Critical Discourse on Press Contribution to NTT Good Local Governance

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Abstract

The contribution of local media in articulating its control function to restore people's rights and encourage the implementation of good local governance cannot be separated from the professionalism and critical support of the media crew. This is because the relationship between local media and regional authorities is still prone to conflict, complex, and bound by certain emotional-cultural aspects. Using critical discourse analysis, this study examines specifically the editorial texts of two local mainstream newspapers, Flores Pos and Pos Kupang, related to some strategic issues, especially corruption issues, within the Provincial Government of NTT. The study found that the reality of local media can be co-opted by the interests of media owners and local governments. It also confirms that local media are not absolutely neutral or interest-free. The neutrality of local mass media is also influenced by the dominance of media owners who have power relations with regional authorities.
Keywords*: Local Pers, Authorities, Corruption, Good Local Governance*

Abstrak

Kontribusi media lokal untuk mengartikulasikan fungsi kontrolnya dalam upaya mengembalikan hak-hak rakyat dan mendorong terselenggaranya tata kelola pemerintahan daerah yang baik (good local governance) tidak terlepas dari profesionalisme awak media itu sendiri dan dukungan sikapnya yang kritis. Hal ini karena hubungan antara media lokal dan penguasa di daerah yang masih cenderung konfliktual (conflict of interests), kompleks dan terikat oleh aspek emosional-kultural tertentu. Dengan metode dan desain analisis wacana kritis, studi ini menelisik khusus naskah-naskah editorial dua koran mainstream lokal, yaitu Flores Pos dan Pos Kupang, terkait dengan sejumlah isu strategis, terutama isu korupsi, dalam tubuh Pemerintah Daerah Propinsi NTT. Dari hasil penelitian ini, ditemukan bahwa realitas media lokal dapat terkooptasi oleh kepentingan pemilik media dan pemerintah daerah. Dengan itu pula menegaskan bahwa media lokal tidak mutlak netral atau bebas kepentingan. Ketidaknetralan media mass local dipengaruhi juga oleh dominasi dari pemilik media yang memiliki relasi kuasa dengan penguasa di daerah.
Kata Kunci*: Pers Lokal, Penguasa, Korupsi, Tata Kelola Pemda*

Introduction

Good local governance is the most prominent issue in public administration today. The intense demands made by the community for the government to implement good regional governance are in line with the increasing knowledge of the community on the demands of globalization. The paradigm shift of governance from the ruling government, which continues to progress towards good governance, is understood as a phenomenon of a just democracy. The poor performance of the bureaucracy is one of the factors that cause the slow process of overcoming the multidimensional crisis. The main key to change is the concept of service by bureaucrats, which is not oriented towards providing structural services to superiors and certain groups but towards providing services to the community (Goebel, 2020). From these perspectives, there is a need to optimize the functions of pers and other communication media. Optimizing the function of the news media (press), both online and print-based, has created various opportunities and challenges for the press in carrying out its control function over a government. The presence of a number of media in a new digital-based dimension can help accelerate the formation of social discourse in controlling and supporting good governance (Rahmawati and Sujono, 2021).

The government has made several efforts to optimize local government administration's efficiency, including repeated revisions of the Regional Government Law. Law Number 22 of 1999 has been revised; it can even be said to be replaced by Law number 32 of 2004 and later Law number 12 of 2008. When viewed from the spirit, Law number 32 of 2004 seems to be directed at strengthening regional autonomy. However, if examined more deeply, some enthusiasm will be found to withdraw decentralization and regional autonomy. Therefore, the Act was replaced again with Law number 23 of 2014, which is valid until the present (Wardhani, Rossieta, and Martani, 2017).

The problems arising from the implementation of government decentralization have become the attention of many people, especially when it is associated with the basic principles of autonomy, such as accountability, transparency, and community participation. Regarding transparency, of course, there is a relationship between its role and the issue of the level of community participation in supervising the running of good local government (Handayani and Nur, 2019). In this context, it must be acknowledged that the spirit of regional autonomy has also had an impact on the freedom of the press and freedom of opinion. Freedom of expression is manifested in the existence of press freedom. Previously, the press was heavily controlled by the government. After that, there was a phenomenon of strengthening the government's press control (Marijan, 2019).

So many political issues get the attention of the press/media. M. Rooij, the former Editor-in-Chief of the de Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant, has stated the relationship between the media and a country's ideology and political dynamics. According to him, the prevailing ideology in the country where a newspaper or media is present and operating will gradually influence and determine the development of the newspaper or media (Sularto, 2011)

What is the relationship between local media and regional authorities? This question became important when Law number 32 of 2004 on Regional Government in Indonesia was enacted. The law gives full authority to regional authorities. This authority positively correlates with improving public services and public welfare. However, in many areas, including in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT),

public services and public welfare are not getting better. Many problems occurred in NTT after the decentralization system was implemented. Therefore, the NTT Provincial Government needs to be escorted by all parties to ensure the achievement of the objectives of regional autonomy. In the context of transparency and accountability of power, the press certainly plays an important role as a "watchdog" that can minimize corrupt practices in their various forms and variants, including in policy planning and implementation (Alyatalatthaf and Putri, 2022).

The task and function of the press are to realize the desire for information needs through its media, both through print media and electronic media such as radio, television, internet. The informative function is to provide information or news to the general public in an orderly manner. The press will report on events on a certain day, report on meetings held, or the press may also warn people about events that are expected to occur (Budyatna, 2016).

The relationship between local media and local authorities can be studied from a communication science perspective and a critical perspective. From a communication perspective, we can see inter-institutional or interpersonal communication patterns colored by the local cultural situation. The extent to which the negotiation, creativity, renewal, and challenges occur between local media and regional authorities. This is seen as the impact of the enactment of regional autonomy. Of course, each region has its own peculiarities, although the problems may be the same. From a critical perspective, the relationship between local media and local authorities can be analyzed from the development of historical, economic, political, and discourse contexts (Martin and Nakayama, 2010). The patterns of relations between local media and regional authorities, in this case in the province of NTT, can be seen through media texts, social contexts, and the cognition of journalists.

Many problems occurred in NTT Province after the decentralization system was implemented. Therefore, the NTT Provincial Government needs to be escorted by all parties to ensure the achievement of the objectives of regional autonomy. How is the relationship between local media and regional authorities in promoting good local governance? Can local media exercise control over local government? Is the independent local media dealing with the rulers and owners of capital?

Public awareness of their participatory role in the context of local government will also influence government performance. The press will greatly influence the formation of public perception and encourage public participation in "enforcing the constitution" or administering orders in accordance with applicable laws and regulations at the national, regional, and local levels (Saleh et al., 2021).

From the results of a study of two mainstream local media in this area of NTT, it was found that the role of the media tends to be elitist and does not have direct contact with the interests of fighting for the rights of citizens to control local government, especially in relation to the use of the budget. The dominance of law enforcement officers in providing information in the structure of corruption discourse also affects the elements in the structure of corruption news texts. The text of the corruption news appears as a report from law enforcement agencies on cases of alleged corruption that occurred in NTT. The corruption news text is nothing more than a report by law enforcement officers with a flat language choice and a euphemistic style of language, except for the title of the corruption news text, which is deliberately made attractive to attract the interest of the reader. This confirms a new finding for researchers that the local mass media in NTT Province is only a showcase for corruption cases in the

regions. Storefront is a display case only. News of corruption also tends to be elitist or only cites the opinion of law enforcement officials and does not touch on the suffering experienced by the people due to corruption cases.

According to the critical paradigm, reality from the ontological aspect is constructed by social, cultural, economic, and political forces that occur in the historical process so that reality is not a real reality but a "pseudo" reality or a constructed reality (virtual reality). The paradigm of the role of the press in monitoring and preventing corruption is still a pseudo-image. This false picture can be seen. For example, studies of several new cases show an increasing trend of corruption cases in Indonesia which also questions the role of the press (Alamsyah, 2020). This means that local media construct the reality of corruption or misuse of state finances in NTT Province according to social, political, and economic contexts, which are ontologically pseudo or "constructed" for an ideological interest (Kusumaningrum, 2019). From the epistemological aspect, discourse on corruption in NTT Province is produced by local mass media subjectively through journalists who are influenced by social cognition and social contexts that occur when the corruption news text is constructed. The text of corruption news constructed by the local NTT mass media is transactional through several actors such as journalists, editors, and other social, political, economic, and cultural forces in the province of NTT. The researchers are, of course, not value-free but have a number of value sets in an effort to find meaning and dismantle the ideology behind the construction of local mass media in NTT Province on the reality of corruption in the news.

A critical discourse study on corruption news in local mass media in NTT Province is a critical language study that specifically wants to dismantle the power relations, meanings, and ideologies contained in the corruption news production in local mass media in NTT Province. Mulyana (Eriyanto, 2020) explains that journalists tend to choose a certain set of assumptions that have implications for selecting news titles, news structures, and their alignment with a person or group of people. This statement confirms that the mass media, through their journalists and editors, construct reality and produce it in the form of news.

Critical theory is widely used to examine various social, political, and cultural problems. Critical language studies or critical constructionist studies carried out in this study seek to understand language as part of a product of intersubjectivity and knowledge related to social and political life (Launa and Tawaang, 2021).

News is a product of dialectical interaction between journalists and facts. In the internalization process, the reality is absorbed by journalists, while in the externalization process, journalists try to interpret reality through dialectical interactions (Indiahono, Negara, & Soedirman, 2010). News about corruption is constructed through the internalization stage; the reality of corruption in NTT Province is absorbed by journalists. In addition, in the externalization process, journalists try to interpret the reality of corruption in news texts as a form of objectification or as the result of dialectical interactions between journalists and the facts of corruption in the regions (Danil, 2021).
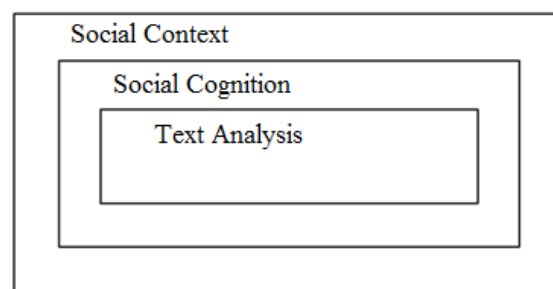
News about corruption in NTT Province can be influenced by factors such as personal background, beliefs and political orientation, the professionalism of journalists at the individual level, patterns formed from routines that occur in the news production process at the media routine level, the structure of media institutions at the media level, organizations, sources of information, advertisements, markets, readers/public,

government, and technology at the extra-media level, and perspectives and attitudes towards the issue of corruption at the ideological level (NIM, 2014).

Corruption in NTT Province as a social reality is constructed by the local mass media in certain ways and techniques carried out by journalists and their editors. It is even possible to use certain words, sentences, and jargon in local mass media coverage of corruption in NTT Province. Therefore, researchers through this study wanted to know the meaning and ideology behind the construction of the reality of corruption in the news reported by the local mass media in NTT Province from phenomenal corruption cases because the effort to find meaning and dismantle ideology is the end of research with this critical paradigm.

Method

This research is a discourse-based study from the perspective of communication science. The reference uses a type of qualitative research method with a specialization in exploratory research to explain the mass media's role in controlling and criticizing the system of good governance at the regional level (Eriyanto, 2011). Therefore, the method used is critical discourse analysis. Research on local print media editorials using van Dijk's critical discourse analysis method (Critical Discourse Analysis/CDA) is a breakthrough in finding answers to research questions. Data analysis uses van Dijk's critical discourse analysis model. Van Dijk (2005) divides discourse analysis into three dimensions: the text, social cognition, and context/social practice. The text dimension is the text structure consisting of vocabulary, sentences, and paragraphs to explain and interpret a text (Van Dijk, 2005). A text consists of three structures/levels, namely macrostructure (general meaning, observed by looking at the topic or theme in the text), superstructure (text structure related to the framework of a text, how the parts of the text are arranged into the news as a whole: introduction, content, closing), and microstructure (text meaning that can be observed from a small part of a text, namely words, sentences, paragraphs).

Figure 1. Critical Discourse Analysis Model of van Dijk (Van Dijk 2011)

Methodologically, this critical paradigm research uses qualitative research methods with the Critical Discourse Analysis research strategy from Teun A. van Dijk to find meaning and uncover the ideology behind corruption discourse in mass media in NTT Province. The study of critical discourse is a critical study of everything that forms the meaning contained in language and is not a representation of language. The language here is not a mirror that can reflect or reflect an independent object but is a tool used to achieve a certain purpose (Barker, 2004). A critical discourse study on corruption news in local mass media in NTT Province is a critical language study that

specifically wants to dismantle the power relations, meanings, and ideologies contained in the process of producing news about corruption in local mass media in NTT Province.

The dimension of social cognition is the role of social cognition as a dimension to explain how a text is produced and the mental awareness of journalists who produce the text. The cognitive approach is based on the assumption that the text has no meaning, but the meaning is given by the language user or the mental awareness process of the reader. The dimensions of social practice are related to different levels of social organization situations, for instance, situational contexts, wider social contexts, or groups (Darma, 2009). In this dimension, it is assumed that discourse is part of the discourse that develops in society. It is necessary to conduct an intertextual analysis by examining how discourse about something is produced and constructed in society.

Results and Discussion
Finding Issues in Media Coverage

Local mass media is an entity that should not be ignored in the structure of the national press. Local mass media are included in the category of the local press. In Indonesia, local mass media thrives. Each province in Indonesia has its own local mass media. This research explicitly places Pos Kupang and Flores Pos as local mass media in NTT Province, as both can better know the people in the area or the condition of their community. These two local mass media carry out the control function of local governance.

The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) received 392 reports or complaints from the public regarding alleged criminal acts of corruption in the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) area from 2018 to 2021. The alleged corruption was related to unlawful acts or abuse of authority that resulted in state losses. This was revealed by KPK Deputy Chair Lili Pintauli Siregar when attending a Coordination Meeting (Rakor) for the Integrated Corruption Eradication Program with the Regional Police, the High Prosecutor's Office, and the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (BPKP) at the NTT Regional Police Headquarters. (As reported by the national media sindonew.com on Tuesday (26/10/2021). It was further stated that the majority were related to unlawful acts or abuse of authority that resulted in state losses.

NTT is among the top 10 poorest provinces in Indonesia which includes the provinces of Papua, West Papua, Maluku, West Sulawesi, Gorontalo, NTT, NTB, Aceh, Lampung and Bengkulu (SinlaEloE, 2010). Apart from being poor, NTT also has various corruption problems. Based on the modus operandi, the forms of corruption in NTT include: mark up (24%), manipulation (21.6%), embezzlement (20%), budget misappropriation (13.6 %), enriching oneself/others (10.4%), project work not according to plan (8%), and mark down (2.4%) (Gobang, 2014)

The conditions in NTT, as mentioned above, have given rise to a play on the NTT acronym as "Nusa Fixed Corrupt". That is the most appropriate nickname given to NTT if the phenomenon of corruption in this province is observed honestly. The public in NTT has long been plagued by poverty and corruption. In other words, poverty and corruption are very relevant to be discussed when it is associated with this one province (SinlaEloE 2010).

Faced with the reality of poor and corrupt NTT, the presence of local media is essential. Pos Kupang and Flores Pos are known and read by the people in NTT Province. Both are expected to play a role in providing information and in taking a stand

as a form of civil society control over the running of a clean regional government. The attitude of regional newspapers can be found in the editorial rubric. This rubric conveys the attitude of a media institution straightforwardly towards phenomena, issues, or facts currently happening in the community where the regional newspaper is located. There is a dynamic linkage between people and media to form a control ecosystem toward a good local governance system (Nabung, 2021).

What the local media presents, both through the editorial rubric and in the news, should be a form of negotiation between the people and the local government. This is because there has been a conflict between the community and the authorities. The conflicts that occurred were identified by the local media through various reports and editorials. The dominant conflict is caused by high levels of corruption and widespread poverty (Martin and Nakayama, 2010).

Corruption for the people in NTT Province has become a scourge. In fact, corruption is not only chronic, but also ironic because it occurs in areas that are classified as poor (Azra, 2002). It is like falling on a ladder; already poor, corrupt too (SinlaEloE, 2010). As a result of the acts of corruption mentioned above, most people in the NTT region will experience adverse effects that are directly related to corruption, such as poverty, poor nutrition, high dropout rates, and increasing unemployment. Perpetrators of corruption in NTT vary. Generally, the perpetrators are the upper middle classes including local government officials (governors, mayors/regents, heads of services, sub-district heads, village heads, and other local government staff), local councils members, police, prosecutors, judges, political party administrators, business people, even teachers, and school principals are involved in corruption in NTT.

Both Flores Pos and Pos Kupang have an official attitude as a press institution to any problems that occur at the local, regional, national, and international levels. However, the researcher wants to examine and study more deeply the attitude of the two regional newspapers in dealing with the corruption problem in the province of NTT.

The attitude of a press institution really needs to be known by both the authorities and the people. Indeed, the attitude of a press institution is part of an effort or struggle that is consciously and intelligently carried out to advance society. The attitude of the institution can be seen in its editorial rubric. Editorial Flores Pos is known as "Bentara". Why is it called "The Herald"? of course, there is a reason! The reason or background for the name "Bentara" for the editorial rubric of Flores Pos has a philosophical meaning, namely the bearer of news (*sabda*). This meaning is in line with the spirit within the Society of the Word of God (Societas Verbi Divini/SVD) of Ende Province as the owner of the Flores Pos daily newspaper, which is to proclaim the good news to all mankind.

Meanwhile, "salam" is the name given to the editorial section of the Pos Kupang newspaper. Just as "Bentara" in Flores Pos has a philosophical meaning, the name "Salam" for the editorial rubric at Pos Kupang also has a philosophical meaning. "Salam", which literally translates into 'Greeting', means that Pos Kupang wants to greet its readers. Through the "Greetings" rubric, Pos Kupang, a regional press institution in East Nusa Tenggara Province, takes a critical attitude in a subtle, polite way. The message conveyed through "Salam" must remain strong. Pos Kupang, in carrying out its control function over the local government, seeks to show its distinctive color through the choice of words that do not judge or accuse but by taking the position of "reader", Pos Kupang conveys its attitude in the "Greetings" rubric. "Greetings" is

the last attitude of the media (Pos Kupang) to facts or social phenomena that are currently happening.

"Greetings" are written by the senior editors of Pos Kupang in rotation. Tony Kleden was most often assigned the task of writing editorials for Pos Kupang. Tony Kleden has worked at Pos Kupang since 1996 as a reporter. At that time, Pos Kupang was four years old. It did not take long for Tony Kleden to gain the trust of one of the editors at Pos Kupang. In 1997, he was entrusted as an education and city editor. Tony Kleden, whose educational background is a degree in philosophy, turns out to have talent in writing. Because of that, he also won the trust as the writer of the editorial column for Pos Kupang.

Table 1. Overview Table about the Role of Two Local Press on Corruption Issues in NTT

No	Regional Newspaper	Anti-Corruption Attitude
1	Flores Pos	The attitude of Flores Pos as a media institution (regional press) towards corruption in NTT is to firmly oppose corruption as a form of crime against the people. Flores Pos also explicitly and firmly defends the interests of the people and encourages the law enforcement process for corrupt actors (corruptors) who are regional officials, both executive and legislative.
2	Pos Kupang	Pos Kupang's attitude as one of the media institutions (regional press) in NIT is to reject the practice of corruption in any form. Pos Kupang continues to carry out its Control function over the course of governance that is free from corrupt practices. Regional officials, both executive and legislative, received the spotlight from Pos Kupang, in order to carry out the press control function

The two newspapers (local media) mentioned above have carried out the negotiation process through their editorial rubrics. This process is important to be carried out by both local media and local governments as regional authorities to neutralize conflicts of interest that can turn into open conflicts, both horizontally and vertically.

Local mass media in NTT Province has its dynamics and problems along with the spirit of regional autonomy. The authority of regional autonomy is regulated in Law number 32 of 2004 on Regional Government. This authority has a positive correlation with improving public services and public welfare. However, in many areas, including in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), public services and public welfare are not getting better.

Independent local media, motivated by idealism and good management, can become important regional entities. Local media not only provide accurate information but are also able to provide political education for local people. Local media become strong and can oversee good local governance.

News about corruption in NTT that was reported by local mass media such as Pos Kupang, Flores Pos, and Timor Express, which became the study's object, did not

present corruption events as they were. Instead, corruption events were constructed in such a way that they became news presented daily in the media.

What is constructed by the local mass media is in turn read and reconstructed by researchers and readers both individually and in society to produce certain meanings that are influenced by ideology, values, ethics, and subjective interests. Furthermore, this will continue as long as the local mass media construct corruption incidents into a news.

The dominance of law enforcement officers in providing information in the structure of corruption discourse also affects the elements in the structure of corruption news texts. The text of the corruption news appears as a report from law enforcement agencies on cases of alleged corruption that occurred in NTT. The corruption news text is nothing more than a report by law enforcement officers with a flat language choice and a euphemistic style of language, except for the title of the corruption news text, which is deliberately made attractive to attract the interest of the reader. This confirms a new finding for researchers that the local mass media in NTT Province is only a showcase for corruption cases in the regions. Storefront is a display case only. News of corruption also tends to be elitist or only cites the opinion of law enforcement officials and does not touch on the suffering experienced by the people due to corruption cases (Mardikantoro and Haryadi, 2018).

Based on the analysis of journalists' social cognition, the researcher further found that the strategies used by journalists and those strategies also determine how corruption news texts are produced or constructed. These strategies include (Eriyanto, 2011):

1. Selection: a complex strategy that shows how sources, events, and information are selected by journalists to be displayed in the news.
2. Reproduction: relates to whether the information is copied, duplicated, or not used at all by journalists. This mainly relates to news sources from news agencies or press releases.
3. Conclusion: a major strategy in producing news related to journalists' mental cognition is inference/summarization of information. This conclusion relates to how complex reality is understood and presented by summarizing through omission, that is, summarizing information by eliminating irrelevant ones, generalizations in which similar or somewhat the same information is used as generally accepted information, and constructions in which several facts are combined to form overall information understanding.
4. Local transformation: relates to how events will be displayed through addition and permutation. According to Marx, ideology is false consciousness, meaning that ideology does not describe the real human situation as it really is. Ideology describes the situation in reverse. The structure of domination is perpetuated by ideology as Marx's false consciousness or Gramsci's hegemony (Boothman, 2008).

The existence of mass media is essential in meeting the information needs of the community. Awareness of the importance of the information needs of the mass media has long been recognized through various opinions of philosophers and communication experts. According to Edmund Burke, the media is the fourth power or the fourth level of the three other levels, namely the executive, legislative, and judicial. Burke said that the media represent an independent source of knowledge, which not only informs people about political activity but also protects people from abuse of power (Edmund Burke in (Gobang, 2014).

Local Media Challenge

Why is Local Media not absolutely neutral or interest-free? This question is a challenge for the local press regarding their social control role toward the local government. The challenge for regional newspapers to compete with other regional newspapers is how to have an extraordinary ideal base supported by a commercial foundation that includes management and financial systems and a reliable, professional workforce (Susanto, 2017).

In addition, the independence of regional newspapers can be "tainted" by the co-optation of the rulers and owners of capital who have a lot of money. The journalists are no exception, tempted by the "contents of the envelope" offered by the owners of capital or the authorities. Regional newspapers will thus easily become an ideological tool for the rulers and owners of capital in the regions (Prasetyo, 2014). The professionalism of regional newspapers can be challenged here. This challenge can be seen in the relationship between local media and regional authorities. A critical perspective in transcultural communication helps us to examine the problems mentioned above (Martin and Nakayama, 2010). This is because transcultural communication examines the power relations contained in the dynamics of cultural groups. Many studies of intercultural communication talk about differences in class, race, gender, nationality, sex, or things that exist in society (Volkmer, Littlejohn, & Foss, 2009).

Flores Pos and Pos Kupang are two regional newspapers that are widely known in the province of East Nusa Tenggara. These two newspapers, of course, have ideals and also a distinctive commercial basis according to the vision and mission carried out by each newspaper (Suryawati and Wulansari, 2013). Another factor that determines the steps and direction of a newspaper's struggle is media ownership. This, in turn, determines the newspaper's attitude in dealing with facts, issues, and social phenomena that occur in society (Dewi, 2011). One of them is the problem of corruption. Based on the conclusion, according to the level of analysis above, on a micro basis, it was found that the actors who committed corruption crimes in NTT were generally local officials, both executive and legislative. These bureaucratic officials usually collude with entrepreneurs (contractors) in addition to taking the same actions (corruption practice) with law enforcement officers.

At the *meso* (medium) level, there are government agencies or offices and regional-owned companies which are referred to as "wet places", i.e., places where there are many projects. Money for these projects is the object or target for corruption by corrupt actors (corruptors) who have great power and access. At the macro level, it was found that people in NTT generally do not have access to sufficient information for them to participate in controlling good local governance. Herein lies the importance of knowing the attitude of the media, in this case, Flores Pos and Pos Kupang, in dealing with corruption in NTT.

Hence, the neutrality of local mass media is also influenced by the dominance of media owners who have power relations with regional authorities. This can be explained as follows: NTT's local mass media have become an important entity in pushing for change, especially in areas of poverty and corruption, which are still rampant. This can also be a challenge for the local media on the one hand and a factual challenge for the NTT community on the other. The challenge for the people of NTT is how and when they achieve liberation from the corrupt government and from poverty that is still rampant. Media workers (journalists and editors), the owners of capital, and the

authorities, in this case, the local government, are trying to dominate, control, direct public thoughts, construct reality, and instill ideology.

Eduardus Dosi, in his book Mass Media in the Net of Power (Dosi, 2012), states that the media in Indonesia was once a tool in the hands of the government to dominate the world of discourse. The media became a tool to legitimize the existence and structure of political and economic power. However, it can also happen on the contrary. The media can be a tool to delegitimize corrupt power, expose the depravity that occurs in the government and society, and overthrow authoritarian powers.

The local and national mass media appear to be a fourth-level power (the fourth estate) that may have been contaminated by corrupt and unfair practices. Yet, is the mass media value-free? Or is there a certain ideology behind its mission in packaging and presenting news?

The study of local mass media coverage in NTT Province about corruption in an area where most people are still classified as poor attracted the researchers to study more deeply using the critical paradigm. Therefore, this research is qualitative in nature and aims to find the meaning of the political economy behind corruption news texts and uncover the ideology behind corruption discourse in local mass media in NTT Province (Pos Kupang and Flores Pos).

News of corruption in the local mass media in NTT Province is constructed based on knowledge of the values or ethics adopted by journalists and news editors. Of course, the critical perspective is different from the classical/positivist/empirical view, which avoids the matters related to subjectivity as far as possible. It is also different from the constructivist view, which only views reality as a product of the interaction between the researcher and the researched without looking at the relationship with social, cultural, and social forces and political economy.

Another perspective asserts that the efforts to avoid subjectivity according to the classical/positivist/empirical view can be obtained if journalists can separate firmly between facts and opinions. Subjective considerations should be avoided as far as possible (Eriyanto, 2020). This classical/positivist/empirical view is criticized by critical and constructivist views, which say that basically, all journalistic work is a very subjective process – not only involving facts but also desires and motivations and even subjective interests. However, in contrast to the critical view, the constructivist view aims only to reconstruct social reality dialectically between the researcher and the object, while the critical view aims at social criticism, transformation, and social empowerment.

According to the critical paradigm, reality from the ontological aspect is constructed by social, cultural, economic, and political forces that occur in the historical process so that this reality is not a real reality but a "pseudo" reality or a constructed reality (virtual reality). This means the reality of corruption or misuse of state finances in the NTT Province which is constructed by local media according to social, political, and economic contexts which are ontologically pseudo or "constructed" for an ideological interest.

From the epistemological aspect, the discourse on corruption in NTT Province is produced by the local mass media subjectively through journalists who are influenced by social cognition and the social context that occurs when the corruption news text is constructed. The text of corruption news constructed by the local NTT mass media is transactional through some actors such as journalists and editors with other social, political, economic, and cultural forces found in NTT Province. The researchers, of

course, are not value-free but have a number of value sets to find meaning and dismantle the ideology behind the construction of local mass media in NTT Province on the reality of corruption in the news.

Restoring People's Rights: Discussion on The Local Press Role in NTT

Pos Kupang and Flores Pos are local mass media published and circulated in the province of East Nusa Tenggara. The local NTT mass media have ideals and also a unique commercial basis according to the vision and mission carried out by each media institution. In the process of producing corruption news texts in the local NTT mass media, it was found on a micro basis that the actors who committed corruption crimes in NTT were generally regional officials, both executive and legislative. These bureaucrats usually collude with entrepreneurs (contractors) and take the same action (corrupt practice) with law enforcement officers. In addition, corruption news texts dominantly position law enforcement officers as the main actors in the construction of the text. This is what causes the discourse on corruption in the local NTT mass media to be elitist. Symptoms of euphemism are also found in the corruption news texts produced by the local mass media in NTT. This phenomenon is also influenced by journalists' cognition and repressive power relations between journalists, editors, editors-in-chief, and media owners. NTT residents are not involved or do not have access to local mass media in NTT.

At the *meso* (medium) level, there are government agencies or offices and regional-owned companies referred to as "wet places", i.e., where there are many projects. Money for these projects is the object or target for corruption by corrupt actors with great power and access. In addition, Pos Kupang and Flores Pos are local mass media in NTT competing for subscribers and readers. Because of that, the circulation of local mass media can change when there is a business consideration as hot news. One type of news that can convert news value into selling value is news of corruption. The process of commodifying corruption news in the local NTT mass media takes place consciously at the level of media institutions through the actors, namely journalists, editors, editor-in-chief, company leaders, and media owners. NTT local mass media, in the name of business considerations, can also get out of the rails of idealism as stated in the vision and mission of the press agency or local mass media institution (Indah 2011).

At the macro level, it was found that people in NTT generally do not have access to sufficient information for them to participate in controlling good and clean local governance. Herein lies the importance of knowing the attitude of the media, in this case, Pos Kupang and Flores Pos, in dealing with the problem of corruption in NTT. The people of NTT are only readers of corruption "reports" of law enforcement officials. Law enforcement officials dominate the news, which is positioned by journalists as the main actor, the only source for producing corruption news texts. The joint commitment of all levels of NTT society to eradicate corruption in NTT is just an empty slogan because it is not carried out by the local NTT mass media as the fourth power in a democracy (fourth estate).

What should the public do when the issue of corruption does not subside? Instead, it is increasingly hitting the joints of the life of this nation and country. The people must move to support efforts to eradicate corruption in all areas of life. One of the social sanctions against the crime of corruption, collusion, and nepotism is giving shame (*shaming*) to the perpetrators of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. Shaming will be effective if there is a culture of anti-corruption, collusion, and nepotism at all levels of

society. Efforts to eradicate corruption are not easy because it has become a culture entrenched in all levels of society (Bel et al., 2010). However, various eradications are still carried out in stages. If it cannot be eliminated completely, it should be reduced.

Based on the other previous study, it was explained that media content is influenced by various factors, both internal and external, from the mass media, which are grouped into several levels (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), namely:

1. Individual level: personal background related to gender, ethnicity, beliefs, behavior, personal values, professional background, and political orientation;
2. Media routine level: a continuous and repetitive pattern that occurs in media workers in carrying out their duties;
3. Organizational level: related to the structure in media institutions from the lowest to the leadership level (the front line, namely writers, reporters, staff; the middle level, namely managers, editors, and producers; and top-level corporate and news executives who make organizational policies, budgets and important decisions related to the business and politics of media companies).
4. Extra-media level: information sources, advertisers and audiences, government control, markets, and technology;
5. Ideological level: related to the perspective of seeing the world and self as a guide to work or act.

What Shoemaker and Reese have described above can be used as a scientific basis for this research. Through this research, researchers want to see how local mass media in NTT produce news about corruption in NTT Province.

The local mass media in NTT can be neutral as a channel that conveys facts or incidents of corruption with the actors as they are. However, the local NTT mass media can also emphasize or highlight certain aspects of events, people, or groups related to the corruption problem in the province of NTT. Moreover, are the journalists working for the local NTT mass media neutral, not influenced by anything or anyone in collecting data or facts and packaging news about corruption in the province of NTT? All of this is the researcher's endeavor to find the answer through the research that will be carried out.

Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese (1996), in the book *Mediating The Message, Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (Shoemaker and Reese 1996), state that the pattern of media content is influenced by factors such as political bias, news character, deviations that occur in society, news sources and topics, geographical and demographic factors, and power or cultural factors contained in the media as an institution.

The political bias intended by Shoemaker and Reese is the influence of political news on the mass media. The mass media, because they contain political news, can be biased in terms of ideology and partisanship. Citing the opinion of Dennis McQuail (McQuail, 1992), Shoemaker and Reese explain that the direction or orientation of the media can change according to who is in power in the media.

McQuail gives an analogy of people playing bowling: the direction of the ball is determined by the bowler. This typology of political bias can be either overt or hidden. This depends on four types of news that are indicated by bias: partisan, propaganda news, unwitting bias, and bias due to ideological factors (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

Another factor that influences media content is the character of the media itself. In this case, it relates to the focus on reporting. News that has elements of violence can affect the pattern of media content. This factor is related to several studies on the effect of violent news on the media, especially television (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). The deviation factor that occurs in the community encourages the mass media to package news about deviations and the people involved in them. Deviations in question include the lives of homosexuals and lesbians, violence, especially sexual violence, murder, abuse of authority, corruption, and other events considered deviant. The mass media are interested in reporting these deviant things (Latif, 2020).

Sources and news topics are factors that also influence mass media content. Usually, famous or prominent people dominate the coverage in the mass media. In contrast, ordinary people are reported by the mass media when it comes to issues of violence, protests, and victims, as respondents in a survey (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

Geographical and demographic factors also influence the content of mass media. Certain areas become the main concern in every mass media coverage. Usually, the center of the capital becomes a priority in the news, and residents in the city more easily become a news source for the mass media (Hamad, 2004). Another thing related to demography as a factor influencing media content is the issue of ethnicity, social class, and minorities (Keller, 2009).

The mass media, at any time, can pack a variety of news. The media have the power to choose, select, and report anything, whether it is political bias or being on the agenda of the mass media itself. The form or pattern of media content also varies, whether it is dramatic or newsworthy, depending on the factors that influence the content of the mass media (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) also question whether the mass media can reflect or describe events as they are? On this question, Shoemaker and Reese argue that the media is a channe. This model adopts the Lasswell model in which the media becomes a passive channel in the flow of information. Media transmits messages neutrally and serves to connect the sender of the message (sender) with the recipient of the message (receiver).

Shoemaker and Reese also argue that there is a neutral journalist theory. This theory has a philosophical basis that the journalist's profession is not to make news but to report it. Therefore, the media in which the journalist works are independent and will not make mistakes because the media content has shown accuracy and represents a picture of the world or its environment (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Another thing emphasized by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) in relation to how an event is packaged into mass media is the manipulation of reality (manipulating reality). The manipulation of reality is that media content is formed based on what happens in the physical environment and is influenced by various factors. Reality can be manipulated when events and people are placed into the main story or story. The media, of course, greatly influence packaging all the materials or data and facts collected by their workers and presenting them in news or broadcasts.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) also mention that the manipulation of reality by the media assigns a certain "label" to a person and can give multiple meanings, such as whether the person is seen as a "liberation fighter" or as a "terrorist". According to Shoemaker and Reese, media construct the structure of the contents of various symbols

to emphasize or highlight events, people, groups, places, and others in the news they produce.

The local media continues to pressure the despotic rulers by boldly reporting on the various depravities and abuses of power that he has made. This raises people's awareness of their rights that have been annexed by the authorities and mobilizes resistance to tear down the seats of power of the dictators. People can also get out of the cage of oppression and breathe the oxygen of freedom and independence. Edmund Burke confirms this fact by stating that the media represent an independent source of knowledge that informs the people about political activities but also protects the people from abuse of power (McNair, 2003).

The communication and information technology advancement has greatly helped the media find various ways and strategies to target and investigate various policies and acts of abuse of power carried out by political elites and rulers who want to be covered up or hidden so that the people continue to demand moral, political and legal accountability. Today there is no depravity in public affairs that can be hidden because one day, the media will surely expose it. It must be admitted that the success stories of the people's struggle to overthrow dictators in various parts of the world and the revelations of various corruptions in the administration of power in this country are success stories for the role played by the media (Dewi, 2011).

A critical perspective in the science of transcultural communication helps us to look deeper into the relationship between local media and regional authorities. This critical perspective encourages investigations of marginalized or oppressed groups and examines the power used in intercultural relations (Volkmer et al., 2009).

Local media as institutions and media workers as subjects must continue to present themselves as free and independent media and media workers accompanied by moral courage not to be "bought" by capital owners and power holders (Loisa et al. 2019). Local media must work with certain principles so that their accountability can be measured by the community and local authorities.

Conclusion

Local media should continue to play a role as a social instrument that enlightens people to become intelligent and critical citizens so that they can build substantive democracy in our government system. If the media denies this role, the people will be more critical in assessing the news and information presented by the media so that it will be a bet for the survival or not of a media. Regional autonomy has created the reality of local government, which has become a commodity in the media system. However, both the reality (system) of local government and the media system can influence each other. Therefore, the neutrality of local mass media is also influenced by the dominance of media owners who have power relations with regional authorities

The phenomenon of local media ownership is an object of study that remains interesting for further analysis. This is because media products can be influenced by media ownership factors. The role of the media and the political system should strengthen the existence of citizens to achieve prosperity. Ones cannot let the media and political system in Indonesia only benefit the elite, both the media elite and the ruling elite, to reap the maximum profit, while the people continue to suffer poverty. The critical perspective in the study of transcultural communication (intercultural communication) has helped the author conduct investigations on marginal groups or oppressed groups. In addition, this critical perspective examines the power used by the

local government and its relationship with the people in NTT Province. The local media, in this case, the Flores Pos and Pos Kupang, are the channels used to restore the rights of the NTT people who have been usurped through corruption.

The ability of local media to articulate their control functions to restore people's rights and encourage the implementation of good local governance cannot be separated from the professionalism of the media crew and their critical attitude. This is because the relationship between local media and regional authorities is still prone to conflict (conflict of interests), complex, and bound by certain emotional-cultural aspects. However, transcultural communication skills will help provide some solutions.

Acknowledgement

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