The Roles of Local Media from Partners Perspective A Silver Line When Its Existence Is Questioned

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Abstract

When the local media gets a lot of negative reviews and its existence is questioned, it is interesting to explore the partnerships between local media and parties who provide support in various forms. The relationship may be based on a number of expectations of the partners on the role that can be played by the local media. This study seeks to reveal the meaning of the local media existence from external parties such as local community leaders, pressure groups, and government officials in West Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The focus of the research is on the form and pattern of partnerships between the local media and the above parties, along with the role of local journalism perceived by these partners. The research data was obtained through a qualitative method with interview techniques to the mentioned sources in 2019 and 2020, followed by observation and document tracing. The results show that each partner established a different partnership pattern with the local media depending on their particular needs and policies. The partnership is based on an assessment of certain roles that are still being carried out by the local media and are expected by these partners. Partners as the external party still view local media as a strategic collaborator at least in assisting the socialization and dissemination of certain

programs or information. Some of the informants still rely on the local media and hope that the role played by the local media will improve in the future. Although each of the local media partners has managed their own media, the local media has been considered to hold the public legitimacy.

Keywords

journalism performance; public legitimacy; local media; journalism role; Sumatera Barat;

Introduction

It is significant to reveal the views and assessments of external parties towards local media institutions to ensure the position of local media in the community. As we know that the existence and sustainability of local media, including local newspapers with all the negative attributes they carry, is highly dependent on parties outside the media who directly or indirectly support the existence of the media (Fadilah, E., Bajari, A., Suryana, A., & Hasan, 2020).

External parties of local media institutions, among others, establish a partnership. In addition to partnership reasons, the existence of these parties is very crucial. They are part of social forces outside the local media which can be both pressure and an opportunity for the existence and sustainability of local media. Gerbner in McQuail (McQuail, 2011) calls it the 'role of external power' consisting of advertising clients, competitors (fellow press institutions), authorities, particularly legal and political authorities, experts, other institutions, and the public. Shoemaker and Reese (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014) place external media parties at the level of social institutions (previously called the extra media level).

The media continuously reshape itself in line with the dynamics of relations with outside institutions. This relationship is illustrated by the dependency of media on news sources, both from government officials and from various interest groups, including relationships with advertisers and corporate Public Relations (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

These external parties have their own views on the existence and role of local media. This study seeks to reveal the role they feel and see from local newspapers that serve the main market in West Sumatra. At least, the perceived and seen role is a signal of hope for the importance of the presence of local journalism in the midst of society as well as input for local media managers and journalists in West Sumatra.

Local press or regional press is defined as a press company that is owned by residents, produces locally using local resources, reports on local issues, and is read or consumed by residents (Franklin, 2006). In this research, local press refers to news media that are oriented towards serving certain regional audiences at the provincial, city, and regency level, and managed by local resources.

Thus far, the performance of local governments has been in the spotlight because, in some ways, it is quite alarming. Local media are perceived to be less independent, less professional, and less promising in business (Nugroho, 2011). At the same time, there are doubts regarding the function of local media as guardians of democracy in the regions (Haryanto, 2011). Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, the local press is quite significant because around 90% of the press institutions are regional press (Dewan Pers Indonesia, 2020).

The role of the local press as a channel of local information and supervision of local government administration is still needed and even strengthened from time to time (Ekström, Johansson, & Larsson, 2006). Likewise, although the development of information technology allows every organization or individual to manage the media and convey their own messages, the presence of news media institutions such as local media is still needed. The government communication team or the Leeds City Hall PR team views the local mass media as a tool or method of publicity and impression management because it has a quality relationship with local residents. Journalists view that the role of the media is still in line with the fundamental norms of journalism in democracy, namely as guard dogs for local governments, by prioritizing the principles of objectivity and neutrality in carrying out their professions for the public interest. In line with the views of the Leeds City Hall PR team, the journalists view their function and role as a key link between local government and the public as well as carrying out the role of public services in terms of information fulfillment. They view their media as a primary and trusted source of information (Firmstone & Coleman, 2014).

The local press has not been the main subject of research in journalism studies in recent years. Local press subjects, including local news, tend to receive less attention and are even considered as stepchildren in both journalism praxis and journalism studies (Harnischmacher, 2014). In Germany, the local media market is still relatively healthy, with high circulation and professionalism of journalists. However, local media still ranks second after national newspapers and the broadcasting sector in terms of quality and status. Even in Germany there are two categories or labels, quality newspapers and local newspapers. Quality newspapers mean national newspapers, while local newspapers still mean local newspapers so that in the extreme, it seems that local newspapers are considered not of quality (Harnischmacher, 2014).

If we want to examine the relevance of the existence of the local press, then the disclosure of this role is one of the right ways because the role of journalism is part of the central topic in journalistic studies. Furthermore, it is seen as the main route for understanding the identity and place of journalism in society. Examining the role of journalism brings us to the core area in which the culture and identity of journalism are reproduced in a situation of tug of war between various parties or interests and has the potential to present a picture of the dynamics of the ongoing preservation and transformation of journalism identity (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

The role of journalism simply means the expectations that journalists believe in and on the other hand, desired by the community regarding the contribution that the news media and their journalists can make. These norms are rooted in every aspect of news production from information gathering to dissemination (Adegbola & Zhang, 2020).

Through this research, the author expect that it will provide an overview of the identity and position of the local press from the point of view of the representation of local social institutions as a basis for building opportunities for the sustainability of the existence and gait of the local press in the midst of society.

This research departs from 3 (three) main research questions, namely (1) How is the partnership pattern between the local press and the main local social institutions?, (2) Why is the partnership maintained and how is the partnership between the main institutions and the local press sustainable in the future?, and (3) What are the roles of the local press perceived by the main institutions in West Sumatra.

Method

This study used a qualitative method with the primary data collection technique through interviews with parties outside the local press institution represented by religious and traditional leaders, representatives of local NGOs, and local government public relations officials. The chairman of the West Sumatra MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) represented the religious circles, the head of the LKAAM (The traditional preservation institution of Minangkabau as the main ethnic group of people living in West Sumatra Province.) The Director of Walhi (Indonesian Forum for the Environment) and Director of LBH (Legal Aid Institute) Padang represented as the local NGOs along with public relations officials of the Provincial Government of West Sumatra and public relations officials for the City of Bukittinggi and the City of Payakumbuh. These external parties are considered as partners of the local press through various schemes that directly or indirectly contribute to its sustainability. Data were also collected through observation and document analysis technique. The research lasted for a year starting from November 2019 to November 2020.

Result And Discussion

Forms and Patterns of Partnerships with Local Media

Partnerships between parties outside the local press institution and local media are established both formally and informally. Formal partnerships are generally in the form of news collaborations in which these outside parties make local media partners in disseminating certain messages and information to spread in the community. The general form of partnership with the media includes news cooperation releases, press conferences, and invitations to journalists to cover activities organized by these institutions. Several institutions use other forms of

partnership which are expected to not only deepen the understanding of journalists towards a case or issue but also aim to increase the capacity of journalists.

City/district and provincial governments in West Sumatra are considered the main partners of local media. All 19 city and district governments in West Sumatra have collaborated on news coverage to socialize or disseminate Regional Government programs and activities to the wider community. These partnerships are mainly managed by government public relations offices in the form of invitations for coverage or press conferences, providing release materials, and arranging interviews with resource persons of government officials. The media then provides a particular space for the results of coverage of local government activities on special pages or rubrics for each region based on an agreement regarding the area of space provided, the choice of publication day, and the frequency.

At the non-governmental organization of Walhi (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup) West Sumatera, partnerships with local media are managed by the Department of Advocacy and Campaign. This division handles advocacy activities or mentoring environmental cases, research, and communication. The communication aspect consists of establishing relationships with the media and managing the WALHI West Sumatra website and social media.

There are various forms of partnership between the Walhi West Sumatera and the media, including various local media institutions. The most basic is in the form of partnerships in terms of reporting, starting from sending news releases, holding press conferences, and inviting journalists to attend seminars organized by WALHI West Sumatera. Another collaboration is in the form of a journalist visit, an activity for journalists to visit case or case sites. In this kind of activity, WALHI West Sumatera acts as the organizer that manages all the highlights such as place, time, potential sources, including covering the accommodation and transportation of journalists during the activity and even providing pocket money.

The journalist visit activity had become a routine agenda before the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, which began to spread in early 2020 in West Sumatra. The journalist visit activity does not only involve journalists but sometimes it is also arranged in such a way by involving politicians and celebrities as the attractor. For example, the journalist visit in 2017 was held in the Mentawai Islands because there was a growing rejection of indigenous peoples against the management of Industrial Plantation Forests (HTI). Walhi collaborated with one of The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) members from the PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) faction, Rieke Dyah Pitaloka, and a ballad singer named Dima Miranda. The reason for choosing Rieke was because the Mentawai Islands Regency is the basis of the PDIP, and Rieke, herself, is concerned with culture-related issues. Meanwhile, Dima Miranda was expected to be able to voice the Mentawai through art. Some local musicians also packaged messages to save the last Mentawai jungle through songs.

Local media is still seen as a strategic partner for the managers of local social institutions. In addition, it has the advantage to conduct partnerships with

several local newspapers, such as Haluan, Singgalang, Padang Ekspres, and Posmetro Padang. According to the Director of WALHI West Sumatra, the four newspapers are the media that officials read the most.

"So it is important to be published in the media so that the message gets to them (government officials or policymakers). WALHI does not have a special channel for policymakers except at the moment of hearing. It's impossible for us to convey it directly without an event. That's why we optimize through the media" (Uslaini, direct interview. 2020, Dec 24).

The partnership model in the form of a journalist visit activity to the site or location of the case is also performed by the Padang Legal Aid Institute (LBH Padang). LBH Padang's considerations in choosing the location to be visited tend to be related to regional accessibility factors. It is a misfortune in which some small areas receive relatively minimal media coverage. It could be because contributors or correspondents who are less sensitive to the existence of legal cases or human rights violations in the West Sumatra region do not have good media coverage. According to the Director of LBH Padang, journalist visit activity to sites or local cases is a form of invitation for journalists from Padang, the capital city of West Sumatera, to see the real matter at the location.

"It's a shame for some areas that are not so big. They don't have good media coverage. Whether the contributor or the correspondent, it's insensitive, so we often invite journalists from Padang to go out of town to see the actual case". (Wendra Rona Putra, direct interview. 2019, 4 December)

Partnerships with the media also take the form of capacity-building activities for journalists. For example, LBH Padang collaborates with the Judicial Commission (KY) to hold briefing activities for journalists related to the scope of the judicial code of ethics in the context of monitoring judges. Debriefing is also carried out for particular issues that are needed, such as mining and forest issues with various terms, such as forest areas, which are often interchangeably or, sometimes, inappropriately used in the news. Journalist capacity-building activities are held relatively often or at least once a year. Usually LBH Padang cooperates with the local Alliance of Indonesian Journalists (AJI). Activities like this do not go through the media but directly to individual journalists.

Partnerships between the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of West Sumatera and local newspapers are generally in the form of news collaboration through press releases, press conferences, and event invitations. However, according to the chairman of the MUI of West Sumatra, Gusrizal Gazahar, the intensity and frequency of current partnership between the MUI and the media tend to decrease compared to the past. During the past year, the MUI of West Sumatra had evaluated the coverage of local and national mass media and decided to reduce the partnership between the news and the mass media. Based on the evaluation results, there are many shortcomings such as inaccurate and bias in reporting. Apparently, according to Gusrizal, press personnel need to deeper understand how to report religious issues so that no one misunderstands. He also emphasized that

when reporting religious issues, it must be cautious, especially when it comes to worship. If the news is delivered incorrectly, people will also perform their worship in the wrong way. As a consequence, the chairman of the MUI is often accused of being stingy in providing news. In fact, according to Gusrizal, this attitude is taken as a precautionary measure. Moreover, since 2018 the MUI of West Sumatra has managed its internet site on http://muisumbar.or.id to disseminate various direct information to people. The site, which is managed by the Information and Communications Commission of the MUI of West Sumatra, also serves as a reference for journalists who need news material related to the opinions or attitudes of the MUI of West Sumatra. The communication and socialization strategies of the MUI of West Sumatra through media currently tend to rely more on the http://muisumbar.or.id/ site. Managing the socialization and communication media itself can at least facilitate control over the socialization materials that the MUI wants to convey to the people.

"The evaluation results (media reports) have many weaknesses when they come to religious issues. People say Buya is stingy with giving news. Currently, it is more likely to channel messages through the MUI web itself rather than to other media so that they are not easily shifted or distorted". (Gusrizal Gazahar, direct interview. 2020, 28 December)

Even though they have their records regarding the journalistic performances of local media, the informants still view local media as strategic partners. Moreover, Gusrizal stated that the presence of some individuals who have concern for the ummah in the ranks of local media managers is one reason to continue the partnership. The similar condition was conveyed by the chairman of the LKAAM by mentioning the names of several individuals who were considered to commit for maintaining local cultural values in West Sumatra. For the two source persons, it is essential to maintain good relations with members of the press who have this concern to maintain local values.

The local government also maintains or continues the partnership with the local media even though all local governments already have their official websites and several social media accounts. The public relations office that manages the website acknowledges that the quality of content and performance of local government websites is still in the development period. According to Irwan, a public relations officer for the Payakumbuh Government, the quality of the management and content of the Payakumbuh Government websites still needs to be improved. The main obstacle to improving the quality of the management and content of the website is the limited human resources, both in terms of the quantity of staff who specifically handle websites and the quality aspect or the ability of the employees to manage and prepare the content with good standards (Irwan, direct interview, 2019, December 18).

The perceived roles of local media

The informants assess that the role of the mass media is getting weaker day by day due to various internal and external factors. Internal factors, among others,

are related to the quality of the news, the tendency of the media to take sides with particular interests, and the business and financial performance of the media. Meanwhile, the most prominent external factor is the changing map of the media industry and business due to the development of information and communication technology.

Despite the fact that the role of the media is getting weaker, all sources agree that local media are still being relied on for certain roles. Some local media roles were presented by the speakers based on their experiences in interacting and collaborating with local media. The sustainability of local media, such as local newspapers, is largely determined by how optimally the roles perceived by the sources are carried out. At least, even in a weakened mass media, several roles are still assigned to the mass media, namely: The role of the mass media as a liaison or bridge. It can be said that the role as a liaison or bridge between parties in society is the most basic role of the mass media. The informants assess that this role was still needed from the local press in West Sumatra. Therefore, partnering with local newspapers or press is the same as building a communication network between various interested parties. For example, when organizations, such as Walhi of West Sumatera and LBH Padang were handling certain cases in the regions, news collaboration with local newspapers or press was still considered very effective in reaching out to policymakers. The Director of WALHI West Sumatra, , believed that the distribution of local newspapers covers all offices or SKPD (Local Goverment Working Unit) of city/district and provincial governments in West Sumatra so that local newspapers are considered as the most widely read by regional officials.

"So it is essential to be published in the media so that the message gets to them (the officials). WALHI does not have a special channel for policymakers, except at the moment of hearing. It's impossible for us to convey it directly without an event. That's why we optimize through the media". (Uslaini, direct interview. 2020, 24 December)

The role as a liaison is supported by networking among local media reporters in the field

The public relations officers of the provincial government place local newspaper reporters as a very essential source of information with the power of the network. Field reporters receive information ahead of time compared to the general public. Not infrequently, the public relations officers of the provincial government get input on the performance of local government work units or official offices from media networks through their field journalists. In this case, newspapers also become a kind of communication medium between service offices or local government work units (SKPD) under the local government. This last function is considered necessary because some local governments no longer manage the internal media as the liaison channel that connects regional government offices or work units.

The role of the media in terms of publicity

Newspapers or local media have the ability to reach a wider audience. Stakeholders realize this role is still intense for the media. Therefore, if the news is expected to be delivered to a wide audience, then partnering with local media is still an option. Likewise, from the community side, if the public wants to be heard by policymakers or specific parties, then media coverage becomes the distribution medium. The director of the LBH Padang stated that the coverage of regional correspondents or contributors who were far from the city center was very beneficial for his party to know the problems faced by people in remote areas. LBH Padang is located in Padang City, the capital city of West Sumatra Province, so it is difficult for the people of West Pasaman facing the HGU (Hak Guna Usaha) case to submit complaints directly to the LBH Padang office.

The ability of local newspapers to reach greater audiences makes this media is very reliable by local governments as a channel for socializing development programs and various government activities to the local community. According to the Head of Public Relations of the Bukittinggi City Government, based on observations and daily experiences, his party assesses that newspapers are still a reference for public information in West Sumatra. Similar opinions are also expressed by other public relations officers of the government officials in West Sumatra.

The role of the media in building public dialogue in terms of constructing particular issues and providing the community with materials to develop a discourse on the issues that are currently rolling

The informants saw that this role was still carried out by the local media. According to one source, local newspapers are the most effective means to ensure that ideas and information can reach the public. News and opinion contents become a reference for building discourse, especially if they are associated with the culture of conversation in coffee shops or commonly called **ota lapau**. This role is hitherto still experienced, especially in remote areas of Payakumbuh, Limapuluh Kota Regency, where the sources are originated. Furthermore, the role is closely related to the power of local media in reaching the local public to remote areas.

"Local newspapers are still considered the most effective means of conveying ideas and information to the public. A kind of reference to build a discourse in the community, especially if it is associated with the culture of chatting in the coffee shop (ota lapau) of the Minangkabau community. This is still felt today, especially in remote areas". (Wendra Rona Putra, Direct interview. 2019, 4 December)

The role of the media in supporting or strengthening public accountability for stakeholders and implementing public transparency

Uslaini assumed that this role is still relied on by the media, especially local media. He gave an example when his party received complaints from the public.

After studying the case with the support of data and facts in the field accompanying references to the rules that have been violated, his party can handily compile a report or forward the report to the government through closed channels, such as letters or written complaints. However, according to Uslaini, this method is ineffective because it seems closed and only known to both parties. The condition will be different if Walhi involves mass media. As the result, people who complain about the case will know that it is handled by Walhi from the news. "But yes...that way, knowledge belongs only to the two of us, even though the public needs to know," added Uslaini. Furthermore, according to Uslaini, any activity, especially advocacy activities, is always followed by releases to the media. Generally, journalists check to related agencies or institutions so that officials will respond and ask "Why are you going to the media? We can meet."

Media coverage makes things easier

Director of WALHI of West Sumatra, Uslaini, said that when he received complaints from the public or was working on a case, his party often had difficulty accessing data from the government or AMDAL (the Environmental Impact Assessment) documents as the basis for the study. Therefore, when conducting any case assistance activities, it is always followed by sending press releases so that the media can be used as material to confirm or check with the relevant agencies or institutions. In general, government officials will give a minimal response to the question of the movement of Walhi, which immediately sends a release to the media. As the result, it will be easier for the government or institution related to the case to provide data or information. Case handling tends to be effortless when it is handled by making media coverage or field journalists vigorously seek and contact government sources for interviews.

The role of the media in probing issues

Community advocacy institutions, such as Walhi and LBH Padang, are based in Padang City, while the scope of work covers the entire province of West Sumatra. In this province, 19 areas at the city and district level have various transportation and communication accessibility. Both WALHI of West Sumatera and LBH Padang often know about cases such as illegal logging, landslides or natural disasters, human rights violations from media reports, including local media. The reach of local media with local correspondents or contributors has greatly helped institutions such as WALHI of West Sumatra and LBH Padang in two ways, namely probing issues and monitoring cases or events. Armed with this initial information, the two institutions conducted checks and searches in the field.

"There are some information or cases that have not yet been reported to us in the media, as well as about cases of illegal logging or landslide events, we don't know and know about it from newspaper reports. From there, we checked or searched, contacted parties in the field, or went directly to the field. For probing

issues, in this case, the media still plays a role". (Uslaini, direct interview. 2020, 24 December)

In line with the role of probing issues, the authors argued that local media has **a role in monitoring and surveillance** of problems that occur in the community. In institutions such as LBH Padang, the division that handles the management of the knowledge system (KMS) collects data on cases of human rights violations in the local media. For LBH Padang, reporting cases of human rights violations in the media is an early indication as a provision to follow up on these cases (follow up). Field journalists on several occasions also directly submit or submit complaints on cases of human rights violations that they encounter in the field. The public relations officer of West Sumatra Province places local media as partners in exchanging ideas about various problems in the region.

Role as policy controller

It is naive for expecting local media to control over government policies. After all, the local government is the main source of local media income, including the four newspapers that are the subjects of the study. Circular Letter (SE) of the Governor of West Sumatra regarding the rice planting movement was less critical of the media response. According to Wendra Rona Putra, the rice planting movement in early 2017 is needed to be criticized because it involved elements of the TNI (The Indonesian National Armed Force).

For relatively neutral issues, they can position themselves quite critically, for example, several publications or releases from LBH Padang regarding civil society cases are still published by the local media even though they are somewhat refined or not all parts are quoted. Including the case of drg. Romi, the role of the media in controlling policies is enough to put pressure on the government so that a circular letter is issued confirming that people with disabilities can compete through public channels in the CPNS (Candidates of Civil Servants) acceptance process. From 2018 to 2019, Wendra Rona Putra also observed the attitude of the media in reporting about the Pariaman Regional Government issuing a Regional Regulation on security and public order which among others stipulates sanctions for the LGBT acts on November 28, 2018. In this case, not all local media are willing to frame it as a form of human rights restraint.

Local media coverage that criticizes public policies and government administration activities is needed as a control or balancer in government. According to the public relations officer of West Sumatra Province, such input or criticism is acceptable as long as it is based on accurate and accountable data or information or, in other words, following journalistic principles.

Considering the perceived role of local media as a ray of hope

There are 8 (eight) categories of roles played by the local media in West Sumatra according to the views of parties outside the local media institutions who

are the sources of this research. The local media plays a role in (1) connecting or bridging various parties both between parties within the government, parties outside the government and the government, and between groups in society, as well as connecting between individuals within the community, (2) disseminating information widely or the role of publicity is due to the reach of the local media to the community so that local media partners are helped to convey messages or socialization to the target, (3) providing community members with material as a provision to be actively involved in the dynamics of public discourse. This point is a special note with the tradition of **"ota lapau"** (coffee shops chats) of the people of West Sumatra, especially among men, (4) supporting and strengthening public accountability, which is a kind of sense of gaining social legitimacy when views or activities are spread in the mass media including local media, (5) leading the path in reaching the authorities for public affairs. this role is related to role number 4, in which social legitimacy opens the way for certain parties to get support or services from other parties especially authorities, (6) presenting issues or information to be known, developed, or followed up, (7) supervising or controlling policies, and (8) maintaining social harmony through the norms and values of the local community. The arrangement of the eight categories of roles mentioned above is more than just an ordinary list, it does not mean a priority order. In fact, some categories still seem to overlap one another.

Basically, there is no definite standard regarding the number and list of what is called the role of journalism. The role of journalism is discursive which means it is dynamic, contextual, and situational through the process of (re) creation, (re) interpretation, appropriation, and contestation (Hanitzsch, 2017)(Raemy & Vos, 2021). The series of roles of the local media that are conveyed by the sources above are more of the roles they feel or experience in working with local media institutions. Mellado divides the role of journalism into three dimensions, namely the dimensions of professional ideology, professionalism, and journalism culture. The dimension of professional ideology defines the role of journalism as a shared view of work or tasks related to how journalism and the media should work in society (Cohen, 1963). The professional dimension explains the role of journalism as the responsibility of journalism and the media in society. The culture of journalism views the role of journalism as a collection of ideas and practices that legitimize the role of journalists in society (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

Based on the views of sources outside the local media institutions in West Sumatra, the dominant role played by the local media is more related to conveying information and liaising between interested parties in the community. Conveying information is the most basic function of the role that can be played by the local media or mass media in general (Effendy, 1993) . It seems that for external media parties, the role of conveying information is more priority. As research by Willnat, Weaver, and Wilhoit   shows that for the public the important role of the media is mainly in the function of reporting as soon as possible (2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that the focus of partnership between the representatives of the resource

persons is based on the need for information distribution and socialization. The distribution of local media that reaches out to policymakers and government administrators as well as communities in remote areas in West Sumatra enables the socialization materials to reach the desired audience or targets.

The role of journalism, in general, is in the range or continuum between being neutral on one side and taking sides on the other side (Cohen, 1963). Local governments as partners of the local media prefer a neutral role and stand to the side of the government. While, when dealing with the government, the role of the local media is ideally to play the role of a gatekeeper (Hellmueller, Mellado, Blumell, & Huemmer, 2016) or as a monitor of power (Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, 2021). However, these two roles do not work well because the pattern of relations between the local media and the local government caused the local media to be very economically dependent on the local government. This fact is also understood by resource persons from, such as the NGOs of environmental and human rights who need the local media as a partner in handling cases of human rights violations and preserving the local environment. Some of these cases are related to the steps and policies of the local government as the authorities.

The economic dependence of the local media tends to negate the role of investigators from the official claims or truths of the government. Even in carrying out its role as a disseminator or information transmitter, according to Tandoc, Hellmueller, and Vos (2013), the local media should be impartial, objective, fair, and put aside certain interests, including the personal interests of journalists. Moreover, in carrying out its role as an investigator, the local media should be critical in accepting official claims by trying to reveal the truth and not involve themselves (conspiracy) in trying to construct a positive image of local governments or politicians. The critical aspect in this reality is the lack of citizen perspective in the role played by the local media. This statement intends to describe the extent to which the local media uses the perspective of citizens in discussing local problems, in the sense of standing from the perspective of the needs and questions that may arise from community members (Mellado, 2015).

One more time, as an extension of the role of information dissemination, the local media is considered to still have a contribution in terms of providing information as a provision or material for the public to be involved in discussions in the public sphere. However, this role only plays at the surface level. It is not deep enough to be able to provide a more critical and rich perspective for constructing social discourse. At a deeper level, this kind of role should develop into an analytical-deliberative and development-educative (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016) role or in the form of providing a space for public criticism and comment (Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, 2021).

The role as a gatekeeper (watchdog) and channeling the aspirations of the people are two of the roles of the press which are considered fundamental in a democratic society. In fact, sources other than government officials assess that the role of a watchdog still emerges from the local media, although it is minimal. However,

the role as a voice of aspirations of people barely emerges. Those opinion are according to sources other than government officials. Local media coverage generally tends to display superficial things and does not show an attitude as a party that plays the role of conveying the aspirations of the people which has been attributed to the press institution. It is an unavoidable fact that these roles are complicated for the local media to carry out because of their attachment to the local government and other interests related to the political and economic interests of the media owners.

Table 1.The Roles of the Local Press from a Partner's Perspective compare with The Roles of Journalists in Political Life (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016)

Roles of Journalists in Political Life	Roles of local media from partners perspective
Informational-Instructive	(2) disseminating information widely or the role of publicity is due to the reach of the local media to the community so that local media partners are helped to convey messages or socialization to the target, (6) presenting issues or information to be known, developed, or followed up,
Analytical-Deliberative	(3) providing community members with material as a provision to be actively involved in the dynamics of public discourse. This point is a special note with the tradition of **"ota lapau"** (coffee shops chats) of the people of West Sumatra, especially among men
Critical-Monitorial	(7) supervising or controlling policies,
Advocative-Radical	(4) supporting and strengthening public accountability, which is a kind of sense of gaining social legitimacy when views or activities are spread in the mass media including local media,
Developmental-educative	(3) providing community members with material as a provision to be actively involved in the dynamics of public discourse. This point is a special note with the tradition of **"ota lapau"** (coffee shops chats) of the people of West Sumatra, especially among men (8) maintaining social harmony through the norms and values of the local community.
Collaborative-Facilitative	(5) leading the path in reaching the authorities for public affairs. this role is related to role number 4, in which social legitimacy opens the way for certain parties to get support or services from other parties,
Source: Research compilation, 2021	

The list of roles of the local media above is summarized from the views of the informants of this study as a result of the interaction and partnership of each

party with the local media in West Sumatra. Each party agrees that even in the current unfavorable situation for the local media and the press in general, the presence of the local media is still needed. Each party thinks that the local media in West Sumatra is still less optimal in carrying out its roles and functions within the society, but they still hold on to their hopes for the ideal role of the local media. However, normatively, the role of journalism is an aggregate of the general expectations that journalists believe and on the other hand, are desired by society (Hanitzsch, 2017). As long as people still expect the local media to carry out their roles, local media is still needed.

In line with its dynamic and discursive nature, differences in the assessment of the role of journalism between internal media parties and external media parties are very likely to occur. Each stands at a different point, as audience views tend to be rooted in orientation to content they like rather than content that is really needed. Meanwhile, on the journalist side, the assessment of the role is based on professional responsibilities and the ideal conception of the role of journalism (Willnat, Weaver, & Wilhoit, 2019). Likewise, the views of partners are very likely to be motivated or driven by certain interests.

Conclusion

The partnership that exists between local media and external parties is still ongoing in various forms. It shows an acknowledgment of the existence and functions that local media can carry out in the midst of society. In a situation in which the local press is always questioned because of several negative assessments addressed to it, the view of external parties on the role that the local press still plays becomes very important. As partners, external parties who are informants of this research still view local media as strategic partners in assisting the socialization and dissemination of particular programs or information. Some informants still rely on local media and hope that the role of local media will increase in the future.

This study has several limitations, especially related to the method. The main data collection of the study used interview techniques with limited local media partners. Whereas for the depth and completeness of the data, including for triangulation needs, data collection should use other techniques such as content analysis of the news material as a manifestation of the partnership. Research informants are also very limited, only a few parties from local media partners can be wider. Therefore, it is suggested that this research becomes the basis for developing research designs regarding the role of local media from the perspective of external parties with more varied sources, such as business actors and those who run local industries.

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