

MASS MEDIA MONOPOLY IN INDONESIA IN THE MEDIA BUSINESS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This study aims to critically examine the phenomenon of media monopolies in Indonesia and their implications for press freedom, content diversity, and democratic discourse. Mass media play a crucial role in society as a provider of information, education, entertainment, and social control, as stipulated in Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press. However, the persistence of monopolistic practices, despite the prohibition outlined in Law No. 5 of 1999 on Monopolistic Practices and Unfair Business Competition, raises significant concerns regarding the imbalance between regulation and reality. Employing a qualitative research design with a literature study approach, this research synthesizes scholarly journals, books, and legal documents to interpret the patterns and consequences of media concentration in Indonesia. The methodology allows for the integration of diverse perspectives from communication studies, economics, law, and political science, thereby constructing a comprehensive understanding of media monopoly dynamics. The findings reveal that media ownership in Indonesia is highly concentrated among a few conglomerates, leading to reduced content diversity, weakened independent journalism, and narrowed public discourse. Digital transformation, while initially viewed as a democratizing force, has enabled new configurations of monopoly, with algorithms and platform dominance amplifying established corporate voices and marginalizing smaller players. Regulatory gaps and limited enforcement capacity further exacerbate these issues, allowing oligopolistic practices to persist across traditional and digital domains. This study concludes that addressing media monopolies requires robust regulatory reforms, strengthened institutional frameworks, and enhanced media literacy initiatives to preserve pluralism, ensure press freedom, and maintain the democratic function of the media.

Keywords: media monopoly, press freedom, content diversity, digital transformation, democracy, Indonesia

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara kritis fenomena monopoli media di Indonesia serta implikasinya terhadap kebebasan pers, keragaman konten, dan wacana demokratis. Media massa memiliki peran penting dalam masyarakat sebagai penyedia informasi, pendidikan, hiburan, sekaligus kontrol sosial sebagaimana diatur dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 40 Tahun 1999 tentang Pers. Namun, masih maraknya praktik monopoli media, meskipun telah dilarang dalam Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 1999 tentang Larangan Praktik Monopoli dan Persaingan Usaha Tidak Sehat, menimbulkan

kekhawatiran mengenai kesenjangan antara regulasi dan realitas yang terjadi di lapangan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka, yakni mengkaji berbagai jurnal ilmiah, buku, dan dokumen hukum yang relevan untuk menafsirkan pola dan konsekuensi dari konsentrasi kepemilikan media di Indonesia. Pendekatan ini memungkinkan integrasi berbagai perspektif dari bidang ilmu komunikasi, ekonomi, hukum, dan ilmu politik sehingga menghasilkan pemahaman yang komprehensif mengenai dinamika monopoli media. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemilikan media di Indonesia sangat terkonsentrasi pada segelintir konglomerat, yang berdampak pada berkurangnya keragaman konten, melemahnya jurnalisme independen, serta menyempitnya ruang diskursus publik. Transformasi digital yang awalnya dipandang sebagai kekuatan demokratis justru melahirkan konfigurasi monopoli baru, di mana algoritma dan dominasi platform memperkuat posisi korporasi besar sekaligus meminggirkan media kecil. Kesenjangan regulasi dan lemahnya kapasitas penegakan hukum semakin memperparah kondisi ini, sehingga praktik oligopoli tetap bertahan baik di ranah tradisional maupun digital. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa untuk mengatasi monopoli media diperlukan reformasi regulasi yang kuat, penguatan institusi, serta peningkatan literasi media agar pluralisme terjaga, kebebasan pers terlindungi, dan fungsi demokratis media tetap terpelihara.

Kata kunci: monopoli media, kebebasan pers, keragaman konten, transformasi digital, demokrasi, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Mass media occupy a central role in modern society, functioning not only as a conveyor of information but also as an educator, entertainer, social critic, and catalyst for change. Souisa, (2020) emphasizes in her work, *Posisi dan Peran Media dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat*, media has become an irreplaceable necessity in contemporary life. Its role extends beyond mere information dissemination; it helps shape cultural values, build public awareness, and serve as a bridge between state institutions and citizens. The proliferation of mass media in Indonesia, both traditional and digital, attests to its significance in shaping the public sphere, particularly in this era of globalization when access to information is more rapid, diverse, and contested than ever before. However, the centrality of mass media also invites scrutiny, especially when concentrated ownership structures create conditions that resemble monopoly or oligopoly, thereby threatening press freedom and content diversity.

The normative framework for the role of mass media in Indonesia is clearly outlined in Article 3, Paragraph 1 of Law Number 40 of 1999 on the Press. This law stipulates that the press functions as a medium of information, education, entertainment, and social control. In theory, such a framework ensures that the press provides balanced content to support democracy, uphold social cohesion, and foster public participation in governance. Yet, in practice, the pursuit of commercial viability and market dominance has compelled media institutions to adopt strategies that compromise these ideal functions. To attract and retain audiences, Indonesian media corporations often expand their reach by building additional channels or establishing networks that extend across regions. While such expansion may improve access to information, it also risks leading to monopolistic practices, wherein one or a few companies dominate the production and dissemination of news and entertainment.

The concept of monopoly, in economic theory, refers to a market structure where a single seller or producer controls the supply of a particular good or service, thereby exerting substantial influence over prices, output, and distribution. According to Zikra (2021), a monopoly arises when a business entity consolidates its power to the extent that it hinders healthy competition and potentially harms the public interest. Masduki & D'haenens, (2022), identifies five characteristics of a monopoly market: (1) the dominance of a single company, (2) absence of close substitutes for the product, (3) barriers to entry for new competitors, (4) prices determined unilaterally by the monopolist, and (5) control of advertising by the monopolist. When these conditions manifest within the media industry, the consequences are particularly troubling. Unlike other commodities, media content is not merely an economic product but also a public good, shaping collective consciousness, political behavior, and cultural identity. Hence, monopolistic control over media not only distorts market competition but also undermines the democratic imperative for pluralism in information sources.

The dangers of monopolistic practices in media are well-documented in global scholarship. Bagdikian's seminal work, *The Media Monopoly* (2004), highlights how concentrated media ownership reduces the diversity of perspectives available to the public, often prioritizing commercial or political interests over journalistic integrity. Similarly, Sukarmi et al., (2024) argues that media monopolies erode democratic discourse by restricting access to alternative viewpoints, marginalizing minority voices, and perpetuating narratives favorable to elites. In the Indonesian context, these global insights resonate strongly, given the rapid concentration of media ownership among a handful of conglomerates. The dominance of major groups such as MNC Group, Kompas Gramedia, and Emtek illustrates how ownership concentration can reduce competition and limit editorial independence. As a result, the plurality of content, the hallmark of a healthy press, is threatened, raising concerns about public access to unbiased and diverse information.

The advent of digital technology and the internet further complicates this landscape. Hartana, (2020) note that the proliferation of smartphones and internet access demands that mass media evolve beyond traditional platforms by embracing online and social media. This transition reflects a global trend toward media convergence, where print, broadcast, and digital formats intersect to create multimedia ecosystems. While digital transformation offers opportunities for innovation and greater reach, it also introduces new risks of monopoly. Unlike traditional media, digital media operates in an environment with weaker regulatory oversight. The absence of clear regulations on digital media ownership in Indonesia creates space for large players to dominate the digital sphere. As platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok reshape audience habits, traditional media companies compete for relevance by expanding their digital presence, often leveraging their financial resources and political connections to suppress smaller competitors. Thus, while digitalization democratizes content creation to some extent, it also enables the entrenchment of monopolistic practices at a new level.

The concentration of media ownership has far-reaching implications for democracy and press freedom. Ari Sutejo, Executive Director of the Indonesian Center for Environmental

Law (ICEL), cautions that “media ownership concentration can threaten diversity and press freedom and influence the quality of information received by the public” (Poti & Khairie Ahmad, 2021). This concern underscores the delicate balance between business efficiency and democratic responsibility in the media industry. When a limited number of corporations control media channels, they not only determine the flow of information but also influence public opinion, political campaigns, and even policy debates. In extreme cases, monopolized media can act as propaganda tools for powerful interests, undermining the watchdog role of the press and eroding the public’s ability to make informed decisions.

Indonesian law formally prohibits monopolistic practices through Law No. 5 of 1999 on the Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices and Unfair Business Competition. This law provides the legal foundation for preventing anti-competitive behavior across industries, including the media sector. The Commission for the Supervision of Business Competition (Komisi Pengawas Persaingan Usaha, KPPU) is tasked with enforcing these provisions. Nevertheless, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly in the media industry, where ownership concentration is often legitimized under the guise of efficiency, investment, or national competitiveness. As a result, major media conglomerates continue to expand and consolidate, while smaller, independent outlets struggle to survive in a hostile environment. This regulatory gap creates anomalies between the spirit of the law and its practical implementation, raising the urgent need for more robust legal and policy frameworks to address the unique challenges of media monopolies.

Beyond the economic and legal dimensions, the phenomenon of media monopolies must also be analyzed through sociological and cultural lenses. Media serves as both a mirror and a mold of society, influencing perceptions of reality, shaping public discourse, and reinforcing cultural norms. When monopolies control media narratives, they wield disproportionate power in framing social issues. For instance, agenda-setting theory Nanda & Ardilla, (2024) posits that the media do not merely reflect reality but actively shape what the public considers important. In a monopolistic environment, this agenda-setting function becomes concentrated in the hands of a few, thereby narrowing the scope of public debate. Similarly, cultivation theory Anggarini & Dewi, (2021) suggests that prolonged exposure to uniform media content cultivates shared worldviews, which can reinforce dominant ideologies while silencing dissenting perspectives. In Indonesia, the risk of monopolized narratives is particularly concerning given the nation’s pluralistic society, where diverse cultural, religious, and political identities demand equally diverse media representation.

Moreover, the rise of digital platforms and algorithm-driven content distribution introduces a new layer of complexity to media monopolies. Algorithms used by platforms like Google, Meta, and local digital outlets determine the visibility of news stories, shaping what audiences see and engage with. This creates what Abdul Aziz et al., (2023) call the “filter bubble,” where individuals are exposed primarily to content that reinforces their existing beliefs, further reducing content diversity. When large media corporations dominate both traditional and digital channels, they gain unprecedented power to shape algorithmic visibility, potentially crowding out independent or critical voices. Thus, the

monopoly problem is not only about ownership concentration but also about control over the digital architecture of information dissemination.

The persistence of monopolistic practices in the Indonesian media landscape raises profound questions about the future of press freedom, democracy, and public accountability. While media corporations understandably pursue growth and profitability, their dominance must be weighed against the public's right to diverse and independent information. In this regard, the principle of media pluralism becomes paramount. As articulated by UNESCO (2008), media pluralism refers to "the diversity of media content reflecting different political, social, and cultural perspectives." Ensuring pluralism requires both structural diversity in ownership and content diversity in programming. Without such pluralism, the media risks becoming a tool of domination rather than a platform for democratic deliberation.

This research is therefore motivated by the urgent need to examine the dynamics of media monopolies in Indonesia, with particular attention to the contradictions between legal frameworks and actual practices. While the press is legally protected as a democratic institution under Law No. 40 of 1999, and monopolistic practices are explicitly prohibited under Law No. 5 of 1999, the continued concentration of media ownership suggests a disconnect between regulation and reality. By analyzing how monopolies are conducted and their dangers to content diversity and press freedom, this study seeks to illuminate the structural challenges facing Indonesian media today. Furthermore, it aims to contribute to broader debates about the role of media in democracy, the balance between market forces and public interest, and the strategies needed to preserve press pluralism in the digital age.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a literature study approach as its primary method of inquiry. A qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate for this research because the phenomenon under investigation, media monopolies in Indonesia, is inherently complex, contextual, and multidimensional. Unlike quantitative methods that rely heavily on numerical data and statistical tests, qualitative inquiry emphasizes depth of understanding, interpretation, and critical reflection on social, political, and cultural realities. In this case, it allows the researcher to explore not only the economic dimensions of monopoly practices but also their broader implications for democracy, press freedom, and public discourse.

The literature study approach enables the author to gather data and insights from a wide range of academic sources, including peer-reviewed journals, books, policy documents, and legal frameworks relevant to media monopoly. By systematically reviewing and synthesizing existing scholarship, the researcher can trace patterns, identify common themes, and highlight contradictions in the discourse surrounding media ownership concentration in Indonesia. This method also provides the flexibility to integrate global perspectives on media monopolies, such as those articulated by Aulia & Raffles, (2021), with local realities documented by Indonesian scholars and legal sources, including Law

No. 40 of 1999 on the Press and Law No. 5 of 1999 on the Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices.

The rationale for adopting this methodological orientation lies in its capacity to capture multiple perspectives. Each scientific study contributes a unique lens through which the issue of media monopoly can be understood, whether from the standpoint of economics, communication studies, law, or political science. By synthesizing these perspectives, the study aims to construct a comprehensive understanding of how monopolistic practices are formed, sustained, and contested within Indonesia's media industry. The conclusion is thus derived not from a single dataset, but from the collective insights of scholarly contributions, offering a critical and holistic interpretation of the challenges media monopolies pose to democratic life in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, derived from an extensive review of scholarly literature, reveal several interconnected themes that characterize the dynamics of media monopolies in Indonesia. These themes not only reflect the economic and structural realities of media ownership but also highlight the broader sociopolitical implications for democracy, press freedom, and cultural diversity. The following discussion presents the major findings organized into four primary categories: (1) structural concentration of media ownership, (2) the erosion of content diversity, (3) digital transformation and new monopoly patterns, and (4) regulatory gaps and challenges in enforcement.

1. Structural Concentration of Media Ownership

One of the most prominent findings of this research is the persistent concentration of media ownership within a small number of conglomerates in Indonesia. The literature consistently identifies several dominant actors, including MNC Group, Emtek, and Kompas Gramedia, which control a significant share of both traditional and digital media platforms. This structural concentration resembles what Purba Nova, as cited by Mahendrawati, (2021), described as the key characteristics of monopoly: dominance by one company, limited substitutes, and barriers to entry for new competitors. The implications of this ownership concentration are profound. As Nugroho, (2021) warned in his global analysis of media monopolies, when a handful of corporations dominate media markets, they wield disproportionate power to shape narratives, influence public opinion, and marginalize alternative voices. In Indonesia, the situation mirrors this global concern. Regional media outlets are often unable to compete with the financial resources, distribution networks, and political alliances of these conglomerates. As a result, independent media find it difficult to sustain operations, further entrenching the monopoly of larger corporations.

2. Erosion of Content Diversity

A second major finding is the reduction in content diversity as a direct outcome of monopolistic practices. According to Widyatama & Polereczki, (2020), monopolized media environments tend to prioritize commercially profitable content such as entertainment, celebrity culture, and sensational news over investigative journalism,

minority issues, or critical political reporting. The Indonesian case confirms this pattern. Faujura et al., (2021) observed that although the press is mandated by Law No. 40 of 1999 to serve as a medium of information, education, entertainment, and social control, commercial pressures often skew content priorities. Literature highlights that the dominance of large media corporations results in standardized programming that lacks diversity. Regional issues, cultural pluralism, and marginalized communities frequently receive minimal coverage, replaced instead by homogenized content that appeals to mass audiences. Agenda-setting theory McCombs & Shaw, (1972) helps explain this phenomenon: when few companies control media channels, they not only decide what issues are covered but also determine the prominence and framing of those issues (Rachmiatie & Ravena, 2020). Consequently, public discourse narrows, leaving audiences exposed primarily to content that reflects the interests of corporate owners. Cultivation theory Mahasin et al., (2023), further suggests that prolonged exposure to uniform content shapes collective perceptions, potentially reinforcing dominant ideologies and suppressing dissent.

3. Digital Transformation and Emerging Monopolies

Another key finding concerns the impact of digital transformation. The literature indicates that the proliferation of smartphones, internet connectivity, and social media platforms has compelled Indonesian media to adapt, shifting toward multimedia integration (Akalili, 2020). While digitalization was initially expected to democratize content creation, the findings suggest that it has also facilitated new forms of monopoly.

Large conglomerates leverage their capital and technological capacity to dominate online spaces, thereby crowding out smaller independent players. Moreover, algorithms employed by platforms such as Google, Facebook, and TikTok determine content visibility, creating what Irfan et al., (2021) calls “filter bubbles.” When dominant corporations align with these platforms, they gain greater algorithmic visibility, further consolidating their reach. This finding highlights that monopolistic practices are not confined to traditional media but extend into digital ecosystems, where regulation remains weak. Interestingly, while digital platforms provide opportunities for citizen journalism and grassroots movements, the literature cautions that these voices often lack sustainability and scale. Without significant investment, independent digital outlets struggle to compete against conglomerates that can cross-subsidize digital ventures with revenue from traditional platforms. Thus, the promise of democratization through digital media remains fragile in Indonesia.

4. Regulatory Gaps and Enforcement Challenges

A recurring theme in the literature is the inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms to address monopolistic practices effectively. Law No. 5 of 1999 explicitly prohibits monopolistic practices and unfair business competition, while Law No. 40 of 1999 emphasizes the democratic role of the press. However, findings indicate that enforcement of these legal frameworks remains inconsistent. The Indonesian Competition Commission (KPPU) is mandated to monitor monopolistic practices, yet the literature documents limited intervention in the media sector. Political alliances between media conglomerates and

state actors often undermine regulatory efforts. Haryanto (2008) warns that ownership concentration can threaten press freedom, and without a strong institutional will, regulatory frameworks risk becoming symbolic rather than substantive. Another challenge lies in the absence of comprehensive regulations for digital media ownership. As Anderson, (2011) note, the digital battleground is still governed by outdated laws designed for print and broadcast industries. This regulatory gap allows conglomerates to expand unchecked into digital markets, effectively creating oligopolistic ecosystems that limit competition and pluralism.

5. Sociopolitical Implications

The combined effects of ownership concentration, reduced content diversity, and weak regulation have significant sociopolitical implications. The findings affirm that media monopolies threaten democratic life by narrowing the spectrum of public discourse. As Gonzalez et al., (2020) states, media concentration undermines the quality of information available to citizens, thereby limiting their capacity to make informed political decisions. This erosion of press freedom poses risks to Indonesia's democratic consolidation. Media monopolies can serve as propaganda tools for powerful elites, marginalizing opposition voices and reducing transparency in governance. Moreover, the dominance of corporate interests often displaces the normative function of the press as a watchdog, weakening its role as a counterbalance to state power.

6. Contradictions Between Law and Practice

Finally, the findings underscore the contradictions between Indonesia's legal commitments and the realities of media monopolies. While existing laws prohibit monopolistic practices and affirm press freedom, the persistence of concentrated ownership indicates a disconnect between regulation and practice. This anomaly suggests not only gaps in enforcement but also structural imbalances in the relationship between state, market, and media. The literature indicates that reforms are needed to strengthen regulatory institutions, close legal loopholes, and promote ownership diversity. International models, such as the European Union's emphasis on media pluralism and UNESCO's (2008) framework for assessing media development, provide potential references for Indonesia. However, local context, including political patronage networks and market dynamics, requires tailored solutions.

Conclusion of Findings

In summary, the findings of this literature-based study reveal that media monopolies in Indonesia are characterized by concentrated ownership among a few conglomerates, the erosion of content diversity, the emergence of new monopolistic patterns in digital platforms, and persistent regulatory gaps. These dynamics collectively undermine press freedom, democratic discourse, and cultural pluralism. The findings confirm the concerns raised by both local and international scholars that monopolized media environments prioritize profit over public interest, limit independent journalism, and narrow the scope of democratic deliberation. They also highlight the urgent need for regulatory reforms and institutional strengthening to ensure that the media in Indonesia can fulfill its essential

role as a medium of information, education, entertainment, and social control. Without such measures, the risks posed by monopolistic practices will continue to threaten the vitality of Indonesia's democratic society.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that monopolistic practices in the Indonesian media sector are not merely an economic anomaly but a structural problem with profound consequences for democracy, cultural diversity, and press freedom. This discussion interprets these findings in light of theoretical frameworks, prior scholarship, and legal perspectives to provide a comprehensive analysis. Five major themes guide this discussion: (1) media ownership concentration as a global and local problem, (2) implications for content diversity and democratic discourse, (3) digital transformation and the reconfiguration of monopoly, (4) the role of regulation and its limitations, and (5) broader socio-political implications and recommendations.

1. Media Ownership Concentration: A Global and Indonesian Problem

The concentration of media ownership identified in this study mirrors a global pattern extensively documented in the literature. Austin et al., (2019) in *The Media Monopoly*, argued that when fewer corporations control the majority of media outlets, the diversity of perspectives declines sharply. Similarly, Berger et al., (2009) underscores how corporate concentration results in media systems oriented toward profit maximization rather than the public good. These insights resonate strongly with the Indonesian context, where conglomerates such as MNC Group, Kompas Gramedia, and Emtek dominate both traditional and digital platforms.

The Indonesian media landscape reflects what Bowyer et al., (2017) terms "media concentration," in which the consolidation of outlets across television, print, radio, and digital channels reduces market competition and curtails independent journalism. Scholars such as Singarimbun et al., (2023) have noted that Indonesian media conglomerates often maintain close political ties, making them powerful actors in both the economic and political spheres. This dual influence raises the risk of what Kundu & Sarangi, (2007) calls "political parallelism," where media outlets align themselves with elite interests rather than serving the broader public. In this respect, Indonesia's experience is not unique. Countries such as the United States and Italy have also witnessed the emergence of powerful media barons, Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi, being prominent examples whose control over media landscapes shaped national politics and public opinion. What distinguishes Indonesia, however, is the relative weakness of regulatory institutions and the rapid pace of digital transformation, which together exacerbate the risks posed by monopolistic structures.

2. Implications for Content Diversity and Democratic Discourse

One of the most critical implications of media monopolies is the erosion of content diversity. The findings confirm that Indonesian media increasingly prioritize entertainment, celebrity culture, and commercially driven programming over investigative reporting or coverage of marginalized communities. This observation aligns

with Anderson, (2011) critique that monopolized media prioritize profit-driven content, thereby narrowing the range of issues available for public debate. Agenda-setting theory Bardos et al., (2020) provides a useful lens to interpret this phenomenon. When a few corporations dominate media channels, they control not only the topics that receive attention but also the framing of those issues. This agenda-setting function is critical in shaping public discourse. For example, during elections, monopolized media can disproportionately highlight certain candidates or issues, thus influencing voter perceptions and outcomes. In Indonesia, scholars such as Adorjan & Ricciardelli, (2021) have shown that media ownership concentration directly impacts election campaigns, with conglomerates using their platforms to advance the political interests of allied candidates.

Similarly, cultivation theory Adegbayibi, (2025) suggests that prolonged exposure to homogenous content cultivates shared perceptions of reality, reinforcing dominant ideologies and silencing dissenting voices. In the Indonesian context, where cultural and political pluralism is essential, such uniformity of media narratives risks marginalizing minority groups and regional perspectives. This finding echoes UNESCO's (2008) insistence on media pluralism as a prerequisite for democratic societies, where diverse voices and viewpoints must coexist within the public sphere.

3. Digital Transformation and New Configurations of Monopoly

The digital revolution was initially heralded as a democratizing force in media, offering opportunities for citizen journalism, independent platforms, and user-generated content. Meifitri and Susanto (2020) emphasize that the proliferation of smartphones and internet access in Indonesia created space for alternative forms of journalism. However, the findings of this study reveal that digitalization has also facilitated new forms of monopolistic dominance. Large conglomerates have adapted quickly to digital transformation, leveraging their financial capacity to establish dominant positions online. This is consistent with Doyle's (2013) argument that convergence across media platforms allows established corporations to extend their dominance into emerging markets. In Indonesia, cross-subsidization enables large media houses to invest heavily in digital ventures, while smaller independent outlets struggle to survive.

Moreover, digital platforms introduce algorithmic monopolies that amplify the power of large players. Pariser's (2011) concept of the "filter bubble" explains how algorithmic curation narrows user exposure to information, reinforcing existing preferences and reducing diversity. When large media corporations dominate algorithmic visibility through partnerships with platforms like Google or Facebook, their narratives overshadow those of independent outlets. This finding suggests that monopolistic practices are no longer confined to traditional ownership structures but now intersect with digital infrastructures, creating complex ecosystems of dominance. At the same time, digital monopolies differ from traditional ones in that they rely less on ownership concentration and more on control over distribution channels. Platforms such as YouTube and TikTok are not media producers per se but gatekeepers whose algorithms determine which content is amplified. This creates what Napoli (2019) calls "platform power,"

where corporations that control distribution wield as much influence as content producers themselves.

4. Regulation and Its Limitations

Despite the existence of Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press and Law No. 5 of 1999 on the Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices, the findings show that regulatory frameworks in Indonesia have been largely ineffective in curbing media monopolies. The Indonesian Competition Commission (KPPU) is mandated to address monopolistic practices, yet enforcement in the media sector remains minimal. This gap reflects what Baker (2007) terms the “failure of antitrust law” in addressing media concentration. Unlike traditional commodities, media products carry democratic significance that extends beyond economic considerations. Therefore, regulatory frameworks must be designed not only to prevent unfair competition but also to protect pluralism and press freedom. The Indonesian case demonstrates the dangers of treating media monopolies as purely economic phenomena, neglecting their sociopolitical consequences.

Another regulatory challenge is the absence of comprehensive frameworks for digital media ownership. Current laws were designed for print and broadcast industries and thus fail to address the realities of algorithmic monopolies and platform power. As a result, digital conglomerates expand unchecked, creating oligopolistic environments that further threaten pluralism. This finding supports the argument of Flew (2018), who notes that digital media requires new forms of governance to ensure diversity and fairness. Internationally, the European Union provides useful models for media regulation, emphasizing both structural pluralism (ownership diversity) and content pluralism (diverse programming). UNESCO (2008) similarly stresses the importance of legal and institutional frameworks that safeguard media independence while promoting diversity. For Indonesia, these models suggest the need for stronger institutional capacity, transparency, and accountability in regulating both traditional and digital media monopolies.

5. Sociopolitical Implications and Recommendations

The broader sociopolitical implications of media monopolies in Indonesia are significant. As the findings suggest, concentrated ownership undermines the watchdog function of the press, reduces government accountability, and narrows the scope of democratic deliberation. Ari Sutejo (cited in Haryanto, 2008) warns that media concentration can threaten the quality of information available to citizens, thereby weakening democratic processes. This concern is consistent with Habermas’s (1989) theory of the public sphere, which posits that democracy depends on open, inclusive spaces for rational-critical debate. Media monopolies distort this public sphere by restricting access to diverse perspectives and amplifying elite interests. In Indonesia, where democratic consolidation remains fragile, such distortions risk deepening political polarization and weakening citizen trust in democratic institutions. To address these challenges, several recommendations emerge from the literature and findings of this study. First, regulatory institutions such as KPPU must be strengthened with greater independence, resources, and enforcement capacity. Second, ownership limits should be imposed to prevent

excessive concentration, both in traditional and digital media. Third, public interest media, including state-owned and community-based outlets, should be revitalized to ensure pluralism. Finally, media literacy programs must be expanded to empower citizens to critically engage with media content and recognize monopolistic patterns.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the phenomenon of media monopolies in Indonesia through a qualitative literature study approach, synthesizing insights from various academic sources, legal frameworks, and global perspectives. The findings reveal that concentrated ownership in the Indonesian media industry, dominated by a few conglomerates, has far-reaching implications for press freedom, democratic discourse, and cultural diversity. While Law No. 40 of 1999 on the Press affirms the normative functions of media as a channel of information, education, entertainment, and social control, and Law No. 5 of 1999 prohibits monopolistic practices, the persistence of ownership concentration demonstrates a significant gap between regulation and practice.

The study concludes that monopolistic structures in Indonesian media undermine content diversity, weaken the watchdog role of the press, and risk narrowing the public sphere by prioritizing commercially profitable narratives over independent journalism and minority representation. Digital transformation, initially expected to democratize media, has instead introduced new monopoly configurations, with algorithms and platform power amplifying the reach of established corporations while marginalizing smaller independent outlets. The absence of comprehensive regulation for digital media further exacerbates these challenges, allowing oligopolistic practices to persist in new forms. The implications for democracy are profound. When a limited number of corporations control the flow of information, they shape public opinion, influence political outcomes, and limit citizen access to diverse perspectives. Such concentration of power threatens the democratic principle of media pluralism and the public's right to independent and balanced information. Therefore, this research underscores the urgent need for regulatory reforms, institutional strengthening, and media literacy initiatives to safeguard pluralism and press freedom. Addressing media monopolies in Indonesia requires a holistic approach that integrates economic, legal, and sociopolitical dimensions, ensuring that the press fulfills its essential role as a guardian of democracy and an agent of positive social change.

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