

**PERCEPTIONS AND ROLES OF
INDONESIAN JOURNALISTS
IN COVERING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS
IN INDONESIA**

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**PERCEPTIONS AND ROLES OF
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by

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ABBREVIATION

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AJI	Aliansi Jurnalis Indonesia (Indonesian Journalists Alliance)
BPS	Biro Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia)
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
COP	Conference of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HPH	Hak Pengelolaan Hutan
HTI	Hutan Tanaman Industri
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KLH	Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup
KPK	Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoI	Ministry of Information
OECD	The Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development
POLRI	Kepolisian Republik Indonesia
PWI	Perwatuan Wartawan Indonesia
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forests Degradation
SIEJ	Society of Indonesian Environmental Journalists
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VOC	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (United East Indian Company)

PERSEPSI DAN PERANAN WARTAWAN INDONESIA YANG MELAPOR ISU-ISU ALAM SEKITAR DI INDONESIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti gambaran persepsi wartawan Indonesia mengenai masalah alam sekitar dan peranan mereka dalam isu ini serta faktor-faktor yang mendorong wartawan dalam memberi penyelesaian ke atas masalah tersebut. Kaedah “*grounded theory*” telah digunakan untuk mengumpul dan menganalisis data. Persampelan teoretikal dijalankan untuk mengenal pasti informan. Kemudian, temu bual mendalam dijalankan ke atas 30 informan. Kaedah “*grounded theory*” telah berjaya membina satu kerangka teori mengenai persepsi dan peranan wartawan Indonesia mengenai masalah alam sekitar. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa persepsi wartawan Indonesia mengenai masalah alam sekitar sebagai mencabar. Namun demikian, apabila ia berkaitan dengan peranan wartawan mengenai alam sekitar, terdapat faktor-faktor penting yang membezakan antara wartawan awam dengan wartawan alam sekitar – kesungguhan, pengetahuan, pendedahan terhadap isu alam sekitar dan jaringan dengan pemegang taruh yang lain. Persepsi wartawan awam mengenai masalah alam sekitar sering dianggap sebagai terlalu mencabar dan mengekang kerja-kerja mereka sebagai wartawan. Oleh sebab itu, mereka memilih untuk tidak meneruskan kerjaya dalam bidang kewartawanan alam sekitar. Sebaliknya, persepsi wartawan alam sekitar pula melihat isu ini sebagai sesuatu yang mencabar tetapi menerimanya sebagai sebahagian daripada tugas seorang wartawan. Berdasarkan persepsi ini, mereka memainkan peranan sebagai agen perubahan, iaitu dengan mempengaruhi institusi media, berperanan sebagai pemberi pengetahuan serta mendidik masyarakat awam. Kaedah “*grounded theory*” membolehkan kajian ini mengenalpasti isu-isu penting mengenai persepsi dan peranan wartawan serta faktor yang mempengaruhi persepsi dan peranan tersebut. Faktor-faktor ini boleh diguna untuk mengubah, melibatkan, memajukan, dan meneguhkan persepsi dan peranan wartawan dalam melapor isu-isu alam sekitar di dalam konteks Indonesia.

PERCEPTIONS AND ROLES OF INDONESIAN JOURNALISTS IN COVERING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN INDONESIA

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine Indonesian journalists perceptions of and roles in environmental issues, and identify the factors that drive journalists to act to mitigate environmental problems. A grounded theory methodology was used to collect and analyse empirical data. First, theoretical sampling was conducted to identify informants for the study. Then, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 informants. The "grounded theory" method has succeeded in building a theoretical framework on perceptions and the role of Indonesian journalists on environmental issues. The study found that all Indonesian journalists perceive environmental problem is challenging. However, when it comes to the role of journalists on it, there are important factors that differentiate general and environmental journalists – passion, knowledge, exposure to environmental issues, and environmental network. General journalists perceive environmental issues as too challenging and constraining for their work as journalists, hence they avoid doing environmental journalism. Environmental journalists, however, perceive environmental issues as challenging but take it as part and parcel of being a journalist. Based on this perception, they play their roles as an agent of change, as an influence to media institution, and as an educator or information messenger to public. The grounded theory methodology enables extracting important issues on journalists perceptions, roles, and influential factors that could differentiate journalists perceptions and roles on environmental problems. Therefore these factors could be used to change, engage, advance, and maintain journalists perception and roles in covering environmental issues in Indonesia.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The fact that environmental conditions in Indonesia are precarious and heading for a crisis situation means there is an urgent need for a response, especially when global journalists have succeeded in mainstreaming environmental issues and generating action to solve environmental problems. Historically, Indonesian journalists also have been successful in playing a role to solve Indonesian social problems. These are the three factors that motivate this research. The different sections of this chapter discuss in details the three factors mentioned, followed by the problem statement, the research questions, the research objectives, and the significance of this research.

1.1 Environmental problems in Indonesia

A Ministry of Forestry report (2010) stated that Indonesian forests originally provided habitats for 17% of the world's birds, 16% of the reptiles and amphibians, 12% of mammals, and 10% of plants. The forest measured 16-27 million ha, located mostly in Papua, Kalimantan, and Sumatra. Indonesian forests also form part of the 44 countries that are collectively home to 90% of the world's forests. Indonesia's tropical climate and archipelagic geography support the world's second highest level of biodiversity of flora and fauna. In Indonesia, 60% of the country has forest cover, with a range of sea and coastal ecosystems, including beaches, mangroves, coral reefs, coastal mudflats, and small island ecosystems among others. However, Indonesia's high population growth and national development, which have encouraged rapid industrialization, have been causing severe environmental problems (Bakti, 2004; Asdak, 2012). Moreover, the problems have always been put

aside by the government in power and so have attracted less attention and become a lower priority in the national development plan.

The data show that from the 1980s to the 2000s, there were degradation and deforestation within the area, and currently only 17 million ha remain, with 9 million ha in Sumatra and Kalimantan, and 8 million ha in Papua. The report also shows that deforestation in Indonesia was 2% annually. The Indonesian Ministry of Forestry report in 2014 stated that deforestation and degradation happened continuously leaving Indonesian forest cover of 14.84 million ha in 2012, which by 2014, had decreased to 13.94 million ha. This scale of deforestation has had an impact on the loss of biodiversity, increase in emissions and pollution, degradation of the land carrying capacity, and a reduction in the area's ability to support human needs (Lambin, 2003).

The impact of deforestation and degradation includes landslides, forest fires, pollution, climate change and acid rain. Landslides in Indonesia happened in 30 out of 33 provinces in 2009, and the number of landslides increased significantly from 6,051 occurrences in 2005 to 7,500 in 2008 (Forestry, 2014). Floods, pollution, acid rain, and forests fires happened repeatedly between 1997 - 2010 (BPS, 2010). All disasters increased significantly in frequency and have already caused major damage to people's lives and health (Forestry, 2010). In 2004, a UNDP report predicted that natural disasters would have raised the sea level by up to one metre by 2050 and would have flooded countries in low-lying coastal areas including Indonesia.

The causes of the Indonesian environmental crisis are the population explosion and government policies on national development that were not integrated

with environmental, social, and economic issues (Asdak, 2012; Hidayat, 2011). The Indonesian population in 2010 was 238 million with an increase rate of 2.7%. If the population growth continues at the same rate, by the year 2050, Indonesia will have 384 million people, which will cause more environmental problems. The consequences of such a population explosion would be the exploitation of natural resources and the production of pollution from daily activities (FAO, 2006).

Government policies on national development and the government's identified vested interests have also exacerbated the environmental problems in Indonesia. Starting with HPH (Hak Pengelolaan Hutan, Forest Management Rights), then the HTI (Hutan Tanaman Industri, Industrial Forest Rights) policy for the national development plan up to private businesses all contribute to the government in power having a political interest in perpetuating their hegemony under the new era regime (Hidayat, 2011). The legacy of the new era regime's vested interest could be seen clearly in the government's policy on regional autonomy. This policy gave more power for regional governments to act the same as central government did under the new era regime. Under the policy of autonomy, regional governments have more authority to invite private businesses to be involved in the development of regional government plans with regional government thus having a vested interest in the policy (Casson, 2002).

These government policies, HPH, HTI, regional autonomy, include private businesses involvement in the development plan. The impact of the policies under the new era regime and under regional autonomy in post new era has caused massive land use conversion from forests to plantations, and from plantations to industrial use or housing developments. Thus, the impact has been worse, as in addition to

landslides, floods, and drought, there has also been a rise in social-economic conflicts, food insecurity, and health problems (Forestry, 2014). The threats of environmental degradation in Indonesia show that Indonesia is heading towards country-wide flooding while the people are suffering from poor health, poor social economic security, and poor levels of literacy regarding environmental problems (Sudarmadi, 2001). Indeed, conditions could become worse if there is no change in society's activities.

On the other hand, environmental studies that have been conducted on Indonesia's environmental crisis have proposed ways to mitigate the current environmental problems, such as poor water conditions (Asdak, 2015), the high level of emissions, the air and soil carrying capacity (Surakusumah, 2008; Tampubolon, 2008; Cronin et.al., 2011), and climate change (Casson, 2002; Cronin, 2011). However, the results have rarely been publicised by journalists and the media in Indonesia to engage public awareness although, historically, journalists and the media in Indonesia have always had an important role in mitigating Indonesia's problems with the regimes in power. Journalists and the media have acted as agents to raise awareness and encourage public action to improve Indonesian society while the nation were undergoing national social problems regarding different regimes.

The roles show that journalists and the media could generate awareness and mobilise people to act to solve the problems in Indonesia. However, journalists responds in being part of environmental problems solution have not been looked into while the environmental problems have already been started since New order era, especially, in compare with their response in political economy problems. Indonesian

journalists' successes in playing their roles regarding social problems –mostly in politic and economic- under various regimes are described in the following section.

1.2 Roles of journalists in Indonesian social problems

Indonesian journalists work is always restricted according to the regime in power. However, as a journalist, Indonesian journalists have always perceived that they have the autonomy to become the four estate of the government or playing the role as watchdog to the government or media owner (Hanitszch, et al., 2007). Indonesian journalists awareness on their role as watchdog guide them to overcome all restrictions made by either government in power or influential individuals or media owners (Ross, 2010; Ross, 2012). They always found the way to express their initiative through their writings. Manzella (2000) studied on how they express the initiatives within government oppressions and resulted Indonesian journalists have been negotiating the news through writing indirect statement in enabling the initiatives published by media and passed government supervision in news. In doing so, they are part of the solution for many social problems, such as mobilizing action, promoting national development, mainstreaming issues, and serve as an influential tool of the decision-making process for the general public. This section describes the role of the journalist within the historical perspective, which describes how journalism and journalists initiatives in Indonesia are important within social problems under the different regimes.

1.2.1 Journalist as a tool of revolution and watchdog in the Colonial and Old order regimes

Press law No. 11 Year 1966 made and enacted by Old Order Regime stated that journalists in Indonesia acted as a tool of revolution, tool of social control, educator, public opinion makers, and tool to mobilize the mass. These roles are described by Old order regime within the law and it reflects how the old regime defined Indonesian journalists roles in Colonial Era. The historical background on this role started in the Dutch liberal era, and Indonesia was colonised under the Dutch constitution in the year 1848, whereupon journalists in Indonesia were required to perform the role of monitoring the government and informing the people regarding the colonialists' program. At the end of the 1930s until the early 1940s, a strong support for the press was gained under the rule of the governor, General Van Heutsz (Wiratraman, 2014). Indonesian scholars who had worked in the Dutch newspapers were able to build the Indonesian newspapers in Bahasa Indonesia. These scholars then became Indonesian journalists, media owners, and also nationalists who initiated revolution within a long time. Rosihan Anwar (in Anom, 2013) said that the leaders of nationalists also became a writer in the newspapers, and played the role as journalist in the struggle to gain Indonesian independence. There were many newspapers in regions with scholars and nationalists who also played their role as journalist support the struggle to gain independence (Suwirta, 2008; Anom, 2013).

Over time journalists coverage had become increasingly critical of the Dutch government, which maintained the threat of criminal prosecution of any journalist who attempted to disrupt public order and tranquillity (Maier, 1991, pp. 68-70). In the mid to the end of the 1990s, political awareness increased, and a national

movement emerged. Journalists and media coverage became extremely critical of the colonial government, whether the Dutch, the Japanese, or the British. In response to very critical articles published by journalists writing in the media, the government initiated multiple ways of restricting press freedom, ranging from preventive measures to repressive censorship. Heraldseide (2014) described the repression during the Japanese monitoring system, where journalists were jailed and assassinated simply for being suspected of being anti-Japanese, being reluctant to serve the interests of the Japanese government, and showing themselves to be against any propaganda created by the Japanese army. The number of journalists in Indonesia decreased together with the country's freedom of expression. This event encouraged more journalists to cover more nationalist issues in the media either publicly or secretly amongst Indonesian nationalists to coordinate a nationalist movement (Kakiailatu, 2007). They kept on struggling to gain Indonesia's independence by sending a wide range of messages and coverage, which raised awareness of the issue of national freedom among local people (Arismunandar, 1993; Heraldseide, 2014; Wiratraman, 2014). The ultimate success of the nationalism movement was the announcement of Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945 (Arismunandar, 1993).

In the era of the old order, journalists under Sukarno focused on political turmoil in Indonesia while land use change from forests to plantations occurred to support the people who were sent to the outer Java islands for security purposes. Scholars that also played as journalists, media owners, and nationalists in 1950 – 1966, in Old order regime, experienced as journalists in the Dutch newspaper and had newspapers in regions (Suwirta, 2008). Wiratraman (2011) described how after

Indonesia had gained independence, the government and the elite in power also oppressed journalists and the media. The media mostly covered political issues in order to gain acknowledgement as a nation state at an international level and also to increase awareness of political turmoil within the country. The tone of the news on domestic politics was critical of the government, which tended to centralise all the power in the president. This was particularly important when the president and the elite in power forced journalists, who were also nationalists and some of whom owned the media, to sign loyalty documents in support of the government in power, stating that they were willing to support government policy and plans. Those who did not sign the document were banned from working as journalists, and the media were closed down (Dewanti, 2012; Mulyadi, 2011).

Journalists' role in the colonial era and the Old Order era was the same, in that they worked as a tool of revolution. But the revolutions that were ignited by journalists' writings were different. In the colonial era, the revolution was against colonialists in order to gain national independence, while in the Old Order era, the revolution was against the president and elites in power to gain press freedom and improve the people's welfare. Critical coverage of government behaviour during the colonial era ignited the national independence revolution, while that during the Old Order era reflected the strong role of journalists as watchdogs who raised awareness of governmental wrongdoing and encouraged the army to instigate revolution by removing Sukarno from the presidency (Wiratraman, 2011).

1.2.2 Journalist as a development partner and watchdog in the New Order regime

The New Order era began in 1966, and it applied authoritarian system. The Old Order era had focused the national development on political stability and the severity of the economic crisis. Therefore, the removal of Sukarno and the rise of Soeharto under the New Order era led the Indonesian national development policy to divert their focus from political stability to economic development during their respective eras. Soeharto launched policies to attract investment by exploiting and exporting forestry resources to solve the crisis and meet the economic development plan. In the long-term, the policies caused massive environmental problems in Indonesia (Hidayat, 2011). Within the context, the government set the role of Indonesian journalists as development journalists, that is, journalists who always support the government's national development program (Eapen, 1973). However, the journalists did not agree with the role set by the government. Therefore, they also claimed that they played a watchdog role during the New Order era (Manzella, 2000; Wiratraman, 2014). In the New Order era, journalists in Indonesia played two roles: as development journalists set by the government and as a watchdog set by journalists.

The government determined the role of journalists as development journalists. Eapen (1973) described the meaning of development journalists in the New Order era as mediators who acted as the responsible party in the economic and development sector. Journalists had to play the role of the party who was in charge of promoting any program related to the government's economic and national development. Journalists were the ones who had the capability and capacity to

communicate and inform the world by inspiring the society through national development programs; therefore, they had to support the government's programs (Eapen, 1973, p.19). Friedman and Friedman (1989) also described the role of journalists in Asian countries as partners of government to support national development plans. Within this role, journalists also had the role of educators of the people regarding the importance of national development plans and promoters of the government national development program. This role of journalists in Asian countries was very different to that of most Western journalists, who claim their job is not to educate, but only to inform and whose role is more to carry out investigative activities in pursuing the watchdog role than is the case of journalists in Asia (p. 8). Yet the role as watchdog to the government is critical in Asian countries as well.

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Information, sometimes supported by the Ministry of Defence, enforced and monitored the implementation of the role of the press during the new era by harshly carrying out press censorship together with additional unstated strict rules, such as threatening media owners or editors or journalists for not covering certain issues. The enforcement instructed all journalists to avoid covering or mentioning any issues related to the president, the president's family and friends, and the military (Manzella, 2000).

Under the control of the government, journalists focused on the issue of the Indonesian development plan and the stability of the political status in order to attract investment. Indeed, journalists' role in publicising the stability of political and economic development in Indonesia was successful in attracting domestic and foreign investments to the Indonesian forestry sector. Then, the government enacted the HPH (Forestry Rights Management) policy; this policy involved the government

dividing Indonesia's forests into several areas and then giving these areas to investors with the license to exploit and export these areas to support the Indonesian national economic growth plan over 20-30 years, a policy which caused major environmental problems (Hidayat, 2011).

While playing the role as development journalists, journalists continued trying to balance the interests of the government with the interests of the people by taking up the role of mediator and writing news coverage in a way that would accommodate their idealistic role as watchdog (Manzella, 2000, p. 317). Journalists under the new order era considered their own role to be watchdog to the government, beside the set of roles that had already been established by the government. The practice of this role was not the same as the role of watchdog in Western countries.

Role of journalists as watchdog set by journalists. Journalists' purpose as watchdog as applied in Asian countries has a dual role, that is, not only to investigate government wrongdoing, but also to educate the people on what would be the correct action, especially when the news was under the government's close monitoring system in the New Order era. Journalists wrote critical reports of the government's wrongdoing by strategizing the statements published in the media. Manzella (2000) described how journalists wrote indirect statements to accommodate the idealistic role of journalists as watchdogs, and to balance the news between the government's interests and the people's interests. Writing indirect statements was the strategy journalists employed to struggle against the repressive government system during and after the New Era (Manzella, 2000).

In certain cases, the strategy was successful in raising public awareness of the government's wrongdoing. The ultimate success of journalists in playing the role of watchdog was when they were able to ignite the social movement and overthrow President Soeharto in 1998. The authoritarian system during the New Order era was in place for 32 years under Soeharto's presidency. The policy of not discussing Soeharto's family and friends or the military led to the authoritarian government becoming corrupt and being able to accumulate benefits only for Soeharto, and his family and friends (Manzella, 2000; Hidayat, 2011). This unwritten policy had created the culture of collusion, corruption, and nepotism in all sectors of the government and related activities. The policy also placed a tremendous burden on the community as a whole.

The global economic crisis, which hit Indonesia in 1998, put a greater burden on the people and attracted journalists' attention. Journalists promoted the issues pertaining to the burden on the community caused by government collusion, corruption, nepotism, and the economic crisis; furthermore, by taking the role of a watchdog on government policies, they were able to emphasise the urgent need to change the corrupt government (Arismunandar, 2000). In turn, journalists inspired demonstrations against the corrupt government. The action cumulatively came to a head in 1998 resulting in the overthrow of the New Order era (Tedjo, 2007; Arismunandar, 2000).

Journalists played an important role as change agents to publicise any issues of government wrongdoing, and led the people to mobilise, which resulted in Soeharto's fall from the presidency (Aminah, 2008; Arismunandar, 2000). Journalists and the media struggled and strived for the people in order to clean up the

corruption, collusion, and nepotism; at the same time, journalists also struggled to gain press freedom over the repressive government under Soeharto's authoritarian system (Wiratraman, 2014; Heraldseide, 2014).

1.2.3 Journalist as Watchdog in the Post New Order regime

In the Post New Order era, media landscapes in Indonesia changed (Nugroho et al., 2012; Lim, 2011). Habibie, Soeharto's vice president at that time, became president after Soeharto fell down. Habibie dismantled the Ministry of Information, and deregulated the issuance of press licenses. He freed the media from censorship and control by the government, and authorised the media and journalists in Indonesia to undertake self-censorship. During the Soeharto era, which lasted from 1998 – 2002, there were over 1200 licenses issued for new print media, 900 licenses for new commercial radios, and 5 licenses for new commercial televisions. Corporate businesses orientation dominated media practices. Mergers, partnerships, and acquisitions took place among media owners and/or supporting telecommunications companies, to support corporate interests in media businesses. Therefore, after the New Order era, corporate political and economic interests had control over media practices (Kakailatu, 2007; Tedjo, 2007; Lim, 2011; Nugroho et al., 2012).

After the Soeharto era, the country faced an unstable government. From 1998 to 2001 it had four presidents (Soeharto, Habibie, Gus Dur, and Megawati), and experienced bombings in several places. The role of the media and journalists within this time of social unrest was to be a watchdog to the betterment of the society. The new media landscape freed the media from the government's control, but not from the media owner's control. Media owners had interests not only in business, but also

in politics, and they used the media to support their political and business interests. However, journalists tried to keep playing the same role as watchdog with struggle over unstable government politics, and struggle over media owners' interests (Kakiailatu, 2007; Lim, 2011; Nugroho et al., 2012). There were cases that show the journalists' role as watchdog within the society generated different impacts on journalists and on society after the New Order era and invite lawsuits to journalist and media describes as follows.

In the Post-New Order era, journalists and the media experienced the ultimate press freedom during 1998 - 2000 (Lim, 2011). However, Friedman and Friedman (1989) stated that in Asian countries, including Indonesia, press freedom remains closely linked with cultural ethics, which is very different from Western press freedom. Therefore, during the period of press freedom, Indonesian journalists experienced the lawsuits cases. The lawsuit against Rakyat Merdeka Daily was about bending journalism ethics, which published a cartoon of the shirtless Head of Parliament. It is not ethical in Indonesian culture to publish a cartoon depicting the head of the highest institution in Indonesia as shirtless, so the editor of Rakyat Merdeka was sentenced to 5 months in prison.

Other lawsuits in the Post-New Order era were the two cases of Tempo media versus Tommy Winata, a close friend of several military generals and a successful business person in Indonesia. The first lawsuits brought by Tempo media against Tommy Winata for attacking the Tempo media office for news coverage mentioning his name resulted in Tempo winning the case. Then, the next lawsuit was regarding the news coverage of fires in Tanah Abang; this was covered by Tempo media, who were sued by Tommy Winata because the report was not balanced and led public

opinion to accuse him of setting the fires despite there being no evidence. After a 2-year process in court (2004-2006), the senior editor of Tempo was sentenced to 2 years.

Journalists' writings were censored by their own media editors, and after a long period of time, the euphoria of having a free press wore off, as despite there being no media censorship policy, journalists and media critics were taken to court and there were many lawsuits (Kakiailat, 2007). Since then, there has been an increase in the criminalization of journalists and in the lawsuits against Indonesian media and journalists' news coverage, with only a low percentage of journalists or the media winning the cases (Daru, 2014). In Indonesia, the corrupt law enforcement system, the greedy elites, and the interests of businesses placed a greater burden on the role of journalists as watchdogs. Moreover, issues of unprofessional journalists, such as writing without facts, increased sensationalism, and the emotional expression of opinions because of irresponsible investigative reporting, highlighted the shortcomings of the press in general, resulting in several lawsuits being brought against journalists and the media after the Soeharto era (Kakiailat, 2007; Wiratraman, 2014).

In post new order, journalists played the role as watchdog existed in the case to eradicate corruption such as in the case of 'Cicak versus Buaya'. The role of the press in mainstreaming the issues and in taking sides to support what they believe in has clearly shown the level of anti-corruption feeling which was critically brought into the public arena (Tedjo, 2007; Syah, 2010). The 'Cicak versus Buaya' case, for example, became iconic with the Eradication Corruption Commission (KPK) versus Republic Indonesian Police Department (POLRI), which was described by Susno

Duadji (the head of Indonesian National Police's Crime Investigation Agency as being like a 'gekko' against a 'crocodile'. There were three different cases pertaining to corruption, namely, (1) a member of the house of representatives, (2) government officials, and (3) high ranking police officers.

The cases were brought in 2009, 2012, and 2015, and journalists covered the cases for a long time in order to ensure transparency and keep the public up to date with events. The cases were sensitive because they involved the decisions of two presidents (President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the first two cases and President Jokowi in the last case), and two respective government institutions were involved in the disputes. Journalists managed to publicise these issues and influence the government's decision in imposing a penalty on each individual involved in corruption and bribery (Syah, 2010; Wicaksana, 2016). Journalists acted as watchdogs and succeeded in influencing the government to change the culture of corruption by removing corrupt individuals from governance, sentencing the individuals in POLRI who practised corruption, and freeing KPK from any blame caused by POLRI.

1.2.4 Journalists' role and of Indonesian social problem

Indonesian social problems over the regime ranged from being occupied by an invading force, being led by president who applied a dictatorship, being led by a president who was authoritarian, and to having a corrupt society. In addition, journalists also faced oppression from the government, media owner and influential individuals while doing their professional work. The lawsuits to media and journalists that happened within the ultimate press freedom time in Indonesia described the power of influential individual, corrupt society, and struggle of

journalists in overcoming it. Indonesian journalists were in the front line in struggling the best for the society and in playing their role as watchdog. In doing their role as watchdog to the government or society, journalists always face the threat of being sentenced/imprisonment, either under oppression government or under ultimate press freedom time. However, journalists and the media in Indonesia succeeded in overcoming those social problems and kept on doing the role as watchdog for the society (Hanitsch, et al., 2007). This division described the commitment of Indonesian journalists in playing the role as watchdog under any circumstances. They played a significant role in gaining independence from the colonials, criticizing the government in power for the people's welfare during political turmoil, attracting investors to solve the economic crisis, igniting the social movement to overthrow the president in power, and influencing decision-making processes regarding corruption cases in the Post-New Order era.

Thus, Indonesian journalists have been playing two different roles, which are the role set by the government and the role they set for themselves. The role set by government was to act as a partner of the government in different concepts, for example, as educator of the people, as support for government programs, or as development journalists to promote New Order government programs (Wiratraman, 2014). In contrast, the role they set for themselves was always in opposition to their governmental role, as they always claimed that their role was as a watchdog to the government and for the betterment of Indonesian society.

Under their proclaimed role as watchdog to the government and for the betterment of society, journalists always took the initiative to do something in response to the national social problems and lead the social process that sometimes

needed more time to finally obtain a positive response from the society in spreading the idea of the need to gain independence from the invading force. Jacob Oetama – owner of the KOMPAS media group – stated that the journey was very long and took place over several generations, but finally the effort resulted in the social movement and subsequently in independence on 17 August 1945 (in Parahita, 2017), 350 years after the colonials had first invaded Indonesia. In the beginning of Old Order Era, government in power applied press freedom. There were many media revealed and media were used to express owners opinion that mostly about the party or interests of the group they were aligned with. In the last 5 years of the Old Order regime, Indonesian journalists began publishing government wrongdoings during the dictatorship before the army finally took action to start the New Order era in 1966 (Manzella, 2000).

Under the New Order era, the early years significantly changed the people's economic condition. However, after 10 years in the presidency, the president, his family, and his friends took advantage of the national development program to increase their own wealth. Therefore, journalists took the initiative to start the social process of monitoring the government's wrongdoing with a strong link between the government and journalists and the media (Kakiaiatu, 2007). The social process took another 22 years to finally obtain public awareness and action to overthrow the president in power. Then, in the Post-New Order era, journalists also began to influence the decision-making process of the government over the terms of four presidents to denounce the corruption of government officials. These cases show that when journalists understand that the country is undergoing nation-wide social problems, they initiate action to start the social process to raise public awareness of

the problem. A greater number of journalists would continuously publicise the problem to ignite a social movement for the betterment of society. Regarding environmental issues, where the nation is already heading into a crisis situation, reporting such issues has not been popular with journalists. Therefore, this study tries to explore journalists' perceptions of and roles in environmental problems. The main argument of this research is that Indonesian journalists' initiatives have usually emerged when the country has been facing national social problems; however, regarding environmental issues, as stated in section 1.2, the environmental news coverage has not been popular in the Indonesian media, compared with economic and political issues. Therefore, exploring the state of Indonesian journalists' perceptions and roles in covering environmental issues has become important.

The argument becomes stronger when it can be seen that journalists in a global context have already proved that they can play an important role in publicising environmental problems and generating global commitment to solve them, especially when the Society of Indonesian Environmental Journalists (SIEJ) has been established since 2006 and government development plan document for 2004 – 2009 had already highlighted environmental sustainability as an important item to be focused on.

1.3 Global journalists success in environmental problem

Journalists' writings on environmental problems about issues such as serious oil spills, and the hole in the ozone layer have resulted in environmental concerns being raised on a global level (Anderson, 1997; Cox, 2006). The global concerns were also shown in the Earth day celebrations in Rio de Janeiro, 1970 (Reiss, 1999), and the

conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (Sohn, 1973). Sohn (1973) also said that human and environmental events are able to earn various commitments from many countries, which are responsible for paying more attention to environmental issues, looking for solutions, and redefining the relationship between humans and the environment. The commitment was made through an action plan, which focused on environmental monitoring and evaluation, establishing a mechanism to mitigate environmental crises through activities, and making a budget commitment as well. The plan also aimed to support environmental management, and encourage positive behaviour through awareness raising, education, capacity building, and public information involving the media.

Journalists and the media coverage on environmental problems are very influential, as it purposely acts in raising the awareness and educating the public on environmental issues (Schoenfeld et al., 1979; Slovic, 2000). Global awareness on environmental issues has become a serious concern, and this has led to a commitment to action among countries in order to find any initiative to resolve the matter (Lockwood, 2010). Then, some studies have described the significant increase in environmental coverage that took place in the 1960s in Northern countries (Cox, 2006; Dryzek, 2005; A. Hansen, 2009), and in the 2000s in Southern countries (Fahn, 2009). Ungar's research (2000) identified that the media have become one of the major determinants of public awareness. The media also act as the main mechanism for publicizing any environmental issues, for contesting claims, and for centralizing the aspect of how the public will know and be aware of problems related to the environment. Schimdt et al.'s research (2013) also showed how the high

frequency of media coverage created a greater awareness among the public of environmental problems.

The success of journalists' writings in publicising environmental problems on a global level raised serious concerns internationally. Moreover, it obtained various commitments from many countries to look for solutions and act in order to respond to environmental problems. This success inspired me to carry out this study, especially when previous studies have shown that there are concerns regarding local government involvement in contributing to global environmental problems (Xuemai Bai, 2007; Scannel et al., 2013).

1.4 Problem statement

This study explores perceptions and roles of Indonesian journalists perceptions in covering environmental problems in Indonesia by assessing their experiences in doing environmental journalism and counting on their historical roles in being part of solution on Indonesian national social problems. This study refers to Hansen perspective on the importance of journalists as central point in communicating environmental problems (2011). Environmental problems data shows that there is a subsequent increase in the environmental problems as social problems in Indonesia. This study argues that within the problems, Indonesia needs to involve journalists to solve the problems. The argument is based on understanding on the significant roles of journalists in being part of the solution in Indonesian social political problems, and also from the success of global journalists in mainstreaming environmental problems and gathering action to solve the problems. The study approaches lack of Indonesian journalists response and attention to environmental

problems, which have been massively increased since New order era, from their perception of environmental problems.

Perception provides the framework for individual to play their roles or do the action (Creme-Regehr & Kunz, 2010) and it is closely linked to individual cumulative knowledge and experiences of events (Hopp, 2011). Perception of journalist is important to guide their action toward environmental problems. Therefore, the study assume that Indonesian journalists perceptions of environmental problems is important to provide the framework for journalists action in publicising environmental problems and to initiate social processes and movements for slowing down the pace of environmental problems, or even more importantly, to ignite social movements to solve the problem as they did in political and economic problems in Indonesia throughout the regimes. Based on this perspective and assumption the study of Indonesian journalists perceptions and roles in covering environmental problems in Indonesia conducted.

The urgency of understanding journalists perceptions and roles is increased when the data on the state of the Indonesian environment in 2012 show an increase in the number of environmental problems (MacAndrews, 1994; Sudarmadi et al., 2001; McCarthy et al., 2009; Jurgens et al., 2013; Gaveau et al., 2013; Asdak, 2014; Sulistiyono, 2015; Baum et al., 2015), and the worse condition will happen due to the trend of continuing growth of population in Indonesia (Bakti, 2004; BPS, 2012) but no link has been established between the environmental problems and journalists action to publicise it to a wider society to generate actions.

The impact of population to environmental problems mentioned by previous study as causes more pollution, and the greater needs of a larger populations encourage the action of a massive forest clearance in Indonesia (Miyamoto, 2006), land-use change from forests to agricultural land, exploitation of natural resources (Ehrlich, 1999; Sunderlin, 1999; Fearnside, 1997; Asdak, 2014). Miyamoto also described how agricultural expansion was a major cause of the continual floods, droughts, and acid rain, which have increased in number and severity over the years. The action of agricultural expansion has to be made to support the needs of the population to secure a sufficient supply of food that would otherwise have to be imported by the government. Population growth also encourages land-use change to support housing, while human activities or the migration of huge numbers of people adds to the production of emissions and creates more pollution in the air, water, and soil (Erlich, 1991, 1999).

Understanding that international journalists have had the power to publicise the issue and have gained a global commitment to solve the problem, and that Indonesian journalists were involved in initiating the social process and encouraging the social movement that contributed to solving national problems, it is worth studying how Indonesian journalists perceive environmental problems and how they establish their roles regarding the problems to initiate the social process and ignite social movements to resolve them, as they did during various regimes in Indonesian history.

Indonesian journalists played the role of agents of change by publicising an issue that was perceived as important for the public, the government, and society, with successes having implications for each regime. This study argues that under any

circumstances, Indonesian journalists have an important role to play in publicising issues that are perceived as important for them, and having success in achieving what they perceive as important. In addition, as message producers, journalists bear a moral responsibility for the issues they write, so examining their perception and role is important in guiding their actions toward solving environmental problems.

1.5 Research questions

Based on the argument and assumption mentioned in problems statement, this study posted three research questions, which are:

RQ 1: How do Indonesian journalists perceive environmental problems?

RQ2: What are the roles of Indonesian journalists pertaining to environmental problems?

RQ3: What are the factors that drive and/or impede journalists in doing environmental journalism in Indonesia?

1.6 Objectives of the study

The fact that environmental conditions in Indonesia is heading for a crisis situation, while historically journalists used to take initiative to solve the national problems, the study aims to:

- a. examine and discuss Indonesian journalists' perceptions of environmental problems;
- b. identify Indonesian journalists' roles in covering the problem;