positively exposed to Covid-19, then this is a dilemma for television journalists. Because if it is not covered, they will lose momentum which is news value. However, if they cover the field, the risk for television journalists to contract or be exposed to Covid-19 is quite large.

Most of the journalists chose the second option. They generally choose to return to their homes for steps that are considered safer to avoid the risk of spreading the spread of Covid-19. Television journalists prioritize the safety of their souls and families rather than Covid-19 coverage. Moreover, the number of deaths due to Covid-19 in North Sumatra is getting higher. This situation is another reason television journalists are increasingly afraid to cover the field until the atmosphere returns to normal. The general attitude of the North Sumatra IJTI television journalist of course threatens mass communication and the public's right to get information about Covid-19 and about what information happened in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this study, it was found that communication through the mass media, especially through television, faced challenges in the process of producing news content. Whereas television journalists who are members of IJTI

North Sumatra, whether they are journalists with organic status, contributors, or stringers, most are reluctant to do coverage during the Covid-19 pandemic because they are afraid of contracting the coronavirus outbreak. They prioritize the safety of their souls rather than having to be desperate to cover in the field which is considered to be very at risk of contracting the virus. The attitude of choosing to prioritize safety from the threat of death taken by television journalists is wise. This attitude is also a serious challenge for the wider community to obtain information through mass communication channels, namely television media.

Since last year television journalists have become a profession that has been affected in maintaining their economic life as a journalist. The condition of the television journalists who are members of IJTI North Sumatra is very dependent on the television media company where they work to make a living for television journalists with the status of contributors, let alone stringers. Because almost all television industry businesses have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. The situation of the Covid-19 outbreak, which is difficult to predict when it will end, has made television journalists worried if at any time the television media company they work for closes and no longer operates. Thus, this becomes a serious challenge for the development of mass communication science. The final way to overcome this is to hope that the state and the government will take a serious part in assisting the survival of the mass media and all media crews who work in it, including television journalists

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