

## The Influence of Regulator on Television Content in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Throughout the authoritarian era, the government imposed tight control on television content in Indonesia. However, after the fall of the last authoritarian ruler in 1998, and the old style of restriction no longer exist, the question now remains: who ultimately control television content? This research measures the influence of political and economic factors on television content with a focus on owners, advertisers, audiences, regulators, and politicians. A questionnaire survey was conducted on 400 television workers employed at 10 national private television stations in Indonesia. Qualitative data was produced from the interview with 50 television workers with a focus on the role of the regulator in influencing content. Key research questions are: 1) what are the most influential politics and economic factors that influence television workers in shaping the content? 2) How does the regulator influence television workers in shaping the content? The findings showed that the audience is the most influential factor since it affected 33.9 percent of television workers. The regulator appeared to be the least influence on programmes content on a daily basis. This showed that the influence of regulators experienced a drastic decline from the strongest in the authoritarian era to the weakest in the post-authoritarian era. However, the influence of regulators was still quite significant among television workers who worked at TV stations and relied heavily on entertainment programmes.

**Keywords:** *Regulator, television, Indonesia, authoritarian, post-authoritarian.*

### INTRODUCTION

The rise of freedom and the process of transition to democracy in Indonesia were marked by the collapse of Indonesian last authoritarian government led by President Suharto in May 1998. After the shift of political power, various reforms in almost all aspects of life occurred, particularly the media and press relishing freedom the most. The euphoria is understandable because for decades' Indonesian media have lived under consistent pressure to follow ruler's political call. For decades, the autocratic government monitored firmly the media, and the fall of President Suharto regime allows the media to appreciate the newly found freedom from the government's strict control. Currently, Indonesia as the world's fourth-largest population, becomes the new emerging democratic country.

Throughout the course of authoritarian era, the government-controlled broadcast media were dominant in Indonesia (Sen & Hill, 2000). From the period of 1974 to 1998, radio and television were liable to strict control by Suharto's administration. Only state radio station, Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) was permitted to air news programmes. Consistently it broadcasts news programmes and it is mandatory for every single other station to relay them. From 1989 to 1995, the government allowed the opening of private television stations and the larger part of those stations' shares were controlled by the family of President Suharto and his internal circle; henceforth the content of telecasts was controlled in accordance with their interests (Combine Resource Institution, 2009).

At the time of authoritarian era, the media that dared to ignore or underestimate government controls would face fatal consequences (Kitley, 2000; Sen & Hill, 2011). Media permits were frequently revoked, subject to bans, and even closed down without gaining access to open trial (Hill, 2007). The restriction imposed on media prevailed until Suharto came down from power. The downfall of the last authoritarian ruler grants Indonesian media to flourish aggressively.

Under heavy pressures from the civil society and the market, the post-Suharto governments took a series of liberalisation policies. In the television business, five new private national channels entered the business sector. The entrance took place even prior to the House of Representatives enacted the new Broadcasting Bills in November 2002 (Sudibyo & Patria, 2013). The new stations should compete with another five stations established during the era of Suharto and once controlled by Suharto's family and cronies [the five new private television are: Lativi (now TVOne), Metro TV, Global TV, Trans TV, TV 7 (now Trans 7)]. After the downfall of Suharto in 1998, and since media permits are no longer required to establish new media outlets, the number of new media rose significantly (Sudibyo & Patria, 2013). Notwithstanding the ten private television channels, every one of them situated in the capital city, a large amount of regional stations has also entered the market (Armando, 2014).

In the era of democracy, regulators control media content. The media regulator could be an independent body or a government agency responsible for exercising autonomous authority over media activities in a regulatory or supervisory capacity (Briandana, 2019). An independent media regulator is a regulatory agency that is independent from other branches or arms of the government. In countries where the media are largely privately owned like in Indonesia, the media are free to operate within the limits of the law, so regulators' controls are exerted through various regulations while in countries where the media are primarily government owned, control is exerted through media financing.

### *Broadcasting Commission*

President Megawati signed the new broadcast law in 2002. The law also commands the establishment of independent broadcast regulator with responsibility for regulating and providing recommendations in the area of broadcasting. One year later, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), an independent state regulatory body, was established. KPI consists of national (KPI) and regional bodies (KPID), with important authority over broadcasting (Articles 6 and 7). Members of KPI and KPID were nominated by the People's Representative Council (DPR) and the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) after public input and based on a fit and proper test (Pursuant to Article 10).

The 2002 Broadcasting Law outlines the functions of the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) as an independent regulatory body that has the authorities to set a standard of broadcast programmes; set regulations and guidance of broadcasting ethical; supervise the implementation of regulations and guidance as well as the standard of broadcast programmes; give sanctions to those who violate the regulations and guidance as well as the standard of broadcast programmes; coordinate and/or cooperate with the government, broadcast institutions, and the people.

Therefore, KPI has formulated and set the Guidance of Broadcasting Ethics and Broadcast Programmes Standard (P3SPS). This is a standard guide for broadcasting in Indonesia. According to KPI, "P3SPS is a parameter of what may and may not be broadcast,

not to reduce the freedom of the press; instead to dignify broadcast content as not everything is worth broadcast and presented to the public" (KPI, 2012).

Based on the discussion above, this study proposes problem-statements as follows. The government imposed tight control on television content throughout the authoritarian era. However, after the fall of the last authoritarian ruler in 1998, and the old style of restriction no longer exist. There has been no empirical study toward television media workers in Indonesia to find out who ultimately controlled television content, and whether the government, through its regulatory body, still exercise control and influencing television content. This research measures the influence of the political and economic factors on television content which includes: owners, advertisers, audiences, regulator, and politicians. Key research questions are: 1) what are the most influential politics and economic factors influencing television workers in shaping the content? 2) How does the regulator influence television workers in shaping the content? Thus, this article focuses on the role of the regulator on television content.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Political and Economic Influences on Media Content*

This research will look at the forces at work within television organisations, the external influences upon their activity and the influence of particular organisation features on what they produce and disseminate. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) suggested five main hypotheses with regard to the theoretical perspectives organised around the question of influence on media content: 1) Content reflects social reality (mass media as mirror of society); 2) Content is influenced by media workers' socialisation and attitudes (a communicator-centered approach); 3) Content is influenced by media-organisational routines; 4) Content is influenced by social institution and forces; 5) Content is a function of ideological positions and maintains the status quo (the hegemonic approach)

According to McQuail (2000), organisational routines, practices and goals systematically and distinctively influence content. He identified five main kinds of relationship, which need to be examined in order to gain some understanding of the conditions affecting media organisational activity and the mass communicator role: 1) Relationship with society; 2) Relationship with owners, clients and suppliers; 3) Relationship with pressure groups; 4) Relationship with internal organisation; 5) Relationship with audience.

Gerbner (1969) depicted communicators in mass media as working under pressure from different external 'power roles', including audience, competitors (other media in the main), clients (such as sponsors and advertisers), authorities (especially legal and political), experts, and other institutions. The media content is designed and disseminated reflecting the interests and perspectives of the dominant and influential class (Islam, 2016). Being the power of elites, the media owners control their media outlets through formulating a favorable policy that sets the type of ideology and news of the media (Islam, 2016).

According to Pringle and Starr (2005, p.102), all broadcast station content (programmes) is determined by four influences: audience, broadcaster, advertiser and regulator. The audience, which seeks out a station for its programmes. Listeners or viewers may be exposed to other content, such as commercials and public service and promotional announcements, but their principal goals to hear or view programmes content that satisfies their need at a particular time. Programmes that fail to attract listeners or viewers (low

rating programmes), or fail to satisfy their needs, are imperiled. So are the financial fortunes of the station.

The broadcaster, who is responsible for operating the station profitably for its owners. The greater the audience, the greater the likelihood that a profit can be realised. Accordingly, the broadcaster selects and schedules programmes to attract as many people as possible among the targeted audience.

The advertiser, whose principal interest in using a radio or television is to bring a product or service to the attention of those most likely to use it. Programmes that attract potential customers stand the best chance of attracting advertising revenues, especially if the number of people is large and the cost of delivering the commercial to them is competitive.

The regulator, or government and its agencies, whose goal is to ensure that the station is operated in a way that serves the public interest. The regulator take actions aimed at compelling or encouraging broadcasters to engage in certain programmesming practices to satisfy that goal.

Lewis (1969) used responses from 301 stations in the United States to determine influences in television station programmesming. He developed eight categories, in no particular order of priority: 1) Direct feedback from the audience, including letters, telephone calls, and conversations; 2) Regulations, or rules and standards of practice, such as commitments to the FCC, its rules and regulations, and the station's own policy statement; 3) Inferential feedback, or ratings; 4) Conditional, a mix of factors, including comments about critics and opinions of friends outside the station; 5) Production staff, the opinions of station personnel with production responsibilities; 6) Personal or subjective judgment, including instinct, common sense, and knowledge of the community; 7) Financial, or factors related to the station's income and expenditures, such as sales potential, sales manager's opinion, and cost; 8) Tactical, that is, methods of programmes planning, the arrangement of the schedule, and viewing trends.

### *The Influence of Regulators*

Regulators in many countries exert controls over the mass media. In democratic societies, the media are free to operate within the limits of laws and regulations. However, conflicts still occur in relations with regulators. In countries where the media are largely privately owned, regulators exert controls on mass media through laws, regulations, licenses, and taxes, whereas in countries where the media are primarily government owned, control is exerted through media financing (Janus, in Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). A media regulator is an independent body or a government agency responsible for exercising autonomous authority over media activities in a regulatory or supervisory capacity. An independent media regulator is a regulatory agency that is independent from other branches or arms of the government.

The relationship between media and regulators, though not entirely one of equals, is similarly one of mutual self-interest. When things really get difficult, regulators make laws and control the flow of information. Regulators control mechanism of regulation directly or indirectly. Given the access of media to the audience, regulators often use media to disseminate policy, to promote initiatives, and to release information into the public domain. Media are also used to test reactions to possible new law, and most of all to present in a public sphere a favourable view of regulators' works.

Regulators are very conscious of the value of media coverage, of what they assume to be the power of the media to sway public opinion. The media are also conscious of their alleged influence, but are informed too of the power of regulators as an information prime source. Broadcast media personnel are especially aware of the financial consequences of regulators' power to allow or to stop things from happening (Burton, 2005, p.20).

In its review of 178 governments' or regulators' relationship with the mass media in 2010, Reporters Without Borders for Press Freedom found that Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Netherlands, and Switzerland as the model countries that have set an example in the way they honor reporters and news media and protect them from judicial abuse (Reporters Without Border, Press Freedom Index, 2010, retrieved from <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html>).

In recent years, Reporters Without Borders (2010) drew particular attention of countries where it is not good to be a journalist or media worker. Marked by a complete lack of news and information and persecution of the media, some 10 countries including China, North Korea, Burma, and Syria are clustered together at the bottom press freedom world index. The situation of press freedom keeps on worsening in these authoritarian countries and it is getting more difficult to say which is worse than the other is.

Although Indonesia is ranked 117 in the index, press freedom in Indonesia has improved since the end of Suharto's authoritarian government. Indonesia has built and maintained a media environment that allows greater freedom and diversity, and with the decline of press freedom among some of its neighbors in East Asia, the country has emerged as one of the better performers in the region. However, continuing problems, especially in Indonesia's legal system, is preventing the Indonesia's press from being classified as fully "free" (Kaufman, 2010).

The government influence on the mass media content can be seen in the battle of determining public agenda. Scholars have long known that the media have the potential for creating issues for the public. According to Walter Lippmann (in Littlejohn & Foss, 2005), the public responds not to actual events in the environment, but to the picture in our heads. Lippmann wrote: "real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutation and combinations. And altogether, we have to act in that environment; we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it." (as cited in Littlejohn & Foss, 2005, p.279).

Gerbner et al. (1979) portrayed media workers as operating under pressures from various external 'power roles', obviously neither power roles nor types of leverage are in reality separate or isolated. On the contrary, they often combine and overlap. The accumulation of power roles and possibilities of advantage gives certain institutions dominant position in mass communication of their societies. In the case of agents of government or business, these can represent powerful advantage and at the same important sources for the media themselves.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses mixed methods design in which the researcher converges or merges qualitative and quantitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this research, surveys are used to measure the most influential political economic factors that shape content. With regards to the first research question: What are the most influential political economic factors that affect television workers in

shaping the content? Survey, as a quantitative technique, would provide essential information to the research question. Questionnaires survey was distributed to 400 television workers from 10 largest television stations in Indonesia.

The measurement technique used in the questionnaires is Likert rating scale. Respondents were asked to rate two statements in the questionnaire with the five-level of scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree to reflect their level of attitude toward regulator: "The authority reprimanded media about its content" and "The programmes content frequently changed due to reprimands from the authority". The measurement was conducted with summated scores on a five-point Likert Scale to the two statements of the regulator's influence. The higher the score respondents obtained, the stronger the influence of the regulator. This research employs a descriptive survey since the objective is to illustrate and explain a situation of political economic pressures that befall television workers, especially from the regulator.

This research also attempts to answer the second research question on how regulators influence television content during Indonesia post-authoritarian era through laws and regulations, and how television workers adapt their content to demands of laws and regulation. Face-to-face in-depth interviews are conducted in order to answer the research question: "How do regulator influence television workers in shaping the content?"

The key question that needs to be raised during an interview with selected television workers is, more or less, the following line: "Can you give some cases based on your experience which illustrate how the regulator may influence your work that eventually affect your television programmes content?" Some 50 workers from 10 television stations in Indonesia were interviewed, and answers to the above question would depend on their opinions, comments, and responses.

This study is 'media-centric', which means taking, or recording the view from within the media (McQuail, 2000). This research focus on ten Jakarta-based free-to-air national television stations - RCTI, SCTV, Indosiar, Metro TV, TV One, Global TV and Trans 7- whose content compositions are not exactly similar. As such, this research examines the regulator's influence on all kinds of television genres.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

These research findings consisted of two parts. The first part of these findings uncover the most influential political economic factors on television content in Indonesia based on survey with 400 respondents who work or had worked at 10 largest television station in Indonesia. The second part explains how the regulator influenced television workers in shaping the content based on the primary data from 50 respondents of television workers selected from the 400 respondents of the survey. The respondents worked in various positions involved in content productions.

Questionnaire distributions apparently had been running well and generated sufficient data. The television workers who became respondents of this study consisted of various levels of positions, whether they were newcomers in television business or those who had been working for years; whether they were still working or no longer working at television stations. In essence, each respondent was asked to give his or her opinions based on their experiences with regard to the various political economic factors that affect their professional works and eventually influenced the content they produced.

Statements in the questionnaire were devised with reference to the various influencing factors that may affect the determination of media content consisting of five dimensions: media owners, advertisers, regulators, audience, and politicians. Based on the feedbacks from television workers, it can be concluded that audience is the most influential factor since it affected the most 33.9 percent television workers employed at 10 national private television stations in Indonesia. Television workers considered audience as the greatest influence on their works among other political, economic pressures that influenced them in shaping the programmes content. They said the influence was recognised from the rating reports obtained from a rating agency.

The second most influential political economic factor on programmes content was placed by advertisers (21.4%), followed by owners (20.3%) who occupied the third position, while politicians came the fourth (14.3%) and number five, or the last is regulators (10.1%). Among the five political economic factors discussed in this study, regulators appear to have the least influence on programmes content on daily basis. This shows that the influence of regulators experienced a drastic decline from the strongest in the authoritarian era to the weakest in the post-authoritarian era. However, the influence of regulators was still quite significant among television workers who worked at TV stations that relied heavily on entertainment programmes. They often produce scenes that pay less attention to ethics to attract audience's attention so that they often got warnings from regulators as revealed from the interview data to be explained in the following section.

Table 1: The average number of television workers affected frequently or very frequently by political economic factors

| Political economy factors | Number of television workers affected | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Audience                  | 135,6                                 | 33,90%         |
| Advertisers               | 85,6                                  | 21,40%         |
| Owners                    | 81,2                                  | 20,30%         |
| Politicians               | 57,2                                  | 14,30%         |
| Regulator                 | 40,4                                  | 10,10%         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>400,0</b>                          | <b>100,00%</b> |

The impact of the political economic factors discussed above is not the same among television channels. There are stations where the workers said that mostly audience affected them while workers at other stations said they were less affected by audience but mostly by owners. Table 2 shows the magnitude of each political economic variable on television workers in shaping content in each television channels. The magnitude scale is produced by measuring the weight of response (from very frequent to very rare) from television workers to each the political economic factor discussed above.

### *The Influence of Regulator*

Television workers interviewed throughout this research said the KPI was quite influential in shaping the programmes content. They said the broadcasting commission constantly monitored television content and in case the content breached broadcasting ethics and laws- gave a reprimand letter to the station concerned. After being warned several times

and no corrections have been made by the stations, the KPI has the power to halt television programmes.

Television workers who worked at two television stations under Trans Corp (Trans TV and Trans 7) owned by businessman Chairul Tandjung said KPI played important role in shaping their programmes content. Mardhatillah, an Executive Producer at television station Trans 7 said the KPI banned her popular talk-show programmes *Empat Mata* (face-to-face) in 2008. According to the KPI, *Empat Mata* had breached several guidelines. KPI considered the programmes's host, a comedian Tukul Arwana, was disrespectful and exploitative toward female guests. The host often touched, groped and kissed cheek to cheek his female guests, such manners considered very impolite and inappropriate. In Indonesia, when female friends meet, they often greet each other by kissing cheek to cheek, but not male to his female friend as demonstrated by Tukul Arwana.

Table 2: The weight of political economy influences in each TV stations observed

| Stations  | Leading programmes | Owners | Advertisers | Audience | Regulators | Politicians |
|-----------|--------------------|--------|-------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| RCTI      | Soap opera         | ***    | ****        | *****    | **         | ***         |
| SCTV      | Soap opera         | ***    | ****        | *****    | **         | *           |
| Trans TV  | Variety show       | ***    | ****        | *****    | ****       | *           |
| MNC TV    | Local music        | **     | ****        | *****    | **         | **          |
| Trans 7   | Reality show       | ***    | ****        | *****    | ****       | *           |
| Indosiar  | Reality show       | **     | ****        | *****    | **         | *           |
| Global TV | Movies             | **     | ****        | *****    | **         | **          |
| ANTV      | Sport              | ***    | ****        | *****    | **         | ***         |
| TV One    | News               | *****  | ***         | ***      | ***        | *****       |
| Metro TV  | News               | *****  | ***         | **       | ***        | *****       |

\*\*\*\*\* Very strong influence; \*\*\*\* Strong influence; \*\*\*Moderate influence; \*\* Less influence; \*Almost no influence

But the ultimate mistake made by the programmes was when they invited Sumanto as guest. The infamous Sumanto was jailed for five years for stealing and literally eating the corpse of an old woman in 2003, and he was released in 2006. During the television show, Sumanto demonstrated how he ate a living frog, such act sparked public protests prompting KPI to halt the show for a month. However, after a short-live ban, the *Empat Mata* show subsequently resumed broadcast under a new name *Bukan Empat Mata*, adding a new word into the programmes's name "*bukan*" being the Indonesian word for "not". After several warnings from KPI, *Empat Mata* changed significantly in the way the host presented the show among others: no kissing cheeks and no vulgar jokes.

Informants at Trans TV interviewed during this research reported that the station received another warning letter from KPI for airing a programmes called *Super Trap*, a weekly prank show, which the commission deemed as intruding into people's privacy. In one episode of the show, which was broadcast on November 25, 2012,

*Super Trap* demonstrated a section in which unconscious people were deceived into utilising a public toilet outfitted with concealed cameras. Once an unaware victim was inside it and utilised the personal facility, the toilet walls caved in and uncovered the baffled and humiliated individual inside. As opposed to creating giggles, the trap drew anger from the audience.



KPI said in a statement it had received hundreds of complaints from audience soon after the Super Trap show, and the commission ordered the station to air a public apology. KPI stated that Trans TV had violated Broadcasting Guidelines and Programmes Standards, which oblige TV to keep up politeness and good manners in their content. The KPI also asserted that Trans TV had encroached individual privacy protection by installing hidden cameras in a public toilet.

In response to KPI's warning, Trans TV said it would evaluate its prank show in order to avoid similar mistakes in the future. "Evaluation will be made to improve the show" the station said. Responding to the KPI's reprimand, Trans TV made a public apology by airing announcements in the form of running text in the station's programmes. The channel also runs the same text during the next show of Super Trap episode. However, despite public outcry criticizing Super Trap, the station did not terminate the programmes. "The criticism means that the programmes is watched by a lot of people," a spokesman with the station said (Commission reprimands, 2012).

Television workers at Trans TV interviewed during this research reported that Super Trap and Empat Mata were two programmes among several other programmes which were rebuked by the KPI due to indecent content. KPI previously warned Trans TV for running a programmes called *Reportase Investigasi* (Investigative Reportage). In one episode, the programmes showed in detail how to blend illicit drugs when most youngsters could be expected to be viewing the programmes. The commission reproached the station once again for its programmes entitled Sexophone which KPI described as "the promotion of excessive sexuality".

For Trans TV, the regulator was perhaps the most important influence on its programmes content. Television workers at the station frequently changed their programmes content because of the streams of warning letters it received from the media watchdog. KPI said in its reports that Trans TV in 2012 topped the list of televisions violating broadcasting regulations and norms (KPI, 2012). Recently in September 2013, the station's cooking programmes also got a rebuke from KPI because the host, a sexy celebrity chef Farah Quinn, wore clothing that was considered exposing the upper part of her body. The KPI said in a statement that on July 28, 2013 Farah Quinn was wearing clothing that was somewhat showing her mid-section body, therefore plainly revealing the host's breast zone during the entire programmes (KPI, 2013). Following the warning, the television improved the programmes content, especially with regard to the outfits worn by the host.

At another television station, Dian Purba, Executive Producer at SCTV, said that she was frequently reprimanded by KPI because her music programmes feature female host wearing sexy outfit. She said (D. Purba, personal communication, September 12, 2013): "*Sering (ditegur), dulu ketika memegang Inbox pernah juga namun sifatnya teguran halus pada saat itu dikarenakan kostum host terlalu minim*". (I was warned frequently, when I was still supervising the Inbox (programmes), but I think it was just a mild warning because the host's outfit was too open).

Television workers at RCTI said KPI suspended the station's entertainment news programmes (infotainment) *Silet* in December 2010 for violating the Broadcasting Law. The commission even reported RCTI's president director Hary Tanoesoedibjo to the National Police saying Hary, as the person responsible for the content of the station's programmes, had dispersed false and misleading information through the gossip programmes *Silet*. Following a volcanic eruption of mount Merapi in central Java in October 2010 killing more than 100 lives, the programmes reported on Sunday of another possible tragedy the next

day in the nearby city of Yogyakarta. Based on a fortune teller's prediction, the programmes's host Fenny Rose, reported the volcano was expected to erupt with even greater intensity. The reports sparked unrest among those already affected by Merapi's eruptions and the inhabitants of Yogyakarta.

Many people lodged complaints to KPI regarding *Silet's* content on likely greater eruptions of Merapi volcano in central Java. For some Javanese, the 3,000-meter high peak is an essential symbol in their traditional supernatural quality and cosmology, particularly for inhabitants of Yogyakarta. The city is regularly thought to be at the heart of Javanese society and culture.

Following public complaints on *Silet*, KPI suspended the programmes and ordered the station to take the programmes off the air until after the volcano's status of alert had been in downgraded to the safe level. Nevertheless, RCTI continued to air new infotainment show called *Intens* to supplant *Silet*. While the programmes had an alternate name and presenter, it had the same content with *Silet*. The airing of new programmes pushed KPI to strike back by filing a police report against the station on November 17, in an attempt to briefly renounce the station's permit for supposedly disobeying the suspension order. RCTI took the case to the State Administrative Court On Nov. 29. The station asked for the judges to cross out the suspension imposed by the commission. The court ruled in favor of RCTI after four months of hearings, referring to procedural oversights in the decision of KPI to force a suspension. *Silet* returned to RCTI on Feb. 25, 2011 including the same presenter, Fenny Rose. The show persisted on RCTI several years after the controversial case.

Workers at a television station Indosiar reported that the station halted the emission of its Islamic drama series *Sembilan Wali* (Nine Propagators of Islam) in August 2012. KPI instructed Indosiar to stop *Sembilan Wali* because the programmes has offended people in Bali island whose inhabitants were mostly Hindus. *Sembilan Wali's* content was about the lives of nine Muslim propagators who spread Islam in Java during 14th and 15th centuries. The story was set during the period when Islam was first introduced in Indonesia's most populous Island, which at the time was under the reign of Majapahit, a Hindu kingdom. The programmes portrayed the Muslim propagators as good people, while Hindus from the Majapahit Kingdom as evil. Horrific scenes of conflicts between Muslims and Hindus were added into the plot in order to spice up and exaggerate the story.

The programmes was broadcast by Indosiar in observance of the Ramadan fasting month, and the station confided to televise the programmes because it had been approved by the Film Censorship Body (LSF). Following the emission of the programmes, dozens of Hindu students in Bali expressed their disagreement with the content. The programmes also sparked protests from Hindus elsewhere. Criticism was also voiced by scholars and historians, who said that the series was not based on historical fact. They said the story has the potential to create interfaith disharmony. KPI demanded Indosiar to stop the programmes amid Balinese public outcry prompting the station to change its programmes list and schedule. The station replaced *Sembilan Wali* with another programmes. Indosiar also apologised to all the Balinese.

Apart from the above cases involving KPI intervention on television content, the commission constantly sent warning letters to most television stations due to various violations. Television workers at RCTI also reported that the station changed the content of another programmes *Dibayar Lunas* (Paid in Cash) following KPI's warning in June 2009 on the use of foul language and the exploitation of the poor. In the warning letters, KPI demanded RCTI to moderate the programmes content or have the programmes taken off

the air. *Dibayar Lunas* was a television reality show that features people who cannot afford to pay their debts, despite their efforts to earn money. A team from the show looks for donors, and then the team brings the cash from donors to the indebted participants. RCTI aired the show every Saturday and Sunday at 5:30 p.m. Along with *Dibayar Lunas*, several reality shows on other stations were also warned of the use of foul language and the exploitation of the poor [This including *Termehkek-Mehkek* (“Crying Out Loud”) and “Orang Ke-3” (“Third Person”) on Trans TV, and “Face to Face” on ANTV].

Television workers said comedy shows on several stations were also reprimanded. They said KPI warned broadcasters because their programmes showed vulgar and sexually suggestive content, or featured a scene where a woman is sexually harassed, as well as violence and blood and sensual looking women, in addition to close ups of women's body parts. The programmes also showed domestic violence –for example, a programmes called *Suami-suami Takut Istri* (Husbands afraid of Wives) showed wives who hurt their spouses, and involved youngsters in a shameful setting.

KPI said none of the content ought to be aired when kids are expected to be watching. KPI's monitoring of television content increased when audience in the world's largest Muslim country intensify their worship, devotion and spiritual reflection during Ramadan, the holly Islamic fasting month. Throughout the time of Ramadan, prior to the first light of the day, Muslims in Indonesia wake up from their profound rest for a pre-sunrise meal, known as *sahur*, and they will stop doing their works for *buka puasa* or fast-breaking. As families flock for *sahur* or *buka puasa* and fill their stomach, televisions are also ready with programmes. During these two prime times, television stations broadcast special Ramadan shows.

While televisions are expected to honor the holiness of Ramadan by airing decent programmes, every year KPI reprimanded television stations for programmes deemed unsuitable for the holy month of Ramadan. Some stations broadcast religious programmes, but more stations do their best to collect extra incomes by broadcast entertainment programmes such as comedy, variety shows, and soap operas (*sinetron*) which considered not in line with the spirit of Ramadan. In 2012, there were only two Islamic programmes *Tafsir Al Misbah* (The Light of the Qur'an) which features a renowned cleric Quraish Shihab on Metro TV and a television series that aired in many countries *Omar* on MNC TV. Apart from the two programmes, according to the broadcasting commission, many television stations broadcast programmes that didn't reflect the spirit of Ramadan and most of them violated the standard rules of broadcasting.

In 2012, after monitoring television shows during Ramadan, particularly comedies televised by the stations during dawn or dusk, the KPI found some violations made by the broadcasters. The KPI said the violations encompassed showing verbal and physical violence against individuals with handicaps and dissimilar sexual orientation; showing programmes unsuitable for minors; showing comedians and actors verbally abused each other and exchanged sexually themed jokes. The broadcast watchdog said the shows are generally aired during fast-breaking and pre-sunrise suppers, which implies that young children in Muslim families could likewise watch them.

The findings prompted the commission to impose sanctions on several programmes for various violations, including Trans TV's *Waktunya Kita Sahur* and *Ngabuburit* and SCTV's *Sabarr*, RCTI's *Kampung Sahur Bejo*. Meanwhile, Indonesian religious leaders called for the boycott of Ramadan television shows that used bawdy humor or foul language. The

Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI) said these comedies shows contorted the true meaning of the holy month.

Television workers interviewed for this research said sanctions imposed by KPI in 2012 had put pressure on some stations to cut down its vulgar comedy shows in the following year's Ramadan programming. For example, RCTI chose to drop the two-hour variety comedy show *Kampung Sahur Bejo* from its day break programme and replaced it instead with a light religious drama *Anak-anak Manusia* (Children of Man) about daily life. With regard to comedy, the station only aired a 15-minute comedy sketch in Ramadan 2013.

Trans TV also scrapped its comedy programmes *Ngabuburit* following KPI's sanction on the programmes in 2012, leaving only one comedy show during Ramadan 2013. As a substitution, Trans TV aired a programmes about Islam knowledge *Cahaya Timur* (Eastern Light) and a news-documentary about an inspiring Indonesian Muslim lady 'Khadijah' (Arditya, 2013). SCTV also discontinued its musical comedy *Sabarr* which was also reviled by the KPI.

Although most broadcasters accepted their mistake, some of them complained about the sanctions they received from KPI as the commission's argument on the violation sometimes confusing and hard to accept. They said KPI had a different way in viewing whether or not the programmes content violated the guidance of broadcasting ethics and programmes standard.

Executive Producer at Trans TV, Zударlis Elfira, said in an interview that she was once summoned by KPI because a segment of her programmes, according to the commission, revealed impolite manners while on the contrary she thought there was no wrong with the programmes content. Zударlis Elfira said (personal communication, July 23, 2013): "On one occasion, KPI commented a programmes containing impolite remarks; on contrary we considered the remarks were still normal. I was summoned by KPI".

A television producer said the KPI sometimes invited broadcasters to discuss television programmes, which were still in planning or production process. The objective of these discussions was to make sure that the programmes wouldn't breach broadcasting ethics. This intervention was somewhat accepted by some broadcasters as they hope that no more warnings will be issued to them to change the content when the programmes had gone on air.

Cornel Pangaribuan, a producer at SCTV was once invited by KPI to discuss his new programmes while it was still in the production process. He explained (Pangaribuan, personal communication, August 8, 2013):

We were invited to communicate or share the idea [with the KPI] in order the programmes, which was still in production stage, will not violate KPI's decisions. We shared to make sure the programmes does not breach the regulation of broadcasting commission. So from the beginning, we determined which things are allowed and not allowed, so there will be no more changes in the concept and its technical production.

The KPI has issued hundreds reprimands so far to different broadcasters over television programmes, commercials and news programmes, deemed to have breached programming standards and the broadcasting code of conduct. Some of the reprimands were issued based on prior public complaints received by the commission. The increase in public complaints either shows that the media audience has become more critical about

what constitutes good programming, or that the broadcast content has become worse. Broadcasters' pursuit to achieve high rating and unprofessional reporting seemed to remain barriers to television quality and ethical programmes.

We can conclude from the data above that regulator is influential in shaping the programmes content. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) is a regulator in terms of programmes content. The KPI plays important role in shaping the television programmes content. KPI has a power to ban the television show. For some televisions, the regulator was perhaps the most important influence on its programmes content.

#### CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that audience is the most influential factor since it affected the most 33.9 percent television workers employed at 10 national private television stations in Indonesia. The second most influential political economic factor on programmes content was placed by advertisers (21.4%), followed by owners (20.3%) who occupied the third position, while politicians came the fourth (14.3%) and number five, or the last is regulators (10.1%). Among the five political economic factors discussed in this study, regulators appear to be the least influence on programmes content on daily basis. This shows that the influence of regulators experienced a drastic decline from the strongest in the authoritarian era to the weakest in the post-authoritarian era. However, the influence of regulators was still quite significant among television workers who worked at TV stations that relied heavily on entertainment programmes. For some televisions, the regulator was the most important influence on its programmes content. Broadcasters frequently changed their programmes content after a stream of warning letters. KPI also initiated discussions with broadcasters to discuss programmes, which were still in planning or production process to make sure that the programmes are eligible to broadcast.

#### BIODATA

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