

The Influence of Mass Media Information on People of Silawan Village in the Republic of Indonesia and Timor Leste Border

Eduardus Dosi

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the extent information from television has an impact on communities living at the Indonesia-Timor Leste borders and what kind of additional information they need. In conducting this research, I chose the residents of Silawan Village as a locus for my research inquiry. I selected Silawan Village as a representative sample because the local people demonstrate characteristics and conditions common among border communities. In order to answer research questions regarding televised media, I facilitated content analysis of media messages commonly aired on television in Silawan Village and juxtaposed these messages with the location-specific aspirations of local subjects. For the second part of my analysis, I used descriptive qualitative methods.

Research results demonstrate that the types of information produced by both state-owned and private televisions as well as by newspapers have both positive and negative effects on my research subjects. Positive impacts are indicated by some worldly knowledge and skills among locals who commonly watch television. On the other hand, information distributed via television also generates problems, particularly behavioral ones, as the villagers become increasingly oriented towards consumptive impulses induced by advertisements. Additionally, television makes children more fearful from watching soap operas containing horror scenes, youths tend to get involved in street fights to imitate martial arts visualized on TV, and the general population fosters its inclination toward *dangdut* songs rather than traditional music conserving local solidarity. Private media supported by huge capital is proven to be more profit-oriented rather than considerate of the benefits of the users. The media being broadcasted or circulated hardly incorporate local content, and so hardly work for their benefit.

Problematically, people at the borders expect the information publicized by local television, radio and newspaper to respond to local needs. Unfortunately, the large majority of these needs go unrepresented in common media. Consequently, collaborations must take place among stakeholders who distribute media on the state borders. Local problems related to agricultural technologies, animal husbandry, the salt industry, as well as education must be voiced to the public for resolutions for the common good and prosperity of local people. Meetings between local and media stakeholders can help media agencies devise strategies to voice relevant local concerns, avoid creating content confusion among viewers/listeners, and pave the way

for harmonious coexistence among different peoples at the Indonesia-Timor Leste borders.

Keywords: Information, Television, Media Effect, People in the borders, Village

INTRODUCTION

Equitable public access to information is fundamental in building an informed society. However, the information gap between privileged and underprivileged populations — particularly border populations — creates major hindrances to progress. Communities in border areas live with poor access to outside information. This is confirmed by the Deputy Chairperson of the NTT KPID (the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission/Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah). In general, the community still lacks media communication facilities such as radio and television transmitters, telephone facilities, and newspapers.

A stand-out issue in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste is the large number of broadcasts from neighboring countries which are legally and culturally contradictory to our regulations and culture. Gradually these foreign broadcasts endanger nationalism and destroy community solidarity. Furthermore, in the overflow of programs from urban-based TV stations, none of them contain content with local relevance. This causes feelings of neglect among people living in border areas.

The most urgent concern in the border regions between Indonesia and Timor Leste is poverty. Poverty is exacerbated by the following factors: Expensive costs of imports, low educational background of those working in border communities, inadequate human resources, insufficient income, and difficulty in accessing information on various government policies, so that people in the border areas receive more information from neighboring countries. Many of Indonesia's government policies are received partially. Information about Indonesia is not sufficient, which can lead to the erosion of the sense of nationalism and belonging to a nation that is meant to support them.

In addition to the problem of Human Resources, another problem experienced by broadcasters in NTT is the problem of technology. Radio broadcasting institutions do not all have advanced technology behind their broadcasts, and so broadcasts cannot reach all regions along the Indonesia and Timor-Leste border. According to the Deputy Chairperson of the NTT KPID, this is a big problem for regional broadcasters. In the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste, the number of Blank Spot areas looms large, for example in the Atambua area. (Gumgum Gumilar, Herlina Agustin, 2016). The study of the National Border Management Agency (Badan Nasional Pengelola Perbatasan) submitted by Sumarsono (2012) discovered that in these blank spots, people in the border areas receive lots of broadcasts from neighboring countries and few from Indonesia. This is partially due to the low interest of broadcasters setting up broadcasting institutions in border areas, as well as due to ineffective human resources and policies and the fact that broadcasters that are not yet fluent in developing methods for broadcasting in prior conflict areas. Problems often aired in the border

areas include information about border disputes with neighboring countries, public welfare, and information gaps. People in this area tend to obtain information via radio from neighboring countries rather than from their own country. Concerns about information distributed via radio are parallel to concerns about the role of television media, which is a medium responsible for distributing both desired and harmful values to the community.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the challenging situations illustrated above, the main problem of this research was formulated around the following question: What are the effects/impact of information from TV media for the people living in the border area of Silawan Village, East Tasifeto District, BeluRegency, at the boundary of Indonesia and Timor Leste?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information

There are a lot of nearly identical definitions for the word “information.” According to Gordon B. Davis (1991: 28) information can be defined as data that has been processed into a form that is meaningful to a recipient and is useful for current and future decision making. According to Jogiyanto H.M., (1999: 692) information is the result of processing data in a form that is useful and meaningful to a recipient and is used for decision making. Raymond Mc.Leod states that information is data that has been processed into a form that has meaning for a recipient and is useful for current or future decision making. Based on the definitions of “information” according to the experts mentioned above, it can be concluded that information is a collection of facts that have been processed into data and that can be utilized for decision-making.

EFFECT OF MASS MEDIA

According to Steven M Chaffe, the effects of mass media can be seen from three approaches. The first approach is the effect of mass media related to the message or the media itself. The second approach is to look at the types of changes that occur in mass communication audiences in the form of changes in attitudes, feelings, and behavior or often known as cognitive, affective, behavior. The third approach is the observation of audiences who are subject to the effects of mass communication. (Rachmat, 2007: 219-131). In short, there are three categories of effects of mass media: cognitive, affective and behavioral.

TELEVISION’S SOCIAL IMPACTS

Gerbner argues that television is a centralized imaging system. Television has become a part of daily lives, including at the borderlands between East and West Timor. Dramas, advertisements, news and other programs present the world of images and

the world of role-play that is relatable in nearly every home. The repetitive patterns of messages and images produced by mass television make up the mainstream of the symbolic environment (Berger et al., 2015: 369).

Television media, like other mass media, acts as a means of disseminating information, entertainment, social control, and strategic regional liaison. Along with the process of delivering intended message content of television media to viewers, one must consider that the messages distributed by television will be interpreted differently depending on the viewer's background. The impacts are also varied. This happens because the level of understanding and needs of viewers of television shows are closely related to socio-economic status which widely vary. Thus, what is assumed by television as important for intended audiences is not necessarily important to *all* audiences.

There are three categories of impact that television shows have on viewers:

- a. Cognitive impacts: the ability of a person or viewer to absorb and understand television programs that impart knowledge to viewers.
- b. Affective impacts: viewers are encouraged to imitate trends broadcasted on television.
- c. Behavioral impact: the process of implanting socio-cultural values broadcasted on television, which then manifest as concrete behavior in the daily lives of viewers (<http://repository.usu.ac.id//>).

RESEARCH METHODS

Throughout this research, I employed descriptive qualitative research methods because, in accordance with the research objectives, these allowed me to glean a picture of the effects/impacts of information from TV media at the Indonesia-Timor Leste border, and also invited descriptions of the type of information or program expected or needed by border area communities.

In this study, I used a purposive sampling technique. The use of this technique was done intentionally by collecting samples among local populations so that the data samples could be supplemented by previously known population statistics. The use of this technique is based on the knowledge of certain characteristics previously obtained via population census (Mardalis, 2008: 58). The population of this study is the border area community in Silawan Village, East Tasifeto District, Belu Regency, NTT. Forty subjects were tasked to represent the characteristics of this population.

In this study, I combined primary and secondary data. Primary data was original data collected through live research. To collect primary data, I used observations, interviews, and focused discussion techniques. In-depth interviews with informants were carried out using the snowball technique by considering the diversity of types of work, age, positions in society, and gender. Group discussions were conducted once with representatives of young television users. The observation technique was done

by observing the daily routines of the participants: some watching television, engaging in mundane activities, and participating in formal and informal meetings in the village.

In this study, secondary data was filtered through documentary studies and obtained from relevant references related to the description of the role of TV media in disseminating border information and the content of TV messages at the border of Belu District and the State of Timor Leste. The informants of this study were those who claimed to know the problems related to media in the border areas, including the Head of Belu TV Station, the Head of the Border Management Agency of East Nusa Tenggara Province, the Head of the Communication and Information Office of NTT Province and Belu Regency, the commissioner of KPID NTT Province, Widya Mandira University academics, and broadcasting practitioners. The data collection method used was interviews, namely data collection techniques carried out by asking questions directly to parties who were considered knowledgeable about the problems studied.

Finally, this study used qualitative data analysis. This means that the data obtained in the study was analyzed descriptively to convey a detailed picture of what I as a researcher encountered during the data collection process. The resulting written analysis includes the steps of data reduction, verification and data presentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The people of Silawan Village acquire most of their information from TV and radio, and occasionally from print media, namely Pos Kupang and Timex. Villagers exhibited a daily frequency of watching TV. Frequency of watching TV proved much higher than the frequency of accessing other information media. The communities living at the border are also affected by the media from Timor Leste; however, the impacts are not so significant because currently people spend more time watching Indonesian TV than listening to radio. This being said, the broadcasting infrastructure at the Indonesian border with Timor Leste must be improved.

Problems in the border areas include border disputes with neighboring countries, danger to public welfare, as well as information gaps. Private TV, RRI and TVRI as well as newspapers are expected to meet the information needs of people in the border areas, considering that these media, especially RRI and TVRI have broadcasting stations up to the border (cfr. Journal of Communication, Media and Informatics, 2016).

The results of this study indicate that the type of TV information produced by TVRI and private TV can have both positive and negative effects. TV and radio broadcasting positively broaden the global knowledge of people in the border areas. On the other hand, this type of media information can create problems. The presence of private media supported by the capital interests seems to be more profit-oriented than tailored to the people who use it. This reality often causes, among other things, excessive materialism that creates friction with limited local resources. This negative influence is characterized by behavioral changes, such as the tendency to increase needless spending because of the influence of advertising broadcasts. Likewise, children become

more afraid of their neighbors due to broadcasts with horror themes. Teenagers and young people like to imitate fights as shown in films and soap operas. The tendency of people to prefer dangdut songs rather than folk songs causes lack of local solidarity around shared history.

This discussion is enriched by secondary data about radio and newspapers. Previous research has concluded that most respondents in the border area of NTT and Timor Leste listened to RRI broadcasts and watched TVRI. Respondents on average spend 1-2 hours/day listening to RRI, usually between the hours of 7.00-9.00. Among the programs, the most listened-to program is news/information. As regards exposure to TVRI, respondents watch TVRI around 1 to 2 hours/day from 19.00-21.00. The most viewed program is news (information). This is at least what I have recorded in Silawan Village, Belu Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The dominance of RRI and TVRI Broadcasting Exposure to Communities in the RI - Timor Leste Border Area 20 operator and broadcast signals from Timor Leste is enormous. Border areas are defined as areas far from information centers. Problems in border areas are generally grouped into 4 (four) issues, namely economic, political, ideological and socio-cultural. The reality that border areas are most likely to be exposed to external threats is glaring. This is due to the lack of resources that allow optimization of many aspects of life, including access to the broadcasting sector where locals might express their concerns (Uyun, 2012). Various problems that arise in the border area, according to Uyun (2012), cannot be separated from the roles of television and radio which distribute values to the community.

Furthermore, the people in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste expect the type of information on TV and radio to reflect the needs of the community. For this reason, cooperation in the development of border media (local TV, radio, newspapers) to reflect grassroots concerns and values is absolutely necessary. This way, problems in various fields in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste can be raised and resolved. These include technological problems in agriculture, animal husbandry, salt processing, and education. This is a strategy to help people in border areas so they are not left behind with poor access to information. They deserve to build shared prosperity and build solidarity to overcome possible conflicts in border areas.

COVERING BORDER INFORMATION: THE STARTING POINT OF THE MARGIN CENTERING PROCESS

Border regions are rampant with issues of poverty, backwardness, the erosion of nationalism, cultural infiltration, and jurisdiction conflicts with neighboring countries. If this danger is presented objectively and in depth, critical information regarding borders can be exposed so that development efforts can finally appear, develop, and these communities will no longer be associated with backward stories. For media in border areas, the information presented must bring them into discussion together with other Indonesian citizens. The findings of the RRI Research and Development Center (2014) revealed the information that the community wants RRI to raise to the national level

while at the same time encouraging public policy at the local level. The information includes economy, natural resources, environment, local culture, education, socio-politics, criminal law, security, governance, land use, weather monitoring, and warning of natural disasters. In further detail, the greatest needs of border communities regarding the type of information can be summarized as follows:

1. Economic issues in border areas need to be brought to national attention. Some issues worthy of particular mention are cross-border trade, availability and cost of basic necessities, and job opportunities.
2. Socio-political issues in border areas that need to be brought to the national level are smuggling, poverty, poor cooperation between countries, breached territorial boundaries and human trafficking.
3. Issues of natural resources and the environment in border areas that need to be brought to the national level are environmental damage, challenges in conservation of natural resources, exploitation of natural resources by foreigners, and lack of early warning of natural disasters.
4. Infrastructure issues in border areas that need to be brought to the national level include the urgent need for better means of transportation, education facilities, medical facilities, clean water, market access, and the need for recreational facilities (Radio Broadcasting, 2018).

CONCLUSION

TV programs, either produced by TVRI or private TV, can have both positive and negative effects. The positive effects caused by TV include making people more knowledgeable about their environments and motivating people to build skills useful for their local economy. Even if the positive effects are substantial, sometimes TV shows and programs can cause problems. This happens when private TV, which is supported by various industrial interests, becomes too profit-oriented and does not voice the concerns of audiences. In the case of Timor's border communities, this occurs when TV programs do not distribute regional content. This paucity of local content eventually creates negative impacts on the community. Broadcast programs must set up stations in border areas in order to start and establish local TV. This will help ensure that the programs will remain in line with the needs of local communities in border areas.

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