



The Role of Mass Media Law in Realizing Social Control in the Digital Era

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Abstract

In the digital era marked by advances in information and communication technology, mass media plays a crucial role as a tool of social control. This study aims to analyze the role of mass media law in realizing social control in Indonesia, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities arising from digital transformation. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, through a literature review including books, journal articles, and other reliable sources. The results show that mass media law serves as a regulatory framework governing media activities in disseminating information. However, there are significant challenges related to press freedom and the potential for abuse of the law to silence criticism. Social media has expanded the space for social control, but also carries the risk of spreading false information. Protecting individual rights, especially regarding personal data privacy, is a crucial issue that must be addressed by law. Increasing media literacy among the public is essential to creating critical consumers of information. Furthermore, collaboration between the government, media, and civil society is key to creating a healthy media ecosystem.

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INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, marked by advances in information and communication technology, mass media has undergone significant transformation. Conventional media such as newspapers and television now compete with digital platforms like social media and online news sites. This change not only affects the way information is disseminated but also the role of mass media in society. (Sudiby, 2022). One of the primary functions of mass media is as a tool of social control. Media can monitor government actions, expose injustice, and provide a voice to the public. In this context, the law serves as a framework that regulates how the mass media can carry out its functions effectively and responsibly. (Tarigan, 2024).

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Mass media law encompasses various aspects, including freedom of expression, personal data protection, and responsibility for disseminated content. In the digital age, legal challenges are increasingly complex due to the vast amount of information circulating and the speed at which it spreads. Therefore, it is important to understand how the law can support or hinder the role of mass media in social control. (Arifah & Ashidiq, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, press freedom is guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution. However, the implementation of this freedom often faces various challenges, including pressure from certain parties seeking to silence criticism. Media law must protect journalists and ensure they can carry out their duties without fear of legal consequences. (Tajudin, 2024).

Social media has become a new arena for social control, allowing the public to actively participate in public discussions. However, the existence of these platforms also presents new challenges related to the spread of false information (hoaxes) and hate speech. Laws must adapt to address these issues to ensure that social control through media remains effective and does not harm society. (Ulvi, 2024).

One example of the application of law in the context of digital media is the Electronic Information and Transactions (EITE) Law. This law aims to regulate online activities and protect the public from the misuse of information. However, its implementation has often sparked controversy due to its potential misuse to silence critical voices. (Rohayanti, 2024).

The importance of media literacy cannot be overlooked in the context of social control. The public needs to be equipped with the skills to analyze and evaluate the information they receive from various sources. The law can play a role in supporting media literacy education as part of efforts to create a critical and rights-conscious society. (Darussalam, 2024). The role of law in regulating mass media also includes protecting individual rights. In the digital age, privacy issues are becoming increasingly important because personal data is often exploited by certain parties. The law must ensure that individual rights are protected without hindering press freedom and access to information. (Sianturi et al., 2024).

Furthermore, collaboration between the government, media, and civil society is essential to creating a healthy media ecosystem. Open dialogue on media regulation can help find solutions that balance the public interest and legal protection for journalists and individuals. In this article, the author will further explain the role of mass media law in realizing social control in the digital age. By understanding the interaction between law, journalistic ethics, and developments in information technology, it is hoped that readers will gain deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities inherent in this context.

METHODS

The research method used in this journal is a qualitative method. Descriptive. This method was chosen because it can provide a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied, namely, the role of mass media law in social control in the digital era. In this study, the author will collect data through a literature review, which includes books, journal articles, and other reliable sources relevant to the topic. By using this descriptive qualitative research method, it is hoped that this journal can provide new insights into the role of law in the context of mass media and its impact on society. This study also aims to open further discussion regarding the challenges and opportunities that exist in media regulation in the current digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Mass Media in Social Control

Mass media play a crucial role in society as a tool of social control. In this context, the media acts as a watchdog over the actions of government and other institutions, and provides a voice for the public (Armadila, 2025). Through the media, information can be widely disseminated, enabling the public to understand and evaluate the actions of those in power. In the digital age, the role of mass media has been further strengthened by the emergence of social media platforms. (Wijaya, 2019).

Citizens can now actively participate in public discussions, express their opinions, and directly monitor government actions. This creates space for more transparent and participatory social control. In carrying out its social control function, the media faces the challenge of ensuring transparency, accountability, and balance of information. Meanwhile, the law plays a role in regulating how the media can carry out its role responsibly, without violating the rights of others.(Al Mustaqim et al., 2024).

Mass media law serves as a regulatory framework governing media activities in disseminating information. In Indonesia, the Press Law and the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law serve as the legal basis for media operations. However, the implementation of these laws often faces challenges. One major challenge is the potential for the law to be misused to silence criticism of the government. In some cases, these laws have been used to prosecute journalists or individuals who express opinions deemed detrimental to certain parties. This highlights the need to evaluate existing regulations to prevent them from hindering press freedom.(Hadiati & Stathany, 2021).

Freedom of the Press and Social Responsibility

Freedom of the press is a pillar of democracy that must be protected. However, this freedom also carries with it a social responsibility to present accurate and balanced information. The media must maintain its integrity by not spreading false or misleading information. In the digital context, the challenge of maintaining information quality is even greater due to the large number of unverified news sources. Therefore, laws need to establish mechanisms to ensure that media outlets are accountable for the content they present to the public.(Setyowati & Kencono, 2024).

Social media has transformed the way people interact and communicate. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram allow users to share information in real time, creating dynamic discussion spaces. However, this also carries the risk of spreading false information or hoaxes. The spread of hoaxes can damage the reputation of individuals or institutions and trigger social tensions. Therefore, the law must provide guidelines regarding the responsibilities of social media users in disseminating information, as well as enforcement mechanisms for such violations. (Rina et al., 2024).

Protection of Individual Rights in the Digital Era

Protecting individual rights is a crucial issue in the digital age, particularly regarding personal data privacy. Many social media users are unaware that their data can be exploited by unauthorized third parties. Laws must ensure that individual rights are protected from data misuse. The Personal Data Protection Law currently being discussed in Indonesia is expected to provide a clear legal framework for the management of personal data by digital platforms and mass media. This is crucial for maintaining public trust in the media. (Tarmizi, 2024)

On the one hand, technology opens up space for freedom of expression and broader social interaction, but on the other hand, it also increases the potential for violations of individual rights. Protection of personal data, privacy, and freedom of expression must be an integral part of legal regulations governing mass media and the digital world. In this context, the role of law is vital in maintaining a balance between freedom of information and the protection of individual rights, ensuring that media oversight remains fair and does not harm society. (Bahram, 2023)

One of the key aspects of protecting individual rights in the digital age is the management and protection of personal data. Mass media and digital platforms frequently collect, store, and process users' personal data, which, if misused, can cause significant harm to individuals. For example, personal information that is leaked or exploited by third parties can be used for commercial, political, or even criminal purposes. Therefore, legal regulations governing personal data protection, such as the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) in many countries, must be strictly enforced to ensure that individuals' personal information is safeguarded and prevented from being misused by irresponsible parties.

Furthermore, in the context of mass media, journalists and media companies must also respect individual privacy in the news reporting process. In many cases, careless reporting can harm individuals, for example, by spreading inaccurate information or violating their right to privacy. Therefore, legal regulations need to establish journalistic ethical standards that protect individuals from reporting that defames or damages their reputations. Mass media law must provide space for press freedom, while at the same time ensuring that individual protection rights are maintained in the reporting process.

The importance of protecting individual rights in the digital age also includes the right to freedom of expression without threat or intimidation. In some cases, journalists or individuals who voice critical opinions about the government or certain institutions may face legal threats or physical violence. Therefore, mass media law must guarantee protection for individuals involved in public discourse, whether journalists, activists, or ordinary citizens. Strong legal protection will create a safe space for the public to access information, participate in public discussions, and express opinions without fear of adverse consequences.

Media Literacy as a Tool of Social Control

Media literacy is an individual's ability to critically assess, analyze, evaluate, and create media content. Increasing media literacy among the public can strengthen social control because people will be better able to assess the accuracy of the information they receive. Media literacy education programs need to be promoted by the government and educational institutions to equip the public with critical skills to navigate the flow of information in the digital age. With good media literacy, the public can become more informed consumers of information. (Priambodo, 2019).

In the digital era, media literacy is a crucial element in achieving effective social control. Media literacy refers to an individual's ability to critically access, analyze, evaluate, and create information. In the context of mass media law, media literacy serves as a tool to empower the public to understand their rights and responsibilities in consuming and disseminating information. The law plays a crucial role in supporting media literacy education, particularly in ensuring that the public has fair access to accurate and credible information.

Indonesian media laws, as stipulated in the Press Law and the Electronic Information and Transactions (EITE) Law, provide a framework that allows for responsible social control. By protecting journalists and media institutions, the law creates an environment where information can be freely disseminated without pressure from certain parties. In the context of media literacy, these laws help the

public recognize media outlets that operate ethically and professionally. Thus, media literacy focuses not only on technical skills but also on understanding the legal regulations governing mass media practices.

The importance of media literacy is increasingly apparent with the rise of hoaxes and hate speech in the digital world. Social media, a key platform for social control, is often misused to spread inaccurate information. Mass media law, in this regard, plays a role in firmly prosecuting violations, as stipulated in certain articles of the ITE Law. However, without adequate media literacy, the public tends to struggle to distinguish between true and false information. Therefore, media literacy is a vital tool to complement the law's role in combating the spread of harmful information.

Besides serving as a tool to protect the public, media literacy also serves as a mechanism for monitoring the government and other public institutions. With the ability to critically analyze information, the public can more easily identify corruption, injustice, or abuse of power. Media laws that protect press freedom provide the media with the space to report on these cases without fear. In this regard, media literacy helps the public understand how to use the information presented by the media to exercise constructive social control. (Rosidah et al., 2024).

Collaboration between Government and Media

Collaboration between the government and the media is crucial to creating a healthy media ecosystem. The government needs to create regulations that support press freedom while protecting the public interest from harmful information. An open dialogue between the government and media stakeholders can help find solutions to the challenges of media regulation in the digital age. It can also increase transparency and accountability on both sides. (Ginting et al., 2021).

Balanced and Inclusive Regulation

The government is responsible for formulating policies that support press freedom while protecting the public interest. Regulations such as the Press Law and the Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE) Law must be implemented proportionally to avoid silencing criticism or restricting freedom of expression. The media must comply with these regulations while upholding the principles of journalistic ethics. News coverage must be conducted independently and without pressure from any party. The media can also provide input on the new regulations to make them more relevant to the needs on the ground.

The government and the media need to engage in open dialogue to align policies that support transparency, openness of information, and the protection of individual rights. Through joint discussions, the government can avoid regulations that are open to interpretation or potentially misused.

Protection for Journalists and Media Activists

The government must ensure that journalists and media activists can work without fear. This includes legal protection against physical threats, intimidation, or unfair lawsuits. The freedom of the press guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution must be realized through concrete actions, such as protecting journalists covering sensitive issues. The media must be proactive in protecting its members by providing training on digital and physical security, especially for journalists working in conflict areas or reporting on cases of corruption and human rights violations.

Tackling False Information and Hate Speech

The government has a responsibility to address the spread of hoaxes and hate speech without restricting freedom of expression. Policies such as media literacy and public education programs can be implemented to help the public recognize and reject false information. The mass media must be the first line of defense in combating hoaxes by producing credible and verified news. Collaboration with the

government can be achieved by launching a joint anti-hoax campaign involving the public.

The Role of Technology in Media Surveillance

Technology has brought significant changes to the world of mass media, including in terms of oversight of the media itself. In the digital era, technology allows the public to access and monitor media content in real time. This creates a new dynamic in social control, where the public is no longer a passive consumer but also plays a role as an active watchdog. Social media, for example, allows individuals to criticize and respond directly to news or content deemed inaccurate, biased, or unethical. This technology encourages greater transparency in mass media practices. (Swastiwi, 2024).

Technological advances have provided new tools for the public to monitor the mass media. For example, data analytics platforms can be used to track news sources and verify their veracity. The use of technology also allows the public to report violations of journalistic ethics directly to relevant institutions, thereby increasing the accountability of the mass media.

Digital technology also plays a crucial role in enhancing media accountability. The presence of online archives makes every published content accessible at any time, allowing the public to trace the track record of reporting. This transparency allows journalists and media organizations to be subject to greater public scrutiny. However, on the other hand, easy access to technology also increases the risk of information misuse by certain parties, such as data manipulation or the spread of propaganda, which requires strong legal regulations to prevent these negative impacts.

However, the role of technology in media oversight is not without challenges. Rapid technological advancements often outpace the adaptation of legal regulations, creating legal loopholes that can be exploited for harmful purposes. Furthermore, reliance on technology can also lead to algorithmic bias that influences how information is prioritized or presented on digital platforms. Therefore, technology must be used wisely, supported by adequate regulations, and involve collaboration between the government, media, and the public to ensure effective and fair media oversight.

Policy Recommendations for Media Regulation

To achieve effective social control in the digital era, policies that wisely regulate mass media are needed. These regulations must be designed to maintain a balance between press freedom, protecting individual rights, and preventing media abuse. One key recommendation is to update existing regulations to be relevant to the dynamics of the digital era. For example, the Press Law and the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law need to be harmonized to ensure that press freedom is protected without compromising the public interest. These improvements must be implemented through a participatory process involving the government, media, academics, and civil society. (Sujoko & Haboddin, 2020).

Another recommendation is to strengthen legal protection for journalists and media workers. The government needs to ensure the safety of journalists from physical threats, intimidation, or unfair legal pressure. Establishing a dedicated protection mechanism for journalists, such as a legal aid center or whistleblowing facility, would be helpful. Furthermore, providing journalists with digital security training is crucial, given the increased risk of hacking and data theft in the digital age. With strong guarantees of protection, the mass media can more effectively fulfill its role as a tool of social control.

Media literacy must also be an integral part of media regulatory policies. The government can collaborate with educational institutions and community organizations to develop comprehensive media literacy programs. These programs aim to improve the public's ability to analyze information, identify hoaxes, and understand how the media works. With a more critical public, the mass media will be more motivated to improve the quality of their reporting, thus enabling more optimal social control.

Furthermore, stricter regulations are needed regarding the management of personal data in the context of digital media. The government needs to establish clear and firm data protection standards to prevent the exploitation of personal data by digital media platforms. These policies should include oversight of data collection, storage, and use by media companies. Furthermore, mass media outlets should be required to adhere to ethical standards in protecting the privacy of individuals who serve as sources or subjects of news reports. This step is crucial to ensure that the public's right to privacy is maintained without hindering access to public information.

The government also needs to encourage collaboration between regulators, media outlets, and civil society to create a healthy media ecosystem. Establishing regular discussion forums involving various stakeholders can help find solutions to the challenges facing mass media in the digital era. This collaboration can also be used to develop more inclusive and balanced policies, accommodating diverse interests without compromising democratic principles. By adopting this approach, media regulation can support the role of law in realizing effective and equitable social control.

These policy recommendations aim to create a healthy and sustainable media environment in Indonesia. By strengthening legal regulations, improving media literacy, and encouraging multi-stakeholder collaboration, it is hoped that the mass media's role as a tool of social control can be effectively realized in today's digital age.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this research demonstrates that the law plays a crucial role in supporting social control through mass media in the digital era. However, challenges such as legal abuse and the spread of hoaxes need to be addressed seriously. With appropriate regulation and collaboration between various parties, the role of mass media as a tool of social control can be strengthened without sacrificing press freedom and individual rights. Mass media law plays a crucial role in regulating dynamics in Indonesia. Although press freedom is guaranteed by the constitution, its implementation still faces various challenges, including the potential for misuse of regulations such as the ITE Law. The law must balance freedom of expression, personal data protection, and responsibility for disseminated content. Media literacy is a key element in empowering the public to face the challenges of the digital era. A critical and educated public can contribute more effectively to the social control function of media. Furthermore, privacy protection and collaboration between the government, media, and civil society are necessary to create a healthy media ecosystem. Through responsive regulation, strong media literacy, and open dialogue among stakeholders, the mass media can continue to fulfill its role in monitoring, providing accurate information, and maintaining a balance between public interest and legal responsibility in the digital era.

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