# Indonesian Journalist; After Political Reformation

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**Abstract**

For the first time ever, 385 professional journalists in Indonesia have been surveyed, by means of face-to-face interviews, for their basic characteristics and their views on professional values. The findings suggest that the 'typical' Indonesian journalist is young, male, well educated and earns an above-average salary. In terms of education and training, journalists of the archipelago are becoming increasingly professional. They see themselves as neutral and objective disseminators of news, though not as political actors and agents of development. Indonesian journalists disapprove of unscrupulous practices of reporting, yet many of them justify and practice corruption during their everyday work. Although the study's primary focus is on Indonesia, the analysis goes well beyond national boundaries. By subjecting the data to factor analysis, five dimensions of media roles could be extracted, namely public-oriented news journalism, popular service journalism, critical watchdog journalism, objective precision journalism and opinion-oriented news journalism.

**Keywords**: Reformation, New-Order Regime, Critical-watchdog Journalism, Objective-Precision Journalism

## Introduction

It has been over than fifteen years, since Indonesia experienced rapid changes after three decades under Suharto's repressive New Order regime. Journalist nowadays feel challenged by the blessing of press freedom. The controversial re-election of Suharto in March 1998 marked the beginning of a 'fascinating chapter' in Indonesia's media history: Journalists continuously reported on demonstrating students and claims for economic and political reforms (Hidayat, 2002: 174). In fact, the national media coverage of the first free election in the post-Suharto era (1999) shared many similarities with the coverage of general elections in the United States (Manzella, 2000: 310). Under the rule of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), who disposed the Ministry of Information shortly after his accession to power in 1999 (Gazali, 2002: 134), Indonesia experienced a 'golden age of press freedom' (Dharma

et al., 2003: 5). This withdraw of political restrictions on the media system has triggered an exploding demand for young and qualified journalists as the number of media outlets sharply increased.

In the most recent survey of *Freedom House* Indonesia's media system is rated "partly free" (Karlekar, 2003: 92), but many scholars believe that press freedom in Indonesia has led to malpractices and excesses when it comes to news reporting (Dharma et al., 2003; Loeqman, 2003). Moreover, the press has been repeatedly blamed by politicians for being 'tendentious' and 'manipulative' (e.g. Kompas, 18-01-2002 and 05-02-2002). Therefore, many among the political elite have started to think about reconsidering the liberal press law (Andrie, 2002: 6; Dharma et al., 2003: 30; Eisy, 2002: 30). In the meantime, several local and provincial governments have set up agencies for the supervision and control of the media (The Jakarta Post, December 30, 2002). In November 2002, the parliament eventually passed a highly restrictive broadcasting law which is believed to 'give birth to a new authoritarianism' (Sudibyo, 2003).

There is also a growing concern about a significant decline of professionalism in journalism (Arismunandar, 2002: 4; Eisy, 2002: 29). Largely criticized is a loss of accuracy, objectivity, neutrality, completeness and depth in national and local news coverage (Abar, 1998; Ma'ruf, 1999). Most of these developments were traced back to the carelessness of young journalists and the inefficiency of journalism education (Manzella, 2000: 306; Hanitzsch, 2001), as well as to the weak self-control of the press (Dharma et al., 2003: 26). Also, as long as bribery continues to be widespread among journalists (Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000; Eriyanto, 2002), efforts to improve professional awareness in their daily work will remain ineffective.

In Europe and North America, a long tradition of surveying journalists has generated an impressive amount of data. In Indonesia, unlike Bangladesh (Ramaprasad and Rahman, 2004), China (Chen, Zhu and Wu, 1998; Pan and Chan, 2003), Hong Kong (Chan, Lee and Lee, 1992), Taiwan (Lo, 1998), South Korea (Kang, 1993) or Nepal (Ramaprasad and Kelly, 2003), the state of research is quite different. Journalists as professionals have never been investigated systematically for their basic characteristics, work patterns and their views on professional values. This research deficit, I believe, is mainly due to an underdeveloped, non-competitive scientific infrastructure which lacks funding as well as significant encouragement for scholars to conduct research.

Consequently, reflections on journalists, their work and their professional views are mostly limited to essays published in daily newspapers or in journals without significant circulation. Empirical research on journalism has also emigrated to non-academic institutions. As an

example, the Alliance of Independent Journalists (*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen*) has conducted a survey of 276 journalists in East Java (Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000). Another study was carried out more recently by a researcher from the Institute for the Study of the Free Flow of Information (*Institut Studi Arus Informasi*), who surveyed 240 journalists working for news media in the capital Jakarta (Eriyanto 2002). In the middle of the 1990s, Romano (2003) conducted interviews with 65 journalists, but her sample was limited mainly to journalists working in the capital Jakarta.

**Previous studies and external data sources**

*Basic characteristics:* The membership records of the Indonesian Journalists' Association PWI (*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia*) as well as a study conducted in East Java (Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000: 6) both suggest that the share of Indonesian women journalists is only slightly above ten percent. Compared with other countries around the globe, Indonesia scores very low (see Weaver, 1998a: 457).1 As many international studies indicate that women journalists constitute an exceptionally low portion of senior positions within the editorial hierarchy (Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig, 2003: 6), I expected the same to be the case in Indonesia. In terms of salaries, several studies --- such as the one by Budiyanto and Mabroer (2000: 8--50) --- draw a deplorable picture of the living standard and income situation of Indonesian journalists. According to their survey, only 13.8 percent of the journalists interviewed receive a monthly salary of more than one million Rupiah ($ 120 US). Low salaries force 46.4 percent of the journalists to have additional jobs. Speaking about education, there is a wide variance among the data. According to the membership records of the Indonesian Journalists' Association PWI, 35.9 percent of their members hold a college or university degree. Contrary to this, the East Java study found 75.3 percent to have an academic degree. Nothing is known about the patterns of professional education.

*Conceptions of media role:* Many surveys of journalists paid special attention to how journalists perceive their role in society. At an early stage in research history, Cohen (1963: 20) suggested an analytical distinction between a 'neutral role' and a 'participant role'. A decade later, Janowitz (1975: 618--9) proposed a classification comprising 'gatekeeper' and 'advocate' roles. Weaver and Wilhoit (1991: 115) more recently distinguish an 'interpreter', and 'disseminator' from an 'adversary' role. Although these media role conceptions are shared by many journalists around the globe (see Weaver, 1998b: 465-8), some scholars suggest that journalism in Asian societies carries some fundamental values which make 'Asian journalism' different from a Western understanding of journalism (see Masterton, 1996; Massey and Chang 2002; Wong 2004). One of these values, being supportive

of national development, is embodied in the Development Journalism philosophy.2 In the meanwhile, journalists in Indonesia have repeatedly been blamed for being 'biased', 'partisan' and 'provocative' (Dharma et al., 2003: 51; Loeqman, 2003: XIII). According to Anwar (2001: 42--43), the national press served not as a 'watchdog' but as a 'lap dog'. He described the press as 'heartless', 'entertainment-oriented' as well as lacking of any ideology, vision and mission. This picture, however, is quite different from the self-perception of Indonesian journalists who see themselves as 'watchdog' (50.8%), 'agent of empowerment' (21.5%) and agent of 'nation building' (18.5%), but not as 'entertainer' (1.5%) (Romano 2003: 57).

*Ethics of reporting:* The justification of controversial reporting practices has become another important aspect of journalism research since it is related to ethical constraints and normative beliefs within a given society. If there are 'pan-Asian' values in journalism, they must appear in reporting practices. Also, a recent study of Berkowitz, Limor and Singer (2004: 176) provides support for the assumption that the social or national context of news-making may be most important in shaping ethical decisions in journalism. In Indonesia, no empirical data are available on the justification of controversial reporting practices.

*Corruption:* According to the 'TI Corruption Perceptions Index' of 2003, Indonesia is ranked 11$^{th}$ in the world. Given its pervasive and systemic nature (Teggemann, 2003: 143), corruption has penetrated virtually every single aspect of everyday life and needs, therefore, to be seen as a significant aspect of culture throughout the crisis-ridden archipelago. The practice of corruption in journalism has been the subject of a wide public debate since the late 1990s (Christianty, 2001; Prinantyo, 2001; Eriyanto, 2002; Haryatmoko, 2002). Due to its close ties to culture, corruption in Indonesia is often identified as 'culture of envelopes' (Eriyanto, 2002: 38; Prinantyo, 2001: 22; Romano, 2003: 150). The term was chosen because usually bribe money changes hands wrapped in envelopes. The East Java study found 70.3 percent of the journalists to accept 'envelopes' during their everyday work (Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000: 53).

**Objectives of the study**

The primary objective of this study was to draw --- for the first time ever --- a comprehensive picture of Indonesian journalists, who they are and what they think about professional values in journalism. The conceptualization of the study was highly influenced by the work of Weaver and Wilhoit (1991; 1996) and Weischenberg, Löffelholz and Scholl (1998). In my research, I paid specific attention to the following questions which were generated from the review of related literature and relevant data:

RQ1: What are the basic characteristics of journalists in Indonesia, with respect to the situation of women journalists in particular?
RQ2: Are Indonesian journalists merely uneducated amateurs or well-educated professionals?
RQ3: How do Indonesian journalists perceive their role in society? Is the Development Journalism philosophy vital in Indonesia?
RQ4: Which dimensions of the media role conception can be extracted from the data?
RQ5: What factors have the highest impact on the journalists' role conceptions?
RQ6: To what extent do journalists justify controversial methods of reporting?
RQ7: To what extent do Indonesian journalists justify and practise bribery during their work?
RQ8: What are the reasons and motives behind corruption in journalism?

**Methodology**

The findings of the present study are based on standardized face-to-face interviews with a total of 385 journalists in Indonesia, conducted between August 2001 and February 2002. Due to a lack of basic data regarding the number of journalists and the quantitative structure of the Indonesian media system, a multi-step research design was chosen. The first step was to define the population and estimate the number of journalists.

Most empirical studies on journalists look at their object of research from an individualistic perspective. Weaver and Wilhoit (1991: 219), for example, defined journalists 'as those who have editorial responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information'. This approach could be summarized by the formula: 'Journalism is what journalists do, and journalist is who works in journalism.' Instead of using this strategy, I employed a system-theoretical approach to the study as suggested by Scholl (1996). As part of my conceptualization, I first identified journalism and journalists with respect to their essential functional contribution to modern society. Journalism as a social system was distinguished from other areas of public communication such as public relations (affiliated with the communicative needs of a certain organization), arts (fictional in character) as well as non-professional and non-periodic media. Second, journalism was differentiated into organizations providing contents for print, broadcasting and online media. Third, professional roles related to the 'core' of journalism, which consists of investigating, selecting,

writing and editing news accounts, were identified. The concept of 'news accounts' was used in a broader sense including hybrid formats such as infotainment or edutainment, lifestyle magazines and special interest publications. Those media outlets and formats should be considered as another mode of journalism ('popular journalism') rather than as something apart from journalism.[3] As a consequence, I did not limit the sample to news journalists only.

The size of the population was estimated by a two-step procedure. First, the investigation of the absolute number of media organizations relevant to journalism produced a total of 1,323 items. The data were gathered from various sources such as the Indonesian Association of Newspaper Publishers (*Serikat Penerbit Pers*) and the Indonesian Union of Private Radio Broadcasters (*Persatuan Radio Siaran Swasta Nasional Indonesia*). Then, I obtained data from 75 media organizations regarding the number and structure of their editorial staff. From this, the overall number of Indonesian journalists was projected to more than 23,000 individuals, 81 percent of which work for magazines as well as daily, weekly and Sunday newspapers. Thus, the average penetration of the entire population is about eleven journalists per 100,000 inhabitants. This is not much if compared to other countries such as Taiwan (25 journalists per 100,000 inhabitants), South Korea (87), Germany (66) or the United States (47) (see Weaver, 1998b: 457-8).

Being an archipelago consisting of almost 14,000 islands, Indonesia posed some challenges to the researcher due to its vast geographical distances. As Hardjana (2000) and Siregar (2002: 3) have pointed out, 75 percent of all Indonesian media organizations operate from the main island Java and half from the capital Jakarta. Due to financial reasons, I decided not to draw a representative sample but to focus on three highly populated provinces (out of 26 at that time). According to the various degrees of industrialization, the affiliation to centre/periphery and different composition of ethnic groups, half of the sample was drawn from Jakarta (West Java; centre, high level of industrialization, predominantly Javanese and Sundanese), one quarter from Yogyakarta (Central Java; periphery, low level of industrialization, predominantly Javanese) and another quarter from North Sumatra (periphery, medium level of industrialization, predominantly Sumatra, Javanese and Malay).[4] By a random sampling procedure, a list of media organizations was generated, and from there a gross number of 480 journalists were randomly selected to be interviewed in person. Finally, 385 valid interviews were successfully completed, representing a response rate of 80 percent.

## Findings and discussion

### Basic Characteristics

The 'typical' journalist in Indonesia is 35 years old, male, married, has one or two children and has worked in the field of journalism for nine years (see Table 1). Most journalists are members of journalists' associations, which is partly due to the fact that during the New Order regime all journalists were required to be a member of the Indonesian Journalists' Association PWI (*Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia*) by a ministerial decree from 1969. After the downfall of Suharto in 1998, the number of journalists' associations in Indonesia has sharply increased, in 2003 the national Press Council (*Dewan Pers*) counted 43 different professional associations, 26 of which agreed on a common standard code of ethical conduct (*Kode Etik Wartawan Indonesia*). Although the PWI 'has repeatedly failed to support journalists' actions against ministerial intervention, particularly arbitrary withdrawals of publication permits' (Sen & Hill, 2000: 55), the association is still the largest of its kind in Indonesia. Younger journalists, however, seem to be less keen to join a professional association.

Four out of five journalists hold a college or university degree, 1.6 percent of them a Master degree, only 14.4 percent have not completed any professional education. Since journalists are quite well educated in proportion to the overall population, it seems legitimate to label them as an 'educated elite'. Younger journalists tend to be even more educated than their older colleagues, indicating a steady professionalization in the field ($X^2$=25.4; d.f.=6; p<.001). In terms of professional education, it turned out that only one out of nine journalists has majored in journalism. Another 22 percent have completed their studies in communication or a related field, and 18.8 percent have completed a professional training in journalism. The fact that 47.9 percent of all journalists did not finish any professional education related to the field of journalism is partly due to the low efficiency of the national journalism education in coping with the fast-moving needs of the profession. Many editors in chief have also expressed their reluctance to recruit university graduates from journalism and communications, having seen that they were not well prepared for the challenges of the profession.

TABLE 1: Basic characteristics (N=385)

| | **Women** | **Men** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average age (Median; years) | 29.9 | 37.0 | 35.0 |
| Married | 69.0% | 51.2% | 65.1% |
| Average number of children | 1.01 | 1.45 | 1.35 |
| Holding college degree | 81.6% | 79.9% | 80.2% |
| Majoring in Journalism | 17.4% | 9.1% | 10.8% |
| Member of journalists' association | 48.5% | 60.5% | 58.1% |
| Having additional jobs | 25.9% | 25.1% | 25.2% |
| Has worked in journalism (years) | 6.7 | 9.4 | 9.0 |
| | 22.1% | 77.9% | 100.0% |

This study has found women journalists to be a small minority in editorial offices in Indonesia, although the percentage is not as small as other data sources suggest (e.g. PWI; Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000: 6). This low percentage is probably caused by professional self-selection as a result from women being more attracted to work in public relations than in journalism (Romano, 2003: 109). Furthermore, women journalists tend to be younger and have less professional experience than do their male colleagues as they enter the profession on an earlier stage in their lives. They are more likely to be married, but they are also less likely to have (many) children. Obviously, combining career and family appears to be difficult for women journalists, given the fact that family is defined as their first duty (Romano, 2003: 113) and news work basically requires total dedication and commitment to 'immediate' demands, as pointed out by Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2003: 21):

> This deters many women, most of whom are interested in granting their professional life an important but not exclusive status in the complicated mosaic of home-family-work. These women, acutely aware at an early age of what each profession demands, tend therefore to avoid the field of news journalism on the assumption/certainty that such work will almost surely upset the desired balance between the various important elements in their lives.

In terms of professional education, women journalists turned out to be better prepared than men journalists. In contrast, they are less likely to be members of journalists' associations than men. The highest percentage of women (25.4%) was found among those with low editorial responsibilities such as reporters, junior editors, assistants, news writers and correspondents. Among journalists who have high editorial responsibility (editors in chief, program directors, senior managers, etc.) the share of women was significantly lower (10.4%; $X^2$=9.22; d.f.=2; p<.01). Since journalism still remains a 'man's job' in Indonesia, it comes with no surprise when women are less likely to be found in higher positions in the editorial hierarchy. Moreover, the career opportunities for women do not seem to be very promising, given the fact that most Indonesians still look upon women journalists as 'strange individuals who jump out of what they are supposed to be' (Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000: 6).

**Conceptions of media role**

Although role conception is pluralistic by nature, Indonesian journalists see themselves mainly as neutral and objective disseminators of information. As Table 2 reveals, 'getting information to the public neutrally and precisely', 'depicting reality as it is', 'staying away from stories with

unverified content' and 'getting information to the public quickly' turned out to be the most important communication goals. These are the 'classical' values of a Western understanding of journalism which requires neutrality, impartiality and objectivity.

No evidence was found, however, to verify the assertion made by Patterson (1998: 17) that 'journalists are increasingly influential political actors'. Indonesian journalists clearly do not carry any prior intention to disseminate their opinion (partisanship), to set the political agenda or to serve as an adversary of the government and business, even though they rate values such as 'criticism' and 'control' high. During the New Order regime, which ruled the country for three decades, the power elites obviously succeeded in their efforts to systematically depoliticize journalism. This has led to a kind of 'A said X and B said Y' journalism that passively relied on official sources and statements. Most critical journalists were found in national quality newspapers being circulated throughout the country.

On the other hand, to support national development, which represents the main characteristic of Development Journalism, does not seem to be a primary goal for Indonesian journalists. Only less than 25 percent of the journalists interviewed found 'supporting national development' to be an 'extremely important' communication goal. These results concur with the findings from Romano's (2003) Indonesia survey and also with other studies conducted in North Africa, India, Nigeria, Tanzania and Bangladesh (Chaudhary, 2000; Murthy, 2000; Ramaprasad, 2003; Ramaprasad and Rahman 2004). Despite its normative importance and presence in journalism education, Development Journalism doesn't seem to be a primary communication goal to journalists neither in Indonesia nor in other developing nations in Asia.

TABLE 2: Role perception

| Communication goals | **N** | **$\bar{x}$ *** | **Saying 'extremely important'** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Get information to the public neutrally and precisely | 363 | 3.52 | 53.5% |
| Depict reality as it is | 365 | 3.29 | 40.0% |
| Support disadvantaged people | 359 | 3.28 | 40.0% |
| Criticize bad states of affairs | 358 | 3.24 | 37.5% |
| Control politics, business, and society | 360 | 3.11 | 26.8% |
| Stay away from stories with unverified content | 355 | 3.09 | 38.5% |
| Get information to the public quickly | 353 | 3.09 | 35.7% |
| Convey positive ideals | 361 | 2.98 | 24.6% |
| Provide analyses and interpretations of complex problems | 367 | 2.96 | 20.6% |
| Investigate claims and statements of the government | 353 | 2.95 | 29.4% |
| Help people in their everyday life | 357 | 2.94 | 24.3% |
| Concentrate on news which is of interest for the widest audience | 354 | 2.89 | 27.3% |
| Support national development | 352 | 2.88 | 22.1% |
| Give ordinary people the chance to express their views | 357 | 2.75 | 23.5% |
| Refer to intellectual and cultural interests of the public | 356 | 2.74 | 17.2% |
| Present new trends and convey new ideas | 350 | 2.74 | 16.4% |

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|---|---|---|---|
| Provide entertainment and relaxation | 355 | 2.61 | 13.7% |
| Discuss national policy while it is still being developed | 353 | 2.38 | 12.7% |
| Influence the political agenda | 347 | 2.25 | 12.5% |
| Serve as adversary of the government by being sceptical | 347 | 2.12 | 9.0% |
| Provide opinion to the public | 356 | 2.10 | 11.2% |
| Serve as adversary of business by being sceptical | 351 | 2.08 | 6.6% |

Scale range: 4=’extremely important’ to 1=’not important’

TABLE 3: Dimensions of media role conception (factor loadings)

| Communication goals | Public-oriented news journalism | Popular service journalism | Critical watchdog journalism | Objective precision journalism | Opinion-oriented news journalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Refer to intellectual and cultural interests of the public | .75 | | | | |
| Concentrate on news which is of interest for the widest audience | .68 | | | .46 | |
| Stay away from stories with unverified content | .62 | | | | |
| Give ordinary people the chance to express their views | .61 | | | | |
| Discuss national policy while it is still being developed | .58 | | .47 | | |
| Investigate claims and statements of the government | .56 | | | | |
| Support national development | .51 | | | | |
| Get information to the public quickly | .46 | .43 | | .41 | |
| Provide entertainment and relaxation | | .81 | | | |
| Present new trends and convey new ideas | | .71 | | | |
| Help people in their everyday life | | .63 | | | |
| Control politics, business, and society | | | .79 | | |
| Criticize bad states of affairs | | | .58 | | |
| Convey positive ideals | | .51 | .57 | | |
| Influence the political agenda | | | .55 | | |
| Depict reality as it is | | | | .79 | |
| Get information to the public neutrally and precisely | | | | .74 | |
| Provide opinion to the public | | | | | .81 |
| Provide analyses and interpretations of complex problems | | | | | .67 |
| *Eigenvalue* | *6.46* | *1.55* | *1.27* | *1.13* | *1.09* |
| *Variance explained* | *34.0%* | *8.1%* | *6.7%* | *5.9%* | *5.7%* |

PCA Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization; KMO=.89; Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity p<.001

Drawing from the assumption that the journalists’ conception of media role is multidimensional, I subjected the data to Principal Component Analysis. Three items were excluded from the model: The items ‘serve as adversary of the government’ and ‘serve as adversary of business’ were suspended since they set up an independent dimension of very low relevance. Perhaps, an adversarial understanding of journalism (as the ‘fourth estate’) provokes strong disapproval among journalists, especially in an Asian

setting. Serving as an adversary seems more proper in Western 'adversarial democracies' which are characterized by a permanent competition between the ruling party and its opposition. In Indonesia, as in many other Asian nations, democracy is strongly oriented toward 'consensus' (Hsiung, 1985). Additionally, the item 'support disadvantaged people' was excluded because of its low statistical communality.

As Table 3 shows, the factor analysis extracted five dimensions from the data. *Public-oriented news journalism* as the main factor, explaining 34 percent of the overall variance, does strongly refer to the interests and the needs of the public ('refer to intellectual and cultural interests of the public', 'concentrate on news which is of interest to the widest audience'). This kind of journalism is also political ('discuss national policy while it is still being developed', 'investigate claims and statements of the government') and incorporates constituents of the Development Journalism philosophy ('support national development', 'give ordinary people the chance to express their views').

The second factor, *popular service journalism*, is strongly oriented toward entertainment ('providing entertainment and relaxation') and everyday life practices ('presenting new trends and convey new ideas', 'helping people in their everyday life'). This concept of journalism does mainly focus on the problems of everyday life and has emerged along with the popular media (Hartley, 1996). Eide and Knight (1999: 526) see the rise of service journalism as a reaction to 'growing scepticism, hostility and resistance towards dependency on established forms of professional expertise, and the demand for greater individual autonomy'.

*Critical watchdog journalism* is the third factor. This dimension of the journalists' perception of media role inherently refers to criticism ('criticize bad states of affairs') and control ('control politics, business, and society'). It seeks to influence the political agenda without drawing from personal opinion. The influence on the political discourse rather emerges from reporting bad states of affairs and criticism of others from an impartial stance, according to the philosophy 'Let's speak the facts for themselves'. The critical watchdog journalism, however, does not only critisize and control, but it also conveys positive ideals as alternative options to what is criticized.

The *objective precision journalism*, on the other hand, heavily draws from the traditional Western values in journalism such as neutrality and accuracy ('getting information to the public neutrally and precisely') as well as from an epistemologically naïve realism ('depicting reality as it is'). It places emphasis on the classical notion of objectivity in the sense of news being a 'mirror of reality', overlooking the selective character of news which is only a representation of the world (Schudson, 2003: 33). The objective

precision journalism also places particular emphasis on the exactness of news coverage and thus shares this ideal with the practice of *precision journalism* (Meyer, 1991), though it needs further investigation to determine whether this kind of journalism applies scientific methods, objectivity and ideals to reporting. In contrast to this, the *opinion-oriented news journalism* as the fifth factor does not aim to be objective; rather, its primary intention is to provide opinion, analyses and interpretations of complex problems to the public. Despite mainly drawing from personal opinion, this kind of journalism does not necessarily carry a political message. Providing opinion is not primarily intended to influence the public discourse or to change the political agenda.

The multiple regression analysis revealed that public-oriented news journalism is most likely to be found among journalists who work for private television stations (see Table 4). This mainstream understanding of journalism fits most the characteristics of commercial televisions news which strongly relies on its ability to attract largest possible audience shares. Interestingly, Indonesia's private television stations are not, like in many Western countries (Hartley, 1996), the precursors of a popular (service) journalism. Public-oriented news journalism is also valued among those who invest a higher amount of time in editing wire news and press releases, as well as in the administration and coordination of editorial work. I can thus assume that this journalism concept is a trait of decision makers in editorial offices. Additionally, public-oriented news journalism is considered vital by journalists who have graduated from journalism and who are privately connected with decision makers from non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, it is less likely to be found among those who work for local and regional daily newspapers and who are less satisfied with their job situation.

TABLE 4: Predictors of media role conception (standardized regression coefficients)

| | Public-oriented news journalism | Popular service journalism | Critical watchdog journalism | Objective precision journalism | Opinion-oriented news journalism |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Local/regional daily | -.24*** | | | | .13** |
| State-owned television | | | -.14** | | |
| State-owned radio | | | | -.14** | .12* |
| Private television | .10* | | | | .15** |
| Weekly hours of work | | | | | -.10* |
| Average time spent for news selection | | .12* | | | |
| Average time spent for editing wire news and press releases | .13** | | | | |
| Average time spent for administration and coordination | .12** | | | | |
| Average time spent for producing | | .13** | | | |
| Editing received | | .24*** | | -.10* | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Job satisfaction | -.14** | | | | |
| Professional course in journalism | | | | | -.15** |
| Graduated from journalism | .11* | | | | |
| Member of journalist association | | | .15** | | |
| Province of Yogyakarta | | | -.11* | | -.16** |
| Level of formal education | | | | .14** | |
| Affiliated to Islam | | -.11* | | | |
| Private relationships with decision makers in politics | | .14** | .22*** | | |
| Private relationships with decision makers in NGO's | .19*** | | .17** | | |
| *Variance explained (adj. $R^2$)* | *17.4%* | *11.0%* | *14.6%* | *4.5%* | *13.8%* |
| F | *12.6* | *10.5* | *14.2* | *7.1* | *8.7* |
| *p* | *<.001* | *<.001* | *<.001* | *<.001* | *<.001* |

Stepwise regression, $p_{in}$<.05, $p_{out}$<.1; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Popular service journalism is most likely to emerge among journalists who invest much time in news selection and (the technical side of) news production. Since this kind of journalism deals with entertainment issues and problems of everyday life, it probably has mainly to do with compiling information gathered from other sources such as the internet and other media. It seems that service journalism is a forerunner of fundamental changes in the social functions of the news. In a world where virtually any kind of information is accessible via internet journalism moves away from merely disseminating information to selecting what is relevant. News people thus become 'search engines' (Hartley, 2000: 43) that help their audiences to navigate through the problems of everyday life.

Critical watchdog journalism is less vital among journalists who work for state-owned television stations, which indicates that, even several years after the downfall of the Suharto regime, journalists working for the state-owned television network TVRI are still uneasy about critical reporting. Also, journalists who work in the province of Yogyakarta, which is far less urban than the capital Jakarta, are less attracted by the philosophy of a critical watchdog journalism. This, I assume, is partly due to the strong influence of the Javanese culture, which is predominant in Yogyakarta. The principles of harmony and respect for authority, which have relatively high regard in the Javanese culture (Magnis-Suseno, 1984: 38; Nasution, 1996: 52), are obstacles to public criticism and thus to the conduct of critical watchdog journalism. Interestingly, this kind of journalism is highly associated with having private ties with decision makers in politics and non-governmental organizations. Obviously, the closeness to those potentially influential persons does not prevent Indonesian journalists from being a critical watchdog.

Objective precision journalism is most likely to be found among educated journalists, while it is less probable to be adopted by those working

for state-owned radio stations and whose news accounts get only little editing from others. However, my data on the objective precision journalism has to be carefully interpreted, given the variance explained by the regression model is very low (4.5%). Opinion-oriented news journalism, on the other hand, is most likely practised among journalists from local and regional dailies, state-owned radio stations and private television stations. Media organizations operating in these areas seem to devote more space for journalists to express their personal views. Also, opinion-oriented news journalism is less likely to appear among journalists who have attended a professional training in journalism. This dimension of the conception of media role is less vital among those who live in Yogyakarta, which again points to the basic principles of Javanese culture. In order to avoid unpleasant consequences from firsthand criticism, these journalists express personal opinion 'through the mouth of others'.

**Ethics of reporting**

In terms of the justification of controversial methods of reporting, Table 5 shows a double-sided structure. It seems that unconventional methods of reporting based on 'harmless deceptions' --- such as 'pretending another opinion or attitude', 'claiming to be somebody else', 'using hidden microphones and cameras' and 'getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information' --- have a much bigger chance to be justified by Indonesian journalists. These methods could be seen as part of the *investigative journalism* philosophy, which also includes 'using confidential government documents without authorization'. However, to make use of confidential documents was disapproved by more than two thirds of the journalists, but was approved by 71 percent of those working for national quality newspapers. Altogether, the practice of *investigative journalism* is most valued in those papers which could be considered high-impact newspapers as they have a good reputation and national circulation.

TABLE 5: Controversial reporting practices

| Reporting practices | **N** | **Saying 'may be justified'** |
|---|---|---|
| Pretend another opinion or attitude | 300 | 80.1% |
| Claim to be somebody else | 332 | 70.2% |
| Use hidden microphones and cameras | 299 | 68.3% |
| Paying people for confidential information | 340 | 67.3% |
| Get employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information | 269 | 62.1% |
| Use confidential government documents without authorization | 324 | 31.7% |
| Use personal documents without permission | 311 | 29.2% |
| Badge unwilling informants to get a story | 319 | 17.6% |
| Agree to protect confidentiality and not doing so | 322 | 8.1% |

Interestingly too, there is a large gap between journalists in Jakarta and their colleagues in the more remote provinces North Sumatra and Yogyakarta. While 47.2 percent of the journalists in Jakarta justified the use of confidential documents, the percentage was much lower in North Sumatra (28.4 percent) and Yogyakarta (29.9 percent). As explanation for this result may serve the fact that journalists working in the country's capital have more opportunities to come into contact with confidential government documents.

At the same time, unscrupulous reporting practices which are potentially harmful and come along with ethical violations --- such as 'agreeing to protect confidentiality but not doing so' and 'badgering unwilling informants to get a story'--- are justified only under certain circumstances by a small number of journalists. The 'use of personal documents without permission' was also disapproved by most of the journalists. Additionally, journalists having less formal education tend to be more aggressive in terms of investigation. Therefore, I suggest to reconsider commonplace assertions made by Indonesian politicians who blame journalists for their unethical and unscrupulous practices of investigation. At least, the problem of reporting methods needs to been seen more sophisticated with regard to the nuances in different branches of journalism.

The percentage of journalists who justified the practice of 'chequebook journalism' --- that is, 'paying people for confidential information' --- is an interesting feature of Indonesian journalism, too. More than two thirds of the journalists interviewed see no ethical problems with this method of obtaining confidential information. Even though Indonesia has no strong tradition of investigative reporting, the percentage is even higher than in Great Britain (65%; Henningham and Delano, 1998: 156). Given corruption is in Indonesia a matter of course even in everyday life and journalists thus got used to bribery in reporter-source interactions, it comes as no surprise when journalists do not shrink from paying money for secret information.

**Corruption**

When Indonesian journalists were asked about their attitudes toward corruption in daily reporting and whether or not they practice it, they surprisingly spoke very openly about it. More than one third (37.4 percent) of them said that they would justify corrupt practices in journalism, but it depends on the particular context, that is, the specific situation and person offering the bribe.[5] Another 2.9 percent admitted that they would justify corruption in journalism regardless of any specific context. Nevertheless, 59.7 percent of the journalists did not justify bribery.

Turning from attitude to practice, we could see that more than 46.2 percent of the journalists interviewed do actually accept bribe money, at least

occasionally, while working on a story. Obviously, some of them are on the horns of a moral dilemma since they practice corruption even though they do not justify it. On the other hand, 44.1 percent of the journalists said that they would always refuse offered 'envelopes', another 9.7 percent said that they would accept the envelopes first and forward them to the editorial management which, later on, passes the envelopes back to the 'source'. The last way of handling is intended to 'save face' (Romano, 2003: 156f.) and thus to make sure that the person who offers money to the journalist will not be offended by a direct refusal, which is culturally considered impolite (Eriyanto, 2002: 40). Hence, although in Indonesia the number of journalists who justify and practice bribery is indeed alarming, I have to notice that a majority of their colleagues clearly disapprove of corruption. Thus, the findings of the East Java study (Budiyanto and Mabroer, 2000) could not be supported by our research.

However, it is evident from the data that journalists employed by public or state-owned media companies are more likely to be tempted by the benefits of receiving 'envelopes' during their work. Table 6 reveals that journalists employed by TVRI (*Televisi Republik Indonesia*), RRI (*Radio Republik Indonesia*) and '*Antara'* (official news agency) are significantly more likely to advocate the acceptance of 'envelopes' during their work. Since corruption is an everyday phenomenon in the Indonesian bureaucracy, it is not surprising if journalists working for state-run media, who have been integrated in the government structure for years, share a positive attitude towards bribery.

TABLE 6: Justifying corruption and media ownership

| Media ownership | **Saying 'justified'** | **Saying 'justified, but depends on context'** | **Saying 'not justified'** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public/state-run | 8.8% | 57.5% | 33.6% | 100.0% |
| Private | 4.5% | 30.5% | 65.1% | 100.0% |

N = 382; $X^2$ = 31.9; d.f.=2; p<.001

Furthermore, my findings indicate that cultural factors such as ethnicity and territory have a significant impact on the justification and practice of corruption: The highest degree of resistance to corruption could be found among journalists in the capital Jakarta, while their colleagues in North Sumatra have the greatest tendency to justify corruption ($X^2$=13.1; d.f.=4; p<.05). Further inquiry did prove that this difference is mainly triggered by the factor ethnicity. Journalists who belong to the ethnic group of the Sumatra, predominant in North Sumatra, turned out to be most attracted to corruption if compared to the Sundanese, Javanese and Malay

($X^2$=13.9; d.f.=6; p<.05). The Sundanese and Javanese are the major constituencies of the Jakarta's and Yogyakarta's population.

When it comes to motives and causes, corruption in journalism is often seen as related to insufficient pay (Habito-Cadiz, 1996: 104; Peters, 2003: 52). According to Dharma et al. (2003: 25), low salaries force Indonesian journalists to accept 'envelopes' in order to be able to 'maintain a humane standard of living'. Previous inquiries, however, produced some evidence which gives support to the view that bribery in journalism is much more related to culture than to low pay (Eriyanto, 2002: 42). My study points to a similar explanation: The data produced no significant correlation between the income level of the respondents and the extent to which they justify/practise corruption. In fact, only 19.7 percent of all journalists who accept 'envelopes' during their everyday work could confirm that they do so because of insufficient pay.

Obviously, my findings make a good case for the assumption that the causes and motives for corruption in journalism are to a large extent related to everyday culture (Budiyanto and Mabroer 2000; Eriyanto 2002). Bribery seems to be an instrument of maintaining 'good connections' between the journalist and the 'donor'. Many journalists, however, legitimize their acceptance of 'envelopes' with the argument that they don't want to offend the person offering the bribe through a direct refusal of the 'envelope'. This 'formula of politeness' refers to a motivational structure which prioritizes the cultural adequacy and the suitability of social action with regard to its probable costs, that is, the refusal of a bribe could result in a loss of trust. This indicates that corruption will persist as long as there are persons who expect to be bribed (journalists) and others who expect the journalists to accept the bribe.

## Conclusion

Surprisingly, Indonesian journalists look quite similar to their colleagues around the globe: They are mostly young and well educated men, earning above average salaries. Although younger journalists tend to be more reluctant to membership in journalists' associations, journalists in Indonesia seem to become increasingly professional in terms of education. But whether or not this professionalism becomes manifest in their daily work needs to be further investigated by means of content analysis. Indonesian journalists also share many basic professional views with their counterparts in other countries as they primarily see themselves as neutral disseminator of news.

A cross-national comparison of my results with data compiled by Weaver (1998b) nevertheless revealed some fine-grained differences in terms of the journalist' professional views. But whether these differences can be seen as evidence for the existence of 'pan-Asian' values is hard to say,

given the heterogeneities among Asian (China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan) as well as Western (Australia, France, Great Britain, United States) journalists are more than obvious. As Ali (1996: 147) has pointed out, the continent's 'diversity of religions, ideologies, traditions, political systems, and levels of development make it almost impossible to define a set of values applicable to all of Asia'. If anything, Indonesia's journalists are, to some extent, similar to their colleagues from Taiwan as they place less emphasis on the role of the 'watchdog' and 'adversary'. Chinese and Hong Kong journalists, however, are much more likely to emphasize the 'watchdog role', which makes them similar to their colleagues in Australia, Great Britain and the United States. In terms of reporting methods, Asian journalists seem to be more likely to disapprove of using official documents which are confidential (Weaver, 1998b: 471).

This kind of comparison, however, faces some serious methodological problems as the data did not originate from taylor-made cross-national studies but from single-nation researches using different conceptualizations and methods.(6) Whether or not journalists throughout Asia share some cultural values different from those of Western journalists needs to be investigated by systematic and taylor-made comparative research including many Asian as well as non-Asian countries. Zhu et al. (1997: 94) concluded from their three-country comparison of journalists from China, Taiwan and the United States that cultural variables tend to have a lower impact on the journalists' professional views than do the differences between political systems. Also, Berkowitz, Limor and Singer (2004: 176), who tested the influence of several factors on the journalists' ethical decisions in Israel and the United States, found the journalists' backgrounds only marginally important to professional views. In my study individual characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity and religious affiliation had no or only little influence on the journalists' role perception and judgements of reporting methods. Only the factor ethnicity appeared to be of some importance here, in particular when it comes to critical reporting. The cultural backgrounds of the journalists' socialization seems to play, at least to some extent and under certain circumstances, a role in defining their professional role in society. Hence, given these fine-grained but nevertheless important differences among journalists who belong to distinct ethnic groups in Indonesia, how could we assume the existence of a common set of values and beliefs carried by *all* Asian journalists?

Although a significant number of journalists in Indonesia justified and practised bribery during their everyday work, it is worth noting that corruption in journalism is not limited to Indonesia, but is actually a common practice in many developing countries and even in industrialized nations (Peters, 2003: 52). With regard to causes and motives for corruption, it has

become obvious that insufficient pay is not a main reason to become compromised by bribe money. As a matter of fact, most journalists who accept 'envelopes' during their work do so because they believe that accepting bribes would not have consequences in terms of human behaviour. This belief may work as an excuse, but it is a dangerous illusion. The public discourse and journalism education in particular needs to raise more consciousness among news people. Journalists need to understand that accepting 'envelopes' does also trigger subtle effects, which often result in a reluctance of the journalists to take action toward the giver. Furthermore, many journalists get involved in practices of corruption because the editorial management does not prohibit them from doing so. This means that more restrictive editorial regulations and more editorial control could help to prevent journalists from selling out their autonomy by accepting 'envelopes'.

Most strikingly, my findings support the assumption that the causes and motives for corruption in journalism are to a large extent related to everyday culture. There are journalists who expect to be offered 'envelopes' and others who expect the journalists to accept the bribe. The way these mutual expectations interact generates a vicious cycle of expectation and anticipation, both of which form the setting of subsequent interactions: If the 'donor' does not offer a bribe, he may worry that the journalist will express his disappointment by negative news coverage; and if the journalist does not accept the bribe, he may hurt the giver's feelings and mutual trust may be put at risk.

**Notes**

1. Any comparison with data compiled in 'The Global Journalist', edited by Weaver (1998b), is limited in scope due to different time frames and conceptualization of research.
2. For detailed discussion of this journalism concept, see, for instance, McKay (1993) or Wong (2004).\
3. The concept of 'popular journalism' is widely discussed within the scientific community. See, for example, Fiske (1992) and Hartley (1996).
4. Data obtained from the Indonesian Central Office for Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*), 2002.
5. Although corruption takes the form of bribery, extortion or nepotism (Alatas, 1968: 11), a narrower notion of corruption, tied to the everyday life experience of Indonesian journalists, was used in my research. I defined corruption in journalism as accepting material returns from actual or potential sources of news reporting.
6. Weaver (1998a: 455) once wrote: 'Comparing journalists across national boundaries and cultures is a game of guesswork at best.' I am well aware that any comparison of these studies remains problematic due to different

conceptualizations, methods and operational definitions, but many of these surveys have borrowed questions from the original questionnaire of Weaver and Wilhoit (1991). Whereas the data compiled in Weaver (1998b) have been obtained between 1986 and 1996, only the study of Weaver et al. (2003) is recent. For a critical discussion of international comparisons in mass communication research, see Chang et al. (2001).

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